

Baptism/Thanksgiving Service Preparation

Ipswich City Uniting Church is delighted to play such a significant role in the life of your family, and in helping you respond to God's grace found in the miracle of your child. Children are a wonderful gift from God and it is only right that we acknowledge that gift with a worship service of blessing for your child.

The Uniting Church offers families 2 different types of worship services that celebrate your child's birth: a **Thanksgiving Service** in which the church joins you in welcoming your child and giving thanks for the gift of their life; or a **Baptism service** which essentially does the same, but with an added significant commitment from yourselves, on behalf of your child, to become an intentional part of the church community.

A Baptism service and a Thanksgiving Service may look the same in parts, but they are significantly different. These preparation sessions are designed to help you decide which service would be most appropriate for your family. In order to get the most out of the sessions, there are a number of things you will need to do:

1. **Baptism/Thanksgiving Information:** When you meet with the minister, you will be given a Baptism Service Template and a Thanksgiving Service Template, as well as an outline explaining the Uniting Church's understanding of the differences between each service. You will need to read these documents carefully. We urge you to discuss them together as a family and write down any questions you may have. When you come to the next session, we will be discussing which service resonates with you the most.
2. **Bible:** You will need to make sure that you have a copy of the Bible. We would be happy to give you a free copy of the Bible that also includes a reading guide to help you understand how to look up chapters and verses etc.
3. **Sessions:** You will need to make sure you can commit to attending the different sessions. Altogether, there are two different sessions – the first is a general information-sharing session with the minister; the second is a discussion and sharing session about how you understand life and faith, what you are seeking for your child, and will also include a walk-through of the service itself. When you come to the second session, you will be introduced to other people from Ipswich City Uniting Church. They will help you with any questions you may have and will also take part in the Baptism or Thanksgiving Service as representatives of our congregation. If you know of any people who attend our church who you would like to fulfil this role, please let us know beforehand.
4. **Participation in Worship:** Parents are also invited to attend at least one church service before the date of the Baptism or Thanksgiving. This is not about ticking off a roll, but rather it allows families to familiarise themselves with the church service itself (different church worship services and styles can vary quite significantly). It also allows our congregation an opportunity to get to know you before the big day.

Dates and times for your Baptism or Thanksgiving Service will need to be arranged with the minister. We would love to be able assist you by having a service date that best suits your circumstances, but due to the nature of church-life we are not always able to secure the availability of the date/time of your first choice.

Our congregation also would like to extend hospitality to you and your family and friends after the service, with a **morning tea and a special cake**. Please let us know if you do not wish to participate in this.

We realise that there is a lot here to take in. Baptism and Thanksgiving Services are very important to us at Ipswich City Uniting Church because we value children and families very highly. We live in a world that can sometimes bruise us, and leave us feeling unwanted, or even alone. We want the families that come to us for Baptism and Thanksgiving Services to feel loved and valued. This preparation course takes time, because the things in life that are important to us, are worth the time we invest in them.

For people who have not grown up in the church, or haven't been to church for a long time, church can sometimes feel foreign, and perhaps even a bit scary. But as you come to church, you will find us to be a welcoming community of people just like you. We believe that there is more to life than what we see around us, and we give thanks to God for the miracle of children, and the privilege of parenting. I can't promise that we will be able to answer all of your questions about faith and life, but I can promise that we will provide a safe place in which you can ask them.

We look forward to journeying with your family at this special time.

