

PASTORAL SERVICES

from the Methodist Worship Book

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Many sources have contributed to the compilation of this book, and not all of them are now traceable. Individual members of the Committee prepared drafts, which were revised more or less drastically by the Committee, often resulting in final versions which looked little like the original drafts. Among the casualties of this sometimes protracted process was the identity of many of the sources; they could not be recalled, nor did there seem to be any way to track them down. The Panel wishes to record at once both its indebtedness to any who may recognise in this book rhythms and patterns, expressions and phrases, ideas and images which are their own, and its regret that it became impossible to ask permission or seek consent for their inclusion...

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PASTORAL SERVICES

AN ACT OF THANKSGIVING AFTER THE BIRTH OR ADOPTION OF A CHILD

INTRODUCTION

In the Methodist tradition, the children of Christian parents are normally brought for Baptism, but there are occasions when **An Act of Thanksgiving** may be helpful, either suggested by the minister or requested by the *parents*. Prior to a child's Baptism, the *parents* may have some particular reason for wishing to give thanks for her/his arrival. Newly-adopted children may already have been baptized, and **An Act of Thanksgiving** serves to welcome the child into the local congregation. Some *parents* may have reservations about the Baptism of young children, while still desiring to give thanks for *their* child's arrival and to dedicate themselves for *their* new task.

The themes of the service are thanksgiving to God for the gift of children, assurance of God's love for all, and our need of God's blessing and help in the nurturing of our families.

NOTE

It is appropriate that this **Act of Thanksgiving** should follow the sermon, but it may be used before the Ministry of the Word.

1 The *parents stand* in front of the minister.

2 Let us pray.

Heavenly Father,
who entrusted your Son, Jesus Christ,
to the protection of Mary and Joseph:
bless us on this day of thanksgiving
with the gifts of your grace,
that *this child* and *her/his parents*
may always be united to you
and to each other;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

3 The following passages of scripture are read:

Hear, O Israel: The Lord is our God, the Lord alone. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might. Keep these words that I am commanding you today in your heart. Recite them to your children and talk about them when you are at home and when you are away, when you lie down and when you rise.

Deuteronomy 6:4-7

Jesus took a little child and put it among them; and taking it in his arms, he said to them, 'Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me.'

Mark 9:36-37

4 The minister asks the *names* of the *child*.

5 All stand.

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God.
It is right to give our thanks and praise.

We praise you, O God, for creating all things
and for making us in your own image.

Thanksgiving for Birth or Adoption of a Child

We thank you that while we were yet sinners
you gave your only Son, Jesus Christ,
to be born of Mary,
to live as one of us,
to suffer death on the cross,
and to rise again for our salvation.

And especially today
we give you thanks and praise
for the gift of a *daughter/son* to *A and B (A)*
and we pray that you will bless *N* by your grace
and through the love of *her/his* parents.

May *she/he* come to know you
and to share with all your people
the life of the baptized,
the bread of heaven,
and the joys of your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

6 The minister says to the *parents*:

A and B (A),
do you thankfully receive *N* as a gift from God, and do you
promise to love and care for *her/him*?

Answer: We do.

7 The minister may also say to the *parents*:

Will you share your faith with *N*
and help *her/him* to pray and worship
that you and *she/he* together
may cherish your place in the life of the Church?

Answer: With God's help, we will.

8 The minister says to the people:

Members of the body of Christ,
will you surround this family with your love,
and will you support them with your prayers?

With God's help, we will.

9 The minister may take each child in her/his arms.

The minister says:

God our Father,
bless *N* with your Holy Spirit
that *she/he* may come to believe in Christ
and glorify you for ever. **Amen.**

10 A Bible may be given to the *parents* or the *child*.

11 The minister says:

Let us pray.

Gracious God,
we pray for *N* and *her/his* family and friends
that they may be strengthened in their love for each other
and receive your gifts of wisdom and understanding.

The Lord hears our prayer.

Thanks be to God.

We pray that together we may follow Christ
and witness to your love in our homes and in our community.

The Lord hears our prayer.

Thanks be to God.

12 **The Lord's Prayer, if it is not said at some other point in the service**

EITHER

OR

We say together the prayer
that Jesus gave us:

**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.
Save us from the time of
trial
and deliver us from evil.
For the kingdom,
the power and the glory
are yours,
now and for ever. Amen.**

As our Saviour taught his
disciples, we pray:

**Our Father, who art in
heaven,
hallowed be thy Name;
thy kingdom come;
thy will be done;
on earth as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our
daily bread.
And forgive us our
trespasses,
as we forgive those who
trespass against us.
And lead us not into
temptation;
but deliver us from evil.
For thine is the kingdom,
the power, and the glory,
for ever and ever. Amen.**

13 May the love of the Lord Jesus
draw us to himself;
may the power of the Lord Jesus
strengthen us in his service;
and may the joy of the Lord Jesus
fill our hearts, now and always. **Amen.**

14 **The service continues.**

A CELEBRATION OF CHRISTIAN RENEWAL

INTRODUCTION

From time to time a Christian may pass through an experience which strengthens her/his faith. This may be emergence from bereavement, for example, or a response to a call for deeper commitment, or the experience of beginning again with God after a lapse in the journey of faith. The use of ***A Celebration of Christian Renewal*** may be suggested by the minister or by the individual concerned.

Although this service marks and celebrates an individual's experience, to which personal testimony may well be given, it also recognizes God's gifts to the whole Christian community. The service looks forward to a continuing Christian life, firmly rooted in the total life of the Church's fellowship and worship.

NOTE

When ***A Celebration of Christian Renewal*** is used, it follows the sermon during a celebration of ***Holy Communion***. Any appropriate order for Holy Communion may be used, but that for ***The Day of Pentecost and Times of Renewal in the Life of the Church*** (page 174) is especially suitable.

1 The minister says:

The Lord has done great things for us and holy is his name.

N is here to give thanks for what the Lord has done for *her/him*; and to renew *her/his* commitment to the one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in whose name *she/he* was baptized.

2 The minister may say to *N*:

N, do you believe in God, who is creator of the world and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ?

Answer: Yes, I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ, the Son of God, who saves us from sin and renews the life of all who trust in him?

Answer: Yes, I do.

Do you know the power of God the Holy Spirit, whose fruit is love and whose gifts build up the Body of Christ?

Answer: Yes, I do.

Do you desire to love God with all your heart and soul and mind and strength, and your neighbour as yourself?

Answer: Yes, I do.

Do you promise to be faithful in prayer and in reading the Scriptures and in the worship and fellowship of the Church?

Answer: Yes, I do.

3 The minister may ask *N* to testify to God's renewing grace and to declare *her/his* commitment to Christ.

4 The minister says:

N, we rejoice with you in your experience of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit; and we pray for God's continued blessing on you.

5 The minister says:

May God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,
bless you and keep you in eternal life. **Amen.**

This blessing may be accompanied by the laying on of hands.

6 EITHER the minister says:

Let us pray.

Father, we thank you
for what you have done in *N's* life
through your Holy Spirit.
We pray that Christ may dwell
in *her/his* heart by faith,
and that *she/he* may be filled with all your fullness;
through Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

OR the minister prays in *her/his* own words.

7 The minister may invite others to commit their lives to Christ.

8 The minister says to the people:

Let us together renew our Christian commitment.

**Almighty God,
in the power of your Spirit
we offer you our souls and bodies
to be a living sacrifice.
Strengthen us to serve you,
and gather us and all people into your kingdom;
through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.**

9 The service continues.