

*Becoming a
godparent in the
Church of England*





What are godparents' responsibilities?

What happens on the day?

Preparing for the service

What gift should I buy?

Godparents

... are very important people and no doubt you are delighted to have been asked to be one. It means that your friends or relations consider you the kind of person who will be a good example and someone who can be relied upon to pray for their child, speak to them about God and encourage them in their Christian faith.

Godparents have special tasks – helping children to come to know God, encouraging them in their membership of the local church and taking an interest in their spiritual life.

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 *she/he* 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.

Frequently asked questions

Q| Does being a godparent involve being a legal guardian as well?

A| No. Your primary responsibility is a spiritual one. You may also be asked to be a guardian but this is a separate role.

Q| I'm not confirmed – does it matter?

A| Godparents must be baptized and should also be confirmed so that they can fulfil their role properly. This may be the time to think about your own faith in more depth. Why not ask your parish priest for suggestions?

Q| It feels like a big responsibility, being a godparent.

A| That's true, and you should consider carefully the declarations and promises you are about to make on behalf of the child. It is important to decide whether you can fulfil the commitment you are making. However, the Church is also there to support you and will share the task with you.

Q| I'm not sure I can make these decisions. What should I do if I haven't thought much about my faith or don't go to church regularly?

A| The important thing is that you want to be a godparent and are committed to following Jesus Christ as a practising Christian. You do not have to be a perfect Christian to want to follow Christ and it would be surprising if you never had any doubts in your mind.

This may be the chance for you to ask God to strengthen your faith as you become a godparent. You may also want to talk some of the issues through with your parish priest or another Christian you know.

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

A| The priest will ensure that the service is conducted well and that everybody knows what to do and when. In addition, ask if there is a rehearsal or any other preparation in which you could also be involved.





What happens in the Baptism service?

Baptisms usually take place during a normal Sunday morning service. This is so that the congregation can welcome the child into the Church and declare their intention to support and pray for the child, its parents and godparents.

When it comes to the baptism itself, you and the parents will be asked by the priest to gather either at the front of the church or directly around the font.

Before the baptism, you and the child's parents will be asked to say that you are prepared to 'walk with them [the children] in the way of Christ' and that you will 'help them to take their place within the life and worship of Christ's Church'. This is so that you can declare your desire to be a godparent and your intention to do your best to fulfil your duties.



You will then be asked 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.

After the Baptism service

You may be given a special card giving details of the baptism, the name of your godchild and a reminder of the promises you have made. Don't put it away in a drawer for safe keeping. Display it at home or work in a prominent place such as a kitchen noticeboard so that you can remember your godchild and ask God to bless them daily as they grow up. You could pin a photograph next to your godparent card.

Building a relationship with your godchild

You may wish to send a small gift or card on the anniversary of your godchild's baptism so that you build up a special relationship with them.

Children like to receive letters, postcards and emails (with parental permission). One way to encourage them in their Christian life is to be a regular correspondent, especially if you live a long way away. This means that when the child is older and wants to ask questions about faith or the Christian life, she or he may feel able to write to or contact you.





At confirmation

We hope that in later years your godchild will want to make his or her own declaration of faith and be confirmed. This special service is conducted by a bishop and attended by family and friends as well as members of the congregation.

It is an important occasion when your godchild confirms the decisions you made on his or her behalf at the Baptism service and the bishop prays for the gift of God's Holy Spirit for your godchild.

Before this service your godchild will have attended a series of classes or meetings at their local church or school to discuss what it means to be a Christian and to enable them to make their own commitment and decide how to express it in their own lives.



Should I attend the confirmation?

You should try to attend this service to support your godchild and to give thanks for the new step in faith they are now taking. If you have found your own Christian faith to be important in your life, this is the time when you might share that with your godchild to encourage them for the future. You might talk or write to them and, very simply, tell them one or two ways in which your faith has helped you. You might say which Bible story is special to you and why or send them a copy of your favourite prayer.

What should we give our godchild?

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

Godparents don't have to buy lavish and expensive gifts – simple, meaningful ones will be appreciated and mean just as much.

You will need to decide whether to buy something to be used at the time of baptism, or something to be kept for later.

Here are some suggestions. Many of these items may be bought 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. Don't buy a Bible which is too luxurious for everyday use. You may decide on a children's Bible at baptism and a more adult edition as a confirmation present.

Books of Bible stories

There are some very attractive and well-illustrated books of Bible stories for children. You may like to build up a series over the first five years.

Bible software

For your godchild to use when they are a bit older.

Books of prayers

There is a wide variety available, often attractively illustrated or in gift book style.

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



Story cubes, a Lord's Prayer cube or wooden grace and prayer cubes

These are available from Christian bookshops.

Drawings, paintings and posters of Christian stories

A Christmas nativity set

These are a good reminder of the Christmas story and may be used year after year.

An icon or picture

We hope that you will enjoy being a godparent and will have a good relationship with your godchild. If you have any queries or want to discuss any matter connected with baptism, please contact:

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