



BECOMING A
GODPARENT

IN THE CHURCH
OF ENGLAND

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Godparents. . . are very important people! Congratulations on being asked to be one. It means that your friends or relations think you'll be a good example to their child. They trust you to pray for them, speak to them about God and encourage them in their Christian faith.

What does being a godparent involve?

As a godparent, you have a special role. It's about helping a child to come to know God, encouraging them in their spiritual life and supporting them in their membership of the local church.

You will be expected to attend the child's baptism, where you will make promises to help to bring them up in the Christian faith.

It's a role that will develop over time, as your godchild grows up and develops their own faith.

Frequently asked questions

It feels like a big responsibility . . . It is. Have a look at the questions you will answer in the baptism service. Take some time to think through the commitments you make when you answer them. But don't forget that the Church can support you in encouraging and praying for your godchild.

I'm not sure I can make these decisions. What if I've not thought much about my faith and don't go to church regularly? Most people have doubts at some stage, and no one's asking you to be perfect. However, being asked to be a godparent is a good opportunity to think about your own faith.

Godparents must have been baptized themselves, and it's best if you are also confirmed. Baptism or confirmation preparation can help you with your own questions about the Christian faith. It will also help you to support your godchild in developing their own faith. If you have any questions at all, speak to your parish priest or another Christian you know.

Does being a godparent mean I'm a legal guardian as well? No. Your role as godparent is a spiritual one – to encourage and pray for your godchild. Perhaps you will be asked to be a guardian too, but that is separate from being a godparent.

What's the difference between a Christening and a Baptism? None. They are the same thing. Churches normally say 'baptism'.

I'm worried about doing the right thing on the day.

The priest will make sure the service goes smoothly and that everyone knows what to do and when. Why not ask if there's a rehearsal or any other preparation you could get involved in?

What happens in the Baptism Service?

Baptisms normally take place during a Sunday morning service, so the church congregation can welcome the child into the Church and declare their intention to support and pray for the child, parents and godparents.



When it comes to the baptism itself, the priest asks the parents and godparents to bring the child to the front of the church or gather around the font.

Before the baptism, the priest asks you to declare that you intend to do your best as a godparent. The priest asks you to say that you're 'prepared to walk with [the child] in the way of Christ' and will 'help them take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church'.

Then the priest asks you to answer six questions on behalf of the child. All the parents and godparents answer together:

Do you reject the devil and all rebellion against God?

Parents and godparents: I reject them.

Do you renounce the deceit and corruption of evil?

Parents and godparents: I renounce them.

Do you repent of the sins that separate us from God and neighbour?

Parents and godparents: I repent of them.

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

Parents and godparents: I turn to Christ.

Do you submit to Christ as Lord?

Parents and godparents: I submit to Christ.

Do you come to Christ, the way, the truth and the life?

Parents and godparents: I come to Christ.

Remember, if you've any doubts about these, you can always discuss them with your priest.

After the Baptism Service

The church may give you a special card to remind you of your godchild's baptism and the promises you have made. Keep it somewhere you'll see it every day, so you remember your godchild each day and ask God to bless them daily as they grow up. Why not keep an up-to-date photograph alongside the card?

Building a relationship with your godchild

You're a godparent. Now what? Both you and your godchild will get far more out of this relationship if you can keep it alive.



Children love to get letters, postcards and emails. Why not send a card or small gift on the anniversary of the baptism, to show you care about them and to remind you both of what's special about this relationship.

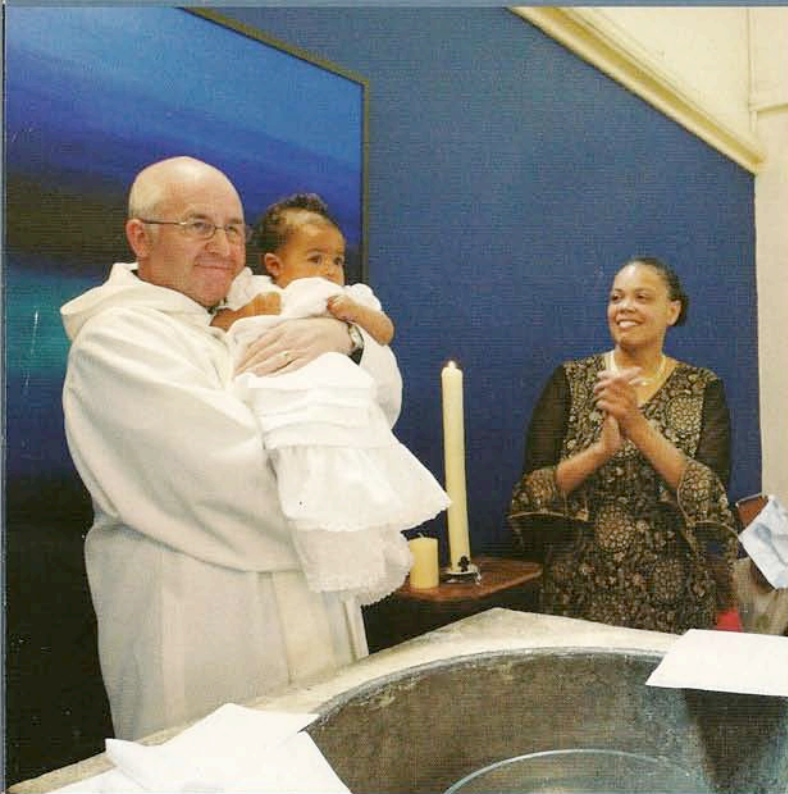
Keep in touch regularly as they grow up. Perhaps when they're older, they'll want to ask questions about faith or Christian life. If you've kept in touch, they might be able to ask you – and that's something special.

Growing in faith: confirmation

Hopefully, later on your godchild will want to make his or her own declaration of faith at a **confirmation service**. Confirmation is an important occasion. Your godchild confirms the promises you made for them at the baptism service and the bishop leading the service prays for God's Holy Spirit to rest upon your godchild.

Before their confirmation, they attend a series of classes or meetings at their local church or school. They discuss what it means to be a Christian, so they can decide whether to make their own Christian commitment and how they'll express that in their own lives.

Should I attend the confirmation? Confirmation is a big step for your godchild. Plan to attend this service, to support them and give thanks for their developing faith. If your Christian faith has been important in your life, confirmation is a good time to share that with your godchild and encourage them for the future. Let them know how your faith has helped you – it's good to be as specific as you can. Perhaps you've a favourite Bible story or prayer you can share with them.



PRAYERS

A prayer for godparents

Lord God,
I pray that you will guide and support me in being a godparent.
Give me your wisdom and your love.
Help me to be a good example of Christian living
and keep me mindful
of my precious godchild [child's name].
Amen.

A prayer for your godchild

Heavenly Father,
thank you for the gift of [child's name]
and for all the joy he/she brings us.
Be with her/him on her/his Christian journey
so she/he may come to know our Lord Jesus Christ as Saviour and
friend.
Amen.

What should I give as a present?

The most important gifts you can give your godchild are your time, presence and prayers, but you will probably also want to mark the baptism or confirmation by giving a special gift.

A simple, meaningful present is a good choice – maybe something to be used at the baptism, or a gift to be kept for later.

Here are some suggestions. You'll find many of these at Christian bookshops and cathedral gift shops. Or ask your minister for details of local suppliers.

- **Bibles** There are many different editions of the Bible. Some have pictures and simple language especially for children. Some have presentation boxes. It's worth asking the parents if there's a version they prefer.
- **Books** There are some lovely illustrated books of Bible stories for children. Why not build up a series over the next few years? You can always ask bookshops for advice on age-appropriate titles. You'll also find a wide variety of books of prayers available, including illustrated and gift book styles. Do you want to give prayers for children or something for later on?
- **Gifts books about baptism, such as My Baptism Book** Your godchild may want to read this when they are old enough, to understand what their baptism means.
- **Baptism, Lord's Prayer or Communion cubes** These are available from Christian bookshops or from www.chpublishing.co.uk

- **A silver or gold cross or chain** Remember that your godchild won't be able to wear this for some time.
- **A small wooden cross; drawings, paintings and posters of Christian stories; an icon or picture**
- **A Christmas nativity set** These are a good reminder of the Christmas story and may be used year after year. It will make your godchild feel special to have something that's hers or his to display every year.

We hope you enjoy being a godparent and building a good relationship with your godchild. If you have any questions or want to discuss baptism or godparenting, please contact:

ISBN 978 0 7151 4130 4

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Third edition published by Church House Publishing 2007

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