

A special relationship

A godchild is a particular blessing and those who are active godparents feel grateful for the privilege.

Many of us long to be more deeply engaged with others and being a godparent is a unique relationship that is focused on the whole development of the godchild.

In today's world the presence of a trusted friend or significant adult has never been more important. As a godparent you can give affection and support without worrying that it is intrusive.

Remember Godparents are chosen. Family are not.

At baptism

Becoming a godparent gives you permission to become engaged at a deeper level. At baptism the godparents stand in for the child and make promises on their behalf. One of these promises serves as a guide to godparents.

“Will you draw them by your example into the community of faith and walk with them in the way of Christ?”

Here are some of the different aspects to that relationship:

✓ Be a role model

Role models are important in the healthy development of children. Try to set a good example by living in a way that is a positive role model.

As a godparent you are someone who has a different way of life to their own parents whether it is in your choice of music, career or how you treat people. Showing these differences are especially important in teenage or early adult years when children are forming their own relationships.

Share ways of living a Christian life, by loving and respecting others, showing care for those less fortunate than you and showing a responsible attitude to the resources of our world. By your example your godchild can grow to be a confident adult.

✓ Be a confidante

Provide a listening service. Being a trusted source of impartial advice can be especially useful in times of transition such as when making a career choice. Share your own experiences but don't prescribe a course of action. Offer help so children can make their own decisions.

✓ Be involved

The most important gifts you can give are your time, presence and prayers. Show interest and love. Be a source of advice and guidance. Have your godchild to stay to give parents a break and get to know each other better.

Keep in touch and remember special occasions – this can be one of the hardest aspects. Send cards or texts for important events such as exams or from business trips or holidays. Take an interest in their interests, whether it is going to a football match or listening to their latest music craze. (Parents can help by encouraging children to write to godparents to keep them updated.)

Consult with parents about presents and give a mix between frivolous and worthy. Maybe something related to an interest the child has or something towards, say, a holiday. Presents don't have to be expensive – it really is the thought that counts.

Pray for the child's development and that they reach their God given potential. You may be well placed to discern their gifts and help them in choosing their career.

I will instruct you and teach you the way you should go; I will counsel you with my eye upon you.

The Holy Bible: Psalm 32 verse 8

✓ **Help in their Spiritual Development**

All godparents, regardless of their own religious experience, can encourage their godchildren to appreciate the place of faith in the world and in their own journey.

Share your journey of faith and be open about the ups and downs of following Christ.

✓ **Be there in a crisis**

If you believe there is a problem unfolding as a friend and godparent it is natural to be concerned.

Sometimes just being on the end of a 'phone is all you can do. A trusted person to confide in can be invaluable and you may be able to discuss particular issues with your godchild that are not discussed at home.

If a child is in trouble support the child, and the parents, accept the child but not the behaviour and don't betray confidentiality.

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After Confirmation

At confirmation your godchild publicly confirms the promises made on their behalf at their baptism. If you can, you should try to attend the confirmation service to support your godchild.

For many godparents the relationship and concern continues after the confirmation and can grow increasingly rewarding as the child grows up. As one godparent said "I keep them for ever, not just till confirmation".

For further information

Look at the other leaflets in our Christian Church series – available from the office in Church House, Salisbury. SP1 2QB

Look at our web sites:

www.themothersunion.org

www.salisburymu.org.uk

and www.cofe.anglican.org

Someone to Watch Over Me – an essential guide to Godparenting.

Peter Hinton and Iona Joy
(ISBN 1-84549-076-2)

Family Options – Godparents

John Bradford, David Gamble and Joan King
(ISBN 0-7197-0982-2)



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