

New Life in Christ



Guide for Godparents

Parish of Takeley with Little Canfield

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Godparents are very important people!

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

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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 your godchild'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.

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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 is here to support you in encouraging and praying for your godchild.

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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 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 why not speak to your own minister or another Christian you know.

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Does being a godparent mean that I'm a legal guardian as well?

No, your role as a godparent is a spiritual one – to encourage and pray for your godchild. Perhaps you will be asked to be a guardian as well, but that is separate from being a godparent.

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What happens during the service?

Normally baptisms take place during a regular Sunday morning service, so that the congregation can welcome your godchild into the family of the church.

You and the parents publicly promise to do your best to raise your godchild to follow Jesus, as part of the wider Church family. The local church members welcome your godchild and promise to support, encourage and pray for him or her, and for their family.

For part of the service, the minister asks you and the parents to bring your godchild to the front of church; for the baptism itself, we gather round the font (*containing the water for baptism*). You are asked to make various promises on behalf of your godchild. After that your godchild is baptised, and then welcomed into the church.

Don't worry about things going smoothly, the minister will make sure that you know what to do and when.

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What will I be asked to say?

During the baptism service you and the parents will be asked to answer these questions:

The Church receives *these children* with joy.
Today we are trusting God
for *their* growth in faith.
Will you pray for *them*,
draw *them* by your example
into the community of faith
and walk with *them* in the way of Christ?
With the help of God, we will.

In baptism *these children* begin *their* journey in faith.
You speak for *them* today.
Will you care for *them*,
and help *them* to take *their* place
within the life and worship of Christ's Church?
With the help of God, we will.

In baptism, God calls us out of darkness
into his marvellous light.

To follow Christ means dying to sin
and rising to new life with him.

Therefore, I ask these questions,
which you answer for yourselves
and on behalf of *the children* to be baptised.

Do you turn to Christ?
I turn to Christ.

Do you repent of your sins?
I repent of my sins.

Do you renounce evil?
I renounce evil.

You will also be asked to join the rest of the church community in publicly declaring your faith in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

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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 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 or Cathedral gift shops. Or ask us for details of local suppliers.

Bibles – there are many different editions of the Bible. Some have pictures and simple language especially for children. Others 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 the baptism and an adult edition as a confirmation present later on.

Books of Bible stories – there are some lovely illustrated books of Bible stories for children. Why not aim to build up a series over the next few years. You can always ask bookshops for age-appropriate titles.

Books of prayers – you'll find a wide variety of books of prayers available, including illustrated and gift book styles. Do you want to give a book of prayers for your godchild to use when they are young, or something for them to use when they are older?

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 his or hers to display every year.

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What happens after the baptism?

You will be given a card to remind you of your godchild's baptism and the promises that you have made. Keep it somewhere you'll see it every day, so you remember your godchild and ask god to bless them daily as they grow up. Why not keep an up-to-date photograph alongside the card?

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 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 the Christian life. If you've kept in touch, they might be able to ask you – and that's something special.

Hopefully, later on your godchild will want to make his or her own declaration of faith at a confirmation service. This will be when they confirm the promises you made for them at the baptism service, and the bishop leading the service prays for your godchild to be filled with God's Holy Spirit.

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

Confirmation is a big step for your godchild – plan to be there, to support them and to 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 to keep their faith growing in the years ahead. Let them know how your Christian 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.

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We hope that you enjoy being a godparent; building a good relationship with your godchild and seeing their own Christian faith grow and develop over the years. It is a wonderful privilege, but also a great responsibility.

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