



# Congratulations

You are considering a  
thanksgiving service  
for your child

*The following notes may help guide you in making this decision*

## **Our invitation to you.**

When a child is born or adopted, many parents consider having a service in church to mark the arrival of the new member of the family. We would like to invite you to have a service of thanksgiving at St David's Church, Resolven or St Cadoc's Church Glynneath or St. Mary's Church Blaengwrach. We are part of the Anglican Church, the Church in Wales; and if you live within the area covered by our church (the parish), or have strong connection with us, then we will be happy to arrange a church service which will be appropriate to you and your child. There is no charge for this.

## **What would you like a service to provide?**

Many parents would like a chance to say thank you to God for the arrival of their child or adoption, and to ask him for help as the child grows up in the family. Members of the family and various friends are usually present to show their support for the parents and their joy at the arrival of the new child. Parents often like to choose a few people who are particularly close to them to have a special role in caring for the child as they grow up. If this is the sort of service you would like, then, a thanksgiving service is the best way to express your hopes.

## What happens in the thanksgiving service?

The service in Church can be at any appropriate time and day of the week, and the following things happen:

- ♥ The vicar leads prayers for the child to thank God for their arrival/ adoption. In doing this, the vicar will ask the child's name.
- ♥ We ask God to be with the child and as they grow up.
- ♥ The vicar takes the child in his arms and will bless the child.
- ♥ A copy of a Gospel, one of the books of the Bible about Jesus is given to the family as a reminder of the good news that the Lord Jesus brings to people.
- ♥ The parents choose some close friends/family to support them, and these are asked the question, "*Will you do all that you can to help and support the parents in the bringing up of the child?*" The vicar then asks the same question to all the congregation present.
- ♥ The Vicar will use some other prayers for the parents and family, and can make them appropriate to circumstances, e.g. adoption, a difficult birth.
- ♥ The service will last about 15 minutes, but could be longer if the parents decide to have a hymn sung during the service.

## What is the difference between a service of thanksgiving and Baptism (also known as Christening)?

### Christian faith of the parents

The idea behind a baptism is that the parents have a commitment to the Christian faith and desire to bring their child up as a practising Christian. If the parents themselves are baptised believers then they may want to extend their faith to their children; and so baptism marks a child's entry into the church where they will receive a welcome to take a full part as they continue to grow up. *In contrast*, a service of thanksgiving is not about promises to follow Jesus, but giving thanks and asking for God's blessing. For this reason, many parents chose a thanksgiving, because in a Baptism service, they would feel hypocrites or not ready to make the public vows of being a strong Christian believer. The thanksgiving service does not have this idea of promising to follow Jesus, but **both services** involved using the name of the child and praying for God to be with them.

### **God-parents**

A baptism is all about receiving the good promises that the Lord Jesus brings to us, and as such it is a service of Christian faith. Because children cannot express a mature faith in themselves, God-parents in a baptism are chosen to support the child in their spiritual life. God-parents **MUST** be baptised believers who will give a good example of what it means to follow the Lord Jesus. In a baptism, the child is going to be welcomed into the Christian church and needs a God-parent who is a regular worshipper at church and who will encourage them in their spiritual life.

In a thanksgiving there is no specific role for someone to promise to bring up the child in the Church, so the God-parents have more of a role to care for the children. Close members of the family, or close friends who can be trusted and relied upon to care for the child and to give a good example in life are good choices. These God-parents have just one line to say in the service, where they promise to support the parents and child.

### **Water and the font**

In a Baptism, the vicar holds the child in his arms and at the font pours water over the child's head in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit; this is a sign of God's promise of the new life that Jesus brings. This is **not** part of a thanksgiving because water is used only when parents want to express the faith they have in Jesus; in a service of thanksgiving, the vicar takes the child in his arms and blesses the child.

### **Time and place**

All baptisms must be part of a public service on a Sunday when the church is gathered for worship, because the parents and God-parents are promising to bring up the child as part of the Church. In contrast, a thanksgiving service is more private and may take place at any time of the day and week. Services are held at St Mary's or St Cadoc's or St David's, or in one of the church halls.

### **Candles, Christening gown and Certificates**

A lighted candle may be given to the parents at a baptism as a symbol of the promise of the light of Jesus coming into the life of a believer. This is not used at a thanksgiving, but instead, a copy of one of the books about Jesus in the Bible, a Gospel, is given to the parents as a symbol of the good news Jesus brings to us.

In both services, the child may be dressed in special clothes (e.g, a white 'family' Christening gown), and in both services, a certificate is given to the parents as a record and details are entered into a church register book.

### **Can my child still go to Sunday School and church?**

Yes. Everyone is welcome to both Sunday School and Church — you do not have to be baptised for either. Neither do you have to be baptised to have a church wedding or church funeral.

### **Can my child still be baptised at later date?**

Yes. Whenever someone believes that they have thought through the options and want to bring up their child in the Christian Church, a baptism service can be arranged. It should be remembered many adults chose to be baptised when they believe in Jesus for themselves. Many parents therefore ask for a service of thanksgiving so that when the child grows up they can make their own mind up about following the Christian faith.

Thank you for reading this leaflet. Please contact the Vicar if you want more advice on whether a baptism or a thanksgiving is the most appropriate service for you. If you have decided, please complete the appropriate application form and return it to:

**Rev. Peter Lewis, The Vicarage, 99a Neath Rd,  
Resolven, SA11 4AN  
01639 711262      rev.peterlewis@virgin.net**

The Parish web site has more information on church life in the Neath Valley.  
You can access it at **[www.vonp.co.uk](http://www.vonp.co.uk)**