



Gateway church Thanksgiving mornings

At Gateway we love family! We understand the church to be an expression of family, in which everyone, regardless of age or marital status is included. We also love the privilege of being parents and having babies, hence our thanksgiving gatherings we hold once a year.

What is the purpose of a thanksgiving gathering?

1. It's an opportunity for parent(s)/guardian(s) to thank God (hence the name thanksgiving gathering) for the gift of their child and to celebrate this with their family and friends.

Psalm 127 v 3 says: "Children are a heritage from the LORD, offspring a reward from him".

2. An opportunity for parent(s)/guardian(s) to dedicate themselves to love, care for and bring up their child in a way that pleases and honours God.

Deuteronomy 6 v 4-7 says: "Love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up."

3. An opportunity for parent(s)/guardian(s) to ask God for his grace and help to fulfil their role and to ask their family and the church for their love and support.

Philippians 4:6 says: Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.

Why isn't it called a christening or dedication?

Hearers of the gospel are called to "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins." Acts 2:38. The New Testament pattern is that those who understand the gospel and desire to follow Jesus are baptised by full immersion (Romans 6:3-4). We have and will continue to baptise children who meet these requirements, but we will not baptise infants, as we believe this symbol is only for those who have made a free will decision of their own making. Hence we don't hold christenings.

In the past "thanksgiving gatherings" at Gateway have been called "dedications". We decided on the change of name as it caused misunderstanding; people thought that the children were being dedicated to God, where in practice it was the parents who were dedicating themselves to bringing up their children in a Kingdom way. While we do see "dedications" of infants to God in the bible (1 Samuel 1 21-28, Luke 2:21-24) these were to fulfil a specific promise or the law of Moses which Christ has now fulfilled. Hence we use the title; "thanksgiving gathering" as it best describes the purposes above.

What happens on a “thanksgiving gathering”?

The gathering will run like most others, except that:

- toward the end of sung worship an elder will explain the purpose of the thanksgivings, and invite parent(s)/guardians to come to the front with their child
- parent(s)/guardian(s) will be given 2 minutes each to express their hearts
- following a corporate prayer the elder will invite family and close friends to gather round and pray individually for the family
- the talk will be prepared bearing in mind there will likely be a good number of guests visiting, and will have some parenting/faith slant

I want to be a part of this, what do I need to do?

- email office@gatewayleeds.net confirming the name(s) of your child(ren) that you would like to take part
- email gwmedia@googlegroups.com with 1 Powerpoint slide with your child’s name and some images of your child on them and one or 2 short prayer requests (this is voluntary, if you need help, please email office@gatewayleeds.net) that can be shown while you talk.
- prepare what you would like to say for the 2 minutes on the morning. We would encourage you to try and cover the 3 main purposes for the thanksgiving gatherings in what you say. You may like to pass on any special thank you’s, highlight any prayer requests or Kingdom hope’s for your child(ren).
- Invite your friends and family and prepare any celebration you want to have following the gathering.
- That’s it! We don’t have any set commitment for you to say and we don’t require any godparents to be assigned.

explaining dedications

interview with family

formal dedication

groups gather round to show support and pray