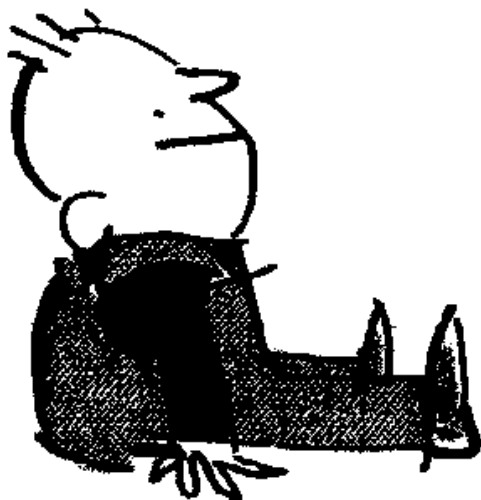
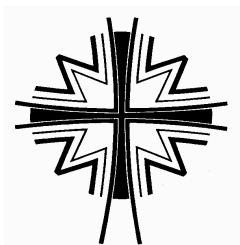


Preparing for Baptism and Thanksgiving



Croglin; Holme Eden and Wetheral with Warwick



Thanksgiving and Baptism Services
at
Croglin; Holme Eden and Wetheral with Warwick

Thank you for your enquiry about **thanksgiving** or **baptism**. Having a baby is both a great joy and a great responsibility and you obviously want to do what is best for your child. The purpose of this booklet is simply to explain a little more about the options that are now open to you.



Both **thanksgiving** and **baptism** (which is also sometimes called christening) are ways of celebrating the life of your child which involve making promises to God, usually with the support of Godparents or sponsors, but the main difference is in the extent and depth of Christian commitment that each form of service expresses.

I see my job as to explain to you with integrity what both these services mean, and what standing up and saying the promises in each case means in practice for parents such as yourself. I then trust you to choose with similar integrity the option which best represents where you are at on your spiritual journey – be that **thanksgiving** or **baptism** (or indeed both, or neither, as is sometimes the case).

Of course, if you have any queries at all in any way, shape or form, do feel free to ask me at any time!

David

David Craven

Priest in Charge, Croglin
Rector, Holme Eden and Wetheral with Warwick

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Here are questions that people sometimes ask...

(1) What is a *Thanksgiving*?

A **thanksgiving** is a celebration to mark the birth and naming of your child. It can often be the occasion for a family party. We give thanks for your child's new life, and commit both you and them to God, asking for his help and blessing in the years to come.



A **thanksgiving** is the sort of service that almost anyone who believes in God can stand up and take part in, even if they are not sure what else they believe. It's a way in which parents can express their gratitude for the birth of the child, and receive God's blessing on them and the child. This service places no further obligations on you in terms of ongoing commitment to the life of the church.

But...

(i) Can my child still be married in church?

Yes, in England everyone has the legal right to be married in the parish church of the parish in which they live.

(ii) Can my child have a Christian funeral service if they are not "Christened"?

Yes, this is not affected by whether or not a person has been "Christened".

(iii) Is it a real Christening?

Yes. If you look up the word "Christen" in a dictionary, you'll find it says "baptise" - that's an indication of the age of the dictionary rather than a statement of theology! The word "Christen" means "bring to Christ". Both **baptism** and **thanksgiving** do that.

(iv) Does it make my child a Christian?

Neither **baptism** or **thanksgiving** does that. You get to be a Christian by faith in Jesus - living as he intends. We pray that your child will want to do that, but we can't do it for them.

(v) Does it mean my child will go to heaven if they die?

The bible doesn't tell us about other people's destiny - only our own. The Church of England does not believe that a church service affects a child's eternal destiny. Being certain of eternal life comes only through believing and trusting in Jesus, not whether you have been "Christened".

(vi) Do we have Godparents?

Yes. We call them "sponsors". They promise to help the parents in bringing up the child, and later to support the child in growing up.

(vii) Are the Godparents also commissioned as guardians?

No. The church has no power to make anyone a guardian, and neither **baptism** or **thanksgiving** does this. You need to make wills to appoint guardians in the event of your death.

(2) What is a *Baptism*?

A **baptism** is also a celebration, often with lots of friends and relatives, but rather more is involved with the expectation that you will become actively involved in church life subsequently. In the Bible, baptism is linked to...

(i)... deciding to turn away from our own way of doing things, and letting God rule every area of our lives (what the Bible calls "**repentance**")

(ii)... deciding to follow Jesus Christ and accept God's forgiveness made possible by his death on the cross (this is what the Bible calls choosing to "**believe**").



Baptism is therefore an event which embodies more explicit Christian commitment, and it involves making a series of promises which amount to a public declaration of basic Christian belief and a desire to live these out in practice in a committed and wholehearted way.

The promises and statement that you and Godparents make are enclosed with this leaflet - they cannot be made lightly!

(3) Why is water used in *Baptism*?

Water is used because it reminds us of...

(i)... cleaning. Just as water cleans our clothes and washing up, so the pouring of water in baptism reminds us that when we turn to Jesus Christ as outlined above, God makes us spiritually “clean” in his sight.

(ii)... death. Water can be very destructive, causing floods or storms. The water of baptism speaks of death --- a dying to life without God.

(iii)... life. Water is vital for life, as we know from our gardens! The water of baptism reminds us that God offers us spiritual life, life which not even physical death can destroy.

Thanksgiving is a simpler ceremony which does not include water. However, this does not make it a second class alternative. Far from it! In fact it is a first class alternative and joyfully used by Christians and those who are not. Either way the child’s spiritual status is the same.

4) Why are children baptised?

So far it may seem that **baptism** is only really for adults. And some churches, like Baptists, limit it to grown-ups or older children only. But in the Church of England we believe that when children are born to Christian parents, they should be given the sign of the Christian community (**baptism**) when they are welcomed into the church family. This is done in the belief and expectation that the children themselves will want to be followers of Jesus themselves when they are old enough to make their own minds up.



It is a bit like opening a bank account for a baby – the account is opened in their name and in one sense the money is theirs, but they have to grow up and understand what it is all about in order for it to become real to them personally. Similarly, we pray and trust that a baptized child will grow up to understand and appropriate for themselves the promises made in **baptism**. For this reason, it is important to understand that baptism is the beginning of a spiritual journey within the family of the church – not a one-off event which means that a child is “done”...

(5) What does this mean for me as a parent?

For parents who bring children to be **baptized**, the service involves making promises before God and the congregation to be a wholehearted disciple of Jesus Christ – and to show evidence of that commitment by being a regular part of the church community. This is a robust commitment to make in today's post-Christian, secular society, and is something to be thought through seriously.



Because **baptism** is so tied in with being part of the church family, we always have a baptism in our monthly Family Service so that everyone can join in welcoming your child.

*(6) How do I know whether **baptism** or **thanksgiving** is right for me?*

If you want to thank God for the gift of your child, but do not want to make the solemn promises before God and other people that baptism involves, then the **thanksgiving** service is for you. Thanksgiving is also for those whose **MAIN** aim is to either have a naming ceremony or a family party. Of course, your child can always be baptized later on as well, should you decide you would like that.

Baptism is for the children of parents who want to be practicing Christians. A Christian is a person who decides to follow Jesus Christ, accepts Christian teaching about his life and death and resurrection, and as a result of that, wants to be a committed member of a local church. The Christian faith is a personal relationship with God through Christ. This relationship is open to us not on the basis of how good we are, but as a gift (much though this surprises many: the Christian faith is not about “being good enough to go to heaven”...).



Of course, being a Christian does not guarantee us a problem-free life (far from it, in fact – it is harder to be a Christian than not to be one in many ways) – but it does bring a completely new and exciting perspective on everything. Following Jesus is about **forgiveness** for the past, **purpose** for the present and **hope** for the future.

(7) How does coming to church fit in to the bigger picture?

As has been said before, a **thanksgiving** service does not imply any ongoing commitment to come to church. We would love to see you --- and you might be surprised by what you find! --- but the **thanksgiving** does not involve any promises to that effect.

If you decide that this is the best option for you then we can make a booking immediately for an intimate and private service on a Sunday afternoon tailored to your specific needs with friends and family around.

The Church of England **baptism** service, by contrast, does include the clear statement by parents and Godparents that they will help their children “take their place within the life and worship of the church”. There is therefore the expectation that you will become regular attenders at our monthly Family Service. You may wish to come to more and that would be great. Our doors are always open! We will try our best to help you do that.



However we must realise that coming to church, or indeed **baptism** itself, do not *make* people Christian. But coming to church is something a Christian would naturally aim to do.

A Christian outside the church family is as strange as a bee cutting itself off from a hive, or a football player opting out of the rest of the team and running round by himself in the corner of the pitch. Commitment to Christ carries with it commitment to His people, the church.

In **baptism** this is what you are promising to do. You need to therefore think through whether **a)** you are willing to do this, and **b)** you are able to do this.

For some there is a real issue about being forced to work on Sundays, which we understand. But for others, it is a question of priorities. It is not always easy to plan the way we spend each Sunday --- but church-going means putting God first.

For example, you will have less time to go shopping, repair the car, do the cooking, play football or be involved in clubs or other activities. This is a

tough choice in 21st century Britain; but the Christian faith is serious business which involves making clear choices and developing new habits.

As I say, if you want a good place to start, then many people find that coming to the Family Service each month is a good way in to the local church family.

Sometimes people ask, “How often should I come to church?” but that’s a bit like asking, “How often should I kiss my spouse?” If it isn’t happening reasonably regularly, or you have to keep a count of it, then something isn’t quite right!



(8) What if I'm not sure or have lots of questions?

You may well have all sorts of questions, and that's fine: it's the people who don't ask questions who bother me more, because that probably means they're just saying yes to everything out of politeness! I'm more than happy to meet with you at any time if you would like to chat about things further.

From time to time we also run *Christianity Explored*, this short course helps to explain the Christian faith in more detail, and provides a great opportunity to ask questions. Another way to tackle questions is simply to start attending church regularly at our Family Services.



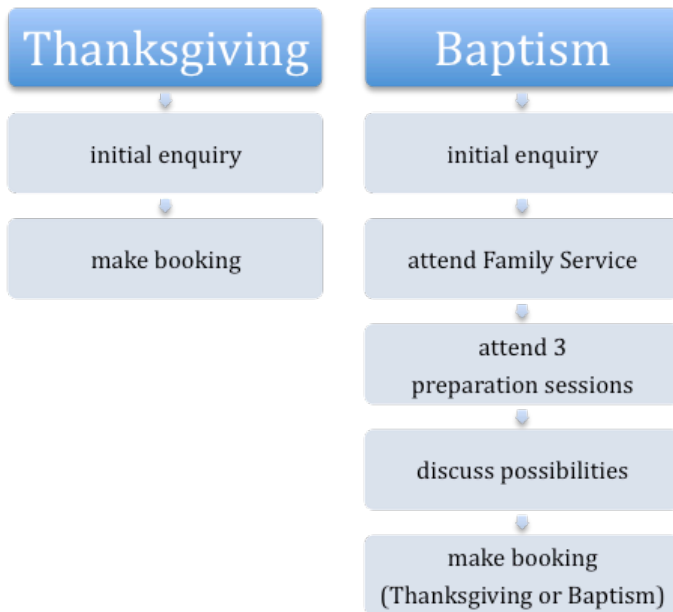
Of course, you can also think things through yourself, perhaps by buying the book “Christianity Explored” by Rico Tice and Barry Cooper (available via amazon.co.uk) or visiting websites such as www.messageofjesus.co.uk and www.bethinking.org

A Summary...

Outlined below is the normal procedure for making a booking. As you will see, given the seriousness of the promises being made at a **baptism** service and the expectations that come with it, we do require certain things from you not prescribed if simply choosing a service of **thanksgiving**.

First, we ask that you begin to come along to the Family Service between now and the **baptism** itself. This gives you and your child the opportunity to become familiar with the church you are going to become a member of. It also allows the existing church folk to get to know you better so they can know how best to support you.

Second, you will be required to meet with the Minister and his wife on three separate occasions to explore some of the basics of the Christian faith into which you have chosen to have your child baptised. It will also give you the opportunity to think about what you are committing yourself to.



Decision Time

What do you really want?

Just this

- A private service that gives an opportunity for a social occasion with friends and family and a party afterwards.
- To have some sponsors who will have a special relationship with your child.
- An occasion to ask for God's blessing on our child.

Or this as well

- To bring up your child within the Christian faith.
- To help your child to come to know Jesus for themselves.
- To help your child grow up as a member of the Church by becoming actively involved.

If you want both then **baptism** is the right choice for you. If you only want a party, some sponsors and a blessing and don't want to make promises you know you won't keep at this stage then you should choose the **thanksgiving** service. You can still have your child baptised later on.

The choice is yours, but please consider carefully and honestly the decision you make. Once you have done this, please contact Jill Andrews (01228 560404) who will then be able to move things forward with you.

I hope this information is helpful, but please don't worry if you still have lots of queries or questions! The church is not for perfect people but for ordinary men and women like you and me who are honest enough to recognise our need of God. I look forward to hearing from you again soon as to how you wish to take things forward.

Sincerely,

David

Appendix

Service Outline

Baptism

(Sample)

Introduction

When our Lord Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, he commanded his disciples to preach the gospel to all nations and to baptise those who believe.

They obeyed his command and we read of the apostle Peter preaching in these words, “Repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and for your children and for all who are far off, everyone whom the Lord our God calls to himself” (Acts 2:38-39).

We read here the promise of God to give forgiveness and his Holy Spirit to all who turn to Christ. This promise also embraces the children of God’s people. The risen Jesus is willing to give the blessing of eternal life to our children whom we bring to him in faith. Children must themselves express their faith in God when they are able to do so. They must turn away from sin and put their trust in Jesus Christ.

You who already trust in Christ are asked to make the baptismal promises on behalf of N. You must also undertake to teach and encourage them in the same faith.

Presentation of the Candidates

The Minister addresses the Congregation:

Faith is the gift of God to his people.

In baptism the Lord is adding to our number those whom he is calling.

People of God, will you welcome N and uphold them in their new life in Christ?

With the help of God, we will.

The Minister addresses the Parents and Godparents:

Parents and godparents, the Church receives this child with joy. Today we are trusting God for their growth in faith. Will you pray for them, draw them by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ?

With the help of God, we will.

In baptism this child begins their journey in faith. You speak for them today. Will you care for them, and help them to take their place within the life and worship of this church?

With the help of God, we will.

The Decision

The Minister addresses the Parents and Godparents:

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness into his marvellous light. To follow Christ means dying to sin and rising to new life with him. Therefore I ask:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

I submit to Christ.

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

I come to Christ.

Prayer over the Water

Praise God who made heaven and earth,
who keeps his promise for ever.

Almighty God, whose Son Jesus Christ
was baptized in the river Jordan;
we thank you for the gift of water
to cleanse us and revive us;
Saving God,
give us life.

We thank you that through the waters of the
Red Sea you led your people out of slavery
to freedom in the promised land;
Saving God,
give us life.

We thank you that through the deep waters
of death you brought your Son,
and raised him to life in triumph.
Saving God,
give us life.

We thank you for this water
with its reminder to us that
in order to enter the kingdom of heaven
we must be born again of water and the Spirit.
Saving God,
give us life.

We pray that in due course
N may come to be washed clean
and made one with Christ
in his death and in his resurrection,
cleansed and delivered from all sin.

We ask this in confidence
for all might, majesty, authority and power
are yours, now and for ever. **Amen.**

Profession of Faith

The Minister addresses the Congregation:

Let us affirm,
together with these who are being baptized,
our common faith in Jesus Christ.

Do you believe and trust in God the Father,
source of all being and life,
the one for whom we exist?

I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Son,
who took our human nature,
died for us and rose again?

I believe and trust in him.

Do you believe and trust in God the Holy Spirit,
who gives life to the people of God
and makes Christ known in the world?

I believe and trust in him.

This is the faith of the Church.

This is our faith.

**We believe and trust in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit.**

Baptism

N, I baptize you
in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Signing with the Cross

We receive you into the congregation of Christ's flock and sign you with the sign of the cross, to show that you are to be true to Christ crucified until your life's end. **Amen.**

Welcome and Commission

There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism:

By one Spirit we are all baptised into one body.

**We welcome you into the fellowship of faith;
we are children of the same heavenly Father;
we welcome you.**

Gracious God, you have brought us from death to life; we dedicate ourselves to you. Produce in us the fruit of your Spirit.

Equip us to serve your people and advance your gospel in the world.

Enable us to live holy and righteous lives and to please you in all that we do; in the name of Jesus our Saviour. **Amen.**

Heavenly Father, we pray for the parents and godparents of N.

Give them the spirit of wisdom and love, that they may teach them by word and example to know you.

Grant us in our homes the joy that comes from knowing you; through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

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Service Outline
Thanksgiving
(Sample)

Introduction

We are here today to give thanks for *N*, with their family and friends, and to support *their* parents in their responsibilities with prayer and love. God became one of us in Jesus, and understands all that surrounds the arrival and upbringing of children. It is God's purpose that children should know love within the stability of their home, grow in faith, and come at last to the eternal city where his love reigns supreme.

Thanksgiving and Blessing

The Minister addresses the Parents:

Do you receive *N* as a gift from God?

We do.

Do you wish to give thanks to God and seek his blessing?

We do.

God our creator,

we thank you for the wonder of new life
and for the mystery of human love.

We thank you for all whose support and skill
surround and sustain the beginning of life.

We thank you that we are known to you by name
and loved by you from all eternity.

We thank you for Jesus Christ,
who has opened to us the way of love.

We praise you, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Blessed be God for ever.

God our Father,
maker of all that is living,
we praise you for the wonder and joy of creation.
We thank you from our hearts
for the life of *N*,
and for the privilege of parenthood.
Accept our thanks and praise
through Jesus Christ our Lord,
Amen.

The Minister addresses the Parents:
What name have you given this child?
Their name is *N*.

As Jesus took children in his arms and blessed them,
so now we ask God's blessing on *N*.
Heavenly Father, we praise you for their birth;
surround them with your blessing
that they may know your love,
be protected from evil,
and know your goodness all her days.

**May *N* learn to love all that is true,
grow in wisdom and strength
and, in due time, come through faith and baptism
to the fullness of your grace;
through Jesus Christ, our Lord.
Amen.**

May God the Father of all bless *N* and *N*
and give them grace to love and care for *N*.
May God give them wisdom, patience and faith,
help them to provide for *N*'s needs
and, by their example,
reveal the love and truth that are in Jesus Christ.
Amen.

Giving of the Gospel

Receive this book.

It is the good news of God's love.

Take it as your guide.

Read it, for it tells how you and your family can share in eternal life, through repentance and faith in Jesus Christ.

The Minister addresses the Sponsors:

Will you do all that you can to help and support *N* and *N* in the bringing up of *N*?

With the help of God, we will.

The Minister addresses the Congregation:

Will you do all that you can to help and support this family?

With the help of God, we will.

Bible Reading

Prayers

**God our creator,
we thank you for the gift of *N*,
entrusted to our care.**

**May we be patient and understanding,
ready to guide and to forgive,
so that through our love
they may come to know your love;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.**

Amen.

Jesus taught us to call God our Father,
and so in faith and trust we say

**Our Father in heaven,
hallowed be your name,
your kingdom come,
your will be done,
on earth as in heaven.
Give us today our daily bread.
Forgive us our sins
as we forgive those who sin against us.
Lead us not into temptation
but deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom, the power,
and the glory are yours
now and for ever.
Amen.**

Ending

The love of the Lord Jesus
draw you to himself,
the power of the Lord Jesus
strengthen you in his service,
the joy of the Lord Jesus fill your hearts;
and the blessing of God almighty,
the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit,
be among you and remain with you always.
Amen.

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Your Response

Please complete this form and return it to Jill Andrews, either in person at a service, by post or by e-mail. This will mean we have the relevant details for the official church records.

Child's surname:

Child's first names:

Child's date of birth:

Father's full name:

Mother's full name:

Address:

Telephone:

E-mail:

Please see over.....

Mother's occupation:

Father's occupation:

Please indicate whether you are requesting thanksgiving or baptism:

Please indicate whether you've had a child baptised before in the benefice and when that was:

Full names and addresses of Godparents / Sponsors:
(Godparents must be baptised and over 16 years of age)

*Mrs Jill Andrews
Fairways, Wetheral, Carlisle, Cumbria CA4 8JD*

*01228 560404
p.andrews123@btinternet.com*

I have read and understand the commitment that I wish to make in requesting this church service.

Signed:

Date: