

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.

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.

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Becoming a Godparent

Becoming a Godparent in the Church of England

Congratulations on being asked to be a Godparent; they are very important people! It means that your friends or relations think you'll be a good example to help their child grow in faith. 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 and encouraging them in their spiritual life.

You will be expected to attend the child's christening, 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. Here the promises you are asked to make on behalf of your godchild: Parent and godparents you speak for (name of your godchild) today Will you pray for him/her and help him/her to follow Christ?

We will

Do you turn away from sin?

I do

Do you reject evil?

I do

Do you turn to Christ as Saviour?

I do

Do you trust in him as Lord?

I do

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 christened themselves. Christening 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 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.

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.

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 christening by giving a special gift. Godparents don't have to buy expensive gifts. A simple, meaningful present is a good choice – how about a children's Bible or book of prayers, or a gift to be kept for later.

What happens in the christening service?

Christenings take place after the main Sunday morning service at each church or can take place in the main Sunday service. During the service you will make the important promises on behalf of your godchild. The priest will make the sign of the cross on your godchild's forehead – this is like an invisible badge, there forever, to show that your child belongs to God.

Water, which is blessed in the church's font, will be poured over your child's head by the vicar. This is the moment of baptism.

A candle will be given to your godchild as a reminder of Jesus the Light of World who goes with you and is with you always.

After the christening

The Church may give you a special card to remind you of your godchild's christening 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 christening, 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.