

# Being a Godparent

Congratulations! It is very exciting to be invited to be a godparent, but it can also feel quite daunting as you are being asked to have a very special role in a child's upbringing, which is more than being a favourite aunty or uncle. These notes aim to provide you with some simple advice on how to take on the role.

## What exactly is a godparent promising?

Although it is God who enables faith to grow, what we do or do not do can help or hinder the process. The parents and godparents are therefore asked two questions:

Will you pray for the children, draw them by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ?

and

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?

The first question is asking you to make a commitment to the child and the second question is asking you to make a commitment to help them grow in the Christian faith. In answer to both these questions you reply: '**With the help of God we will**'.

There then follow another three questions. This time you are answering on behalf of the child who is too young to make a responsible commitment for himself or herself. The questions are:

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.**

The vows reflect the distinctive Christian life that your child is being called into in baptism, and it is on this basis that the Church of England expects that godparents will have been baptised, and, if possible, confirmed. Indeed, if you have not been confirmed then maybe this is the right time for you to think about your own faith journey and perhaps to be confirmed yourself.

## What if I feel uncomfortable making these vows?

In our diverse city many parents have close and trusted friends who would feel uncomfortable making these vows. If so, we would suggest you serve as a 'sponsor' of the child. Sponsors make the following vows:

- Will you love and care for the child(ren) you are sponsoring today, and will you support (*parents and godparents*) as they walk with (*child's name*) on their journey to faith? **I will.**
- Will you draw (*child's name*) by your example into a life of mercy, peace and justice, and teach them to respect and love their neighbour as themselves? **I will.**
- Will you encourage them to learn about their Christian faith, and support them as they develop lives of prayer and worship, and take their place within the community of the Church? **I will.**



### **What does a godparent do?**

As a godparent you are asked to pray for your godchildren, give them a good example to follow and generally encourage them to play a full part in the Christian community. The parents of the child may also have chosen you in good part because you have been trusted to be a good friend and mentor to the child in the years to come, those someone will take an interest and keep in touch with the child and to give support when needed.

All children and all godparents are different, so there are no firm rules on how to put this into practice! As a few tips: keep in touch with the child's parents and the child; remember their birthdays and Christmas with gifts and messages that may aid their spiritual life; be someone who could become a trusted adult to them in their adolescence.

### **Does being a godparent involve being a legal guardian as well?**

No. A godparent is not a legal guardian. It is possible that the parents may be thinking of you in this role should anything happen to them, but this would be a separate process.

### **What sort of gifts do godparents give their godchildren?**

We asked some godparents for their suggestions. They said:

- A Noah's ark set
- A nativity set
- A rainbow maker
- The donation of a tree or an animal or a water well through a charity in the Third World

- A tiny amount of money each month, which will build up to make a gift on their 18th birthday
- Taking your godchild to church
- Attending their first holy communion and/or confirmation
- A book of prayers
- An illustrated bible that looks attractive to read and one that you would enjoy reading to your God child
- A book about the saints
- A picture or an icon
- An Advent calendar

The Church House Bookshop in Westminster can be a helpful place to look. There are also the usual online retailers.

Godparents should not be expected to buy lavish, expensive gifts. Simple, meaningful ones, especially if accompanied with a letter, will be appreciated and mean more. Time and interest are what matter most. Even when the child does not seem interested, keep trying; don't feel silly, still send them a postcard. You never know when they will need to turn to you.

We look forward to welcoming you on the day!

