



THE ROLE OF GODPARENTS

Godparents can be family members or friends of the parents. However, it is important that those people are chosen because they will take an interest in the child's spiritual welfare and will pray for the child and their parents.

Godparents must themselves be baptised, and ideally also be confirmed.

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 be 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.

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. If you'd like to learn more about the Christian faith, the church runs a course called Alpha, which goes through the basics in a relaxed and informal way.

Godparents must have been baptised 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, why not speak to our Vicar or Curate, 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.

I'm worried about doing the wrong thing on the day!

We'll make sure the service goes smoothly and that everyone knows what to do and when. We often have baptisms so by coming to church regularly you may see one. If you live outside of Sittingbourne, why not speak to your local priest?

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.

Godparents don't have to buy expensive gifts. 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. Perhaps you'll decide on a children's Bible at baptism and an adult edition as a confirmation present. **Books of Bible stories:**

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.

Books of prayers:

You'll find a wide variety available, including illustrated and gift book styles.

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

What happens in the baptism service?

Baptisms normally take place during a Sunday 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, we ask the parents and Godparents to bring the child to the front of the church or gather around the font.

Before the baptism, we ask you to declare that you intend to do your best as a Godparent. We'll ask 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'.

Remember, if you've any doubts you can always discuss them with us.

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.