**A Service of Prayer and naming**In the context of Expected or Actual

Miscarriage, Stillbirth or Neonatal Death

Sentence of Scripture

*This or another suitable sentence of Scripture is read.*

‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you,
and before you were born I consecrated you.’  *(Jeremiah 1: 5)*

Opening Prayer

*The minister says*

God of compassion, we are gathered here with *… and …*,

to honour this baby not able to be brought to the fullness of life

we hoped and intended for *him/her*.

We seek the comfort and knowledge of your love

as given to us in Holy Scripture,

in the gift of your child Jesus who dwelt and died among us.

In your presence with us, we ask your blessing, [*we name him/her*],

and commend *him/her* to your care.

Let us remind ourselves of your knowledge of this baby in the words of Psalm 139:

You yourself created my inmost parts You knit me together in my mother’s womb My body was not hidden from you While I was being made in secret and woven in the depth of the earth Your eyes beheld my limbs, yet unfinished in the womb: all of them were written in your book; they were fashioned day by day when as yet there were none of them. *c.f. Psalm 139: 13, 15-16*

The Reading

*Luke 18: 15–17*

People were bringing even infants to Jesus that he might touch them; and when the disciples saw it, they sternly ordered them not to do it. But Jesus called for them and said, ‘Let the little children come to me, and do not stop them; for it is to such as these that the kingdom of God belongs. Truly I tell you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will never enter it.’

**The Naming**

*If the baby is not being named, the service continues with The Prayers.*

*The minister says*

Holy scripture teaches us that what is called into being, we know and remember through naming. In recognition of the place this baby holds in our family and in our hearts, in honour of the brief time *he/she* was with us, we now name *him/her* … *.*We do this that we might give voice to our longing for *him/her*, [our grief at *his/her* loss] and bring our prayers to you.

The minister addresses the parents:

 *… and …*  have you chosen a name for your baby?

The parents answer:

*I/we* name *him/her* …

The minister says

*…,* we give you this name,

and do so in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

*The minister may make the sign of the cross*

*and may continue:*

Although your earthly life is brief,

you will be remembered as one belonging to the … family

and as a gift shared with us all.

The Prayers

*The minister says*

Let us pray.

*Either of the following prayers may be said by the minister or family members.*

God of wisdom and all compassion,

you love all that you have created.

In the midst of our many questions and our lack of understanding

we believe that little *name* is in your presence.

We pray for the courage and strength to say “good-bye”

before we had the opportunity to say “hello.”
We entrust … to your love and nurture forever.

Help us to endure and wait for the day when we will be re-united

after we too obtain the fullness of your promises in the age to come,

through Jesus Christ our Lord.  **Amen.**

*or*

O God, creator of us all,

give us the grace to honour and remember our baby *N. …* .

Let our love for *him/her* show forth in our lives.

Sustain our trust in your unfailing love

for *him/her* and for all children, born and unborn,

who rest in the sacred mystery of your love.

May we know your comforting presence

as we gather our strength to go forth from this moment into our lives.

This we ask through Jesus Christ our Saviour. **Amen.**

*Where the Naming has not taken place and the baby has died the minister may say*

Almighty God,

we leave in your gracious keeping this infant, baby of *… and …* .

We call to mind the love Jesus bestowed on the children brought before him,

in the sure knowledge that *he/she* is now, and has ever been,

held in the compassionate embrace of your eternal love. **Amen.**

The Lord’s Prayer

*The minister says*

Joining our cares into one prayer, let us pray as our Saviour taught us:

**Our Father …**

**The Dismissal**

*The minister may say*

Tender Shepherd of the flock, *…* lies cradled in your love.

Soothe the hearts of *his/her* mother and father,

and bring peace to their lives.

Strengthen their faith and give hope to their hearts.

We ask this in your name.  **Amen.**

*or in the cases where the baby has died*

Heavenly Father, *…* and *…* have named their baby *… ,*a name to be treasured for ever in their hearts.
But it was you who formed *him/her* in the womb;
you knew *him/her* by name before time began.
Now we commit *…* into your ever-caring and gentle love.
*He/she* brought the promise of joy
to many lives for so short a time.
Enfold *him/her* now in eternal life,
in the name of our risen Saviour who was born and died
and lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit for ever. **Amen.**

The Blessing

*The minister says*

The eternal God is your dwelling place,

and underneath are the everlasting arms.
May God bless us and keep us.
May God’s countenance shine upon us,
and grant us peace and love. **Amen.**

Additional Prayers

*For use with or by parents.*

God of hope,
we come to you in shock and grief and confusion of heart.
Help us to find peace
in the knowledge of your loving mercy to all your children,
and give us light to guide us out of our darkness
into the assurance of your love. **Amen**.

*For use with parents where the baby has died.*

Gracious God,
we thank you for the love in which *…* was conceived
and for the love of the home into which *he/she* was to be born.
We pray that the love which *his/her* parents have for each other
may grow and deepen.
Give us grace, in patience and understanding,
to listen to each other,
and to help one another in the days to come.  **Amen.**

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