

Welcoming a Child

The birth of a child is so special. There is so much to celebrate in this miraculous event. A child is an incredible blessing.

We would love to share in your joy and celebrate the birth of your child. Our Church offers two different formats for welcoming: thanksgiving and baptism. We hope that the following may be of assistance in your discernment.

A Service of Thanksgiving for Infants

Life, and especially new life, is very special. We recognise your desire to celebrate this and to ask God to bless your little one as they begin their journey. The Service of Thanksgiving is a short service which makes no demands of belief or commitment from the parents. Instead, it expresses our deepest wishes and desires for this child, and asks God to bless them as they begin their journey. It is a meaningful service which brings together the past and the present. The service also expresses the Church's hope that one day they will seek baptism. An outline of the service is contained in this booklet.

The Service may be conducted at any location within reasonable travel distance. A donation of \$100.00 is asked towards the mission and ministry of the Church, and is to be paid to the priest on the day.

Baptism – the foundation of Membership

Baptism is offered to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord. Upon being baptised a person becomes part of Christ's body, a full member of the Church. As a full member of the Church each person is expected to live according to the promises they have made, or that they have made on behalf of an infant.

Belonging to Christ's body means developing a deeper understanding of what it means to live as a part of Jesus. The body is a community of diverse people, each adding their gifts and talents to make the world more like God's Kingdom. Baptised members attend Church weekly for worship, prayer, study, reflection and fellowship with other members of Christ's body. It is by our participation, contributing and sharing with one another that we show we belong.

The Baptism of infants is a special celebration. It demonstrates the desire of a family to live as faithful followers of Jesus Christ. Families make promises on behalf of their child and promise to raise and nurture them in a Christian household, so that one day they will make an informed choice about how they may choose also to follow Jesus and become a part of His body.

Therefore, baptism is about belonging. It is about being a member of the Christian community and participating fully within it. It is about adopting a way of living.

In Summary:

The Anglican Parish of Gosford offers two types of services to celebrate the birth of a child:

A Thanksgiving Service

- This is an informal service which can be held at any venue the family chooses (e.g. in a home, park or church).
- A donation of \$100 is offered to the priest on the day of the service.
- Certificates are issued to the child to acknowledge this event.
- Please note that this service does not in any way replace the Sacrament of Baptism.

A Baptismal Service

- This is a formal service which can only be held in the church, on set dates throughout the year.
- The parents are required to be committed members of the Church, living their faith by example. Baptism requires serious promises about the Christian faith and about continued church membership by the whole family.

An Important Decision

There is no doubt that this is a big decision on your behalf. Undoubtedly you may also have some added pressure from relatives or friends to get "the baby done"? In some way reading this document shows you have a deep desire to do something special. To assist you with your decision, tick the boxes below that you agree with.

Thanksgiving Service		Baptism Service	
I believe in God and need the assurance that God knows my child.		I believe in God and need the assurance that God knows my child	
I feel the need to celebrate the birth of and to name my child.		I feel the need to celebrate the birth of and to name my child.	
I believe you don't have to go to church to be a Christian.		I believe that Jesus' actions invite a faith response from me.	
Being a good person is enough for a blessed journey.		I am a disciple of Jesus Christ and want to teach my child to follow him.	
Attending Christian Worship is important to me at special times.		A deep and regular commitment to the Faith Community is important to me.	

Now add up the ticks. The column with the most ticks will point you in the right direction. If you have any questions about any of the information provided in this brochure please contact the Parish Office on 4323 2312 between the hours of 9am – 3pm Monday to Friday. We are most happy to talk with you further about this special event in the life of your child, and your family.

Every blessing,

Fr Rod Bower, The Rev'd Val McDonald, Fr Michael Armstrong
Ministry Team, Anglican Parish of Gosford.

Service of Thanksgiving for a Child

The following is an abstract of our thanksgiving service for your information.

Gathering

We gather in the name of God who brings us to birth, walks with us in Jesus our brother and gives us life in the Spirit.

(All say) "People were bringing little children to Jesus, and he took them up in his arms and blessed them."

We come together to give thanks to our loving and life-giving God for the birth of *N*. We will anoint him/her with holy oil, a symbol of healing and strengthening. We will speak *N*'s name in the presence of God and of this gathering.

This name will be a sign of her very essence both in the physical and spiritual places.

Finally we will bless him/her, listening for the voice of the Divine, whispering softly God's joy at her being,

(All Say) "This is my child, my beloved, in whom I delight".

We pray that this ceremony will be one small step for *N* on the way into the full realisation of the Environment of God and the participation in Jesus Christ that is experienced in Holy Baptism.

Scripture Reading

A passage from the bible is read.

Anointing of Parents

The calling by God to be a parent is the most sacred of all vocations. When Divinity chose to share our human journey in the person of Jesus the Christ, God entrusted that fragile form to the care of Mary and Joseph.

God now comes among us in *N* relying on the gentle love of *X* and *Y*.

We recognise their calling and the sacred trust given to them.

X and *Y* I anoint you and confirm you in your calling as *N*'s parents. May God equip you with all you need to love and nurture him/her in his/her life's journey.

(All say) We your family and friends pledge our support to you in this sacred trust.

Acknowledgement of Godparents

X and *Y* entrust their precious daughter to the guidance, love and support of those they have chosen as *N*'s Godparents: *A* and *B*

Anointing and naming of the child

A Grandparent, Godparent or Sponsor holds the child while the parents assist in the anointing.

- *N* we anoint your mind that you may have wisdom.
- *N* we anoint your ears that you may hear what is right.
- *N* we anoint your lips that you may speak only truth.
- *N* we anoint your eyes that you may see the beauty in all creation.
- *N* we anoint your hands that you may do what is good.
- *N* we anoint your heart that you may love deeply and fully.
- *N* we anoint your feet that you may walk in the way of the Lord.
- *N* may God bless you and keep you, may God's face shine upon you and the Holy One be gracious to you. May God lift up the light of Divine countenance upon you and grant you peace this day and forever more. Amen.

(All say) *N*, we your family and friends, promise (as best we are able) to walk with you, to laugh and cry with you, to share with you what we have learnt on our journey and to share your journey, where ever that may lead.

Family Presentations

Family or friends, Godparents or Sponsors may offer a poem or other words of commitment to sharing the child's life journey. Gifts may be offered in silence or with these or similar words.

N we offer you this gift as a symbol of our commitment to you and of our promise to walk with you always.

The Blessing

While the Christian church brings great truth within its traditions from other places and cultures, we also seek to connect our spirituality to the Spirit of this land. In this desire we have much to learn from aboriginal people.

For indigenous people the smoke of the eucalypt carries cleansing, blessing and protecting properties. Ochre is a sign of purity and restoration.

We honour this tradition, this place, the Spirit of this land and its custodians and pray that *N* may grow and be nurtured by all that is good around him/her.

N may this land surround you in her blessing, nurture you in your growing, sustain you in your living and receive you at the end of your journey. (*N* is passed through the eucalypt smoke)

N may the Spirit of God dance with your spirit into the ages of ages. (*N* is anointed with ochre) Amen.

Final Blessing

Go in peace and may God, both Mother and Father, nurture you and hold you safe; God in Christ walk by your side, and God the Holy Spirit send you out with joy. Amen.