



# A Guide for Godparents Chosen to be Baptismal Sponsors

Being asked to serve as a baptismal sponsor or godparent is an honor, and can be a deeply fulfilling experience. Godparents are chosen and invited into a special relationship with the baptized person, and with God.

## What is Baptism in the Episcopal Church?

According to the Book of Common Prayer, baptism is “the sacrament by which God adopts us as his children and makes us members of Christ’s Body, the Church, and inheritors of the kingdom of God” (p. 858). Baptism is also the full and indissoluble initiation into the church. To choose to be baptized is to enter a life in Christ!

### What Qualifies a Person to be a Sponsor or Godparent?

Ideally, the godparent(s) should be a baptized Christian who can, in good conscience, make the required baptismal promises on behalf of the baptized.

Godparents need not be Episcopalian, but hopefully they participate in the Christian congregation of their choice for their own spiritual growth and strengthening.

Godparents are chosen by the baptismal candidate or the family to perform this role, and it is an expression of confidence. While it is a serious undertaking, it is also deeply fulfilling as both the godparent and the baptized travel together in their Christian journey.

### What is Expected of the Sponsors or Godparents?

It is expected that a godparent will:

- establish a special long-term relationship with the baptized;
- represent Christ and the church to the baptized person, standing with the candidate at the time of baptism and assisting the baptized to live into the baptismal promises;
- set an example of Christian life for the candidate; and
- support the baptized person through prayer.



## Collect for the Baptism of Our Lord

*Father in Heaven, who at the baptism of Jesus in the River Jordan proclaimed him your beloved Son and anointed him with the Holy Spirit: Grant that all who are baptized into his Name may keep the covenant they have made, and boldly confess him as Lord and Savior; who with you and the Holy Spirit live and reigns, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.*

## How Can a Sponsor or Godparent Prepare?

In preparation to serve as a godparent, you can:

- Read the baptismal service on pages 299-308 of *The Book of Common Prayer* (available through Amazon or online at [bcponline.com](http://bcponline.com)).
- Explore the questions, issues and promises surrounding baptism, individually and with the candidate and/or the family.
- Attend baptismal preparation sessions with the parents, when possible, as well as the baptismal rehearsal.
- Pray for the members of the baptismal party, especially the candidate.



## What Does a Sponsor or Godparent Do During the Baptismal Service?

Godparents sit with the candidate and family in the congregation. After the opening words, prayer, readings and sermon, the service continues with the baptism.

- During the **Presentation and Examination of the Candidates**, the candidates and the godparents of infants and young children make a series of renunciations and promises.
- In the **Baptismal Covenant**, the congregation recites the Apostles' Creed and then reaffirms five baptismal promises that provide direction for a Christian life.
- At the **Baptism**, the baptismal party comes forward and gathers around the baptismal font. The candidate is baptized with water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and sealed on the forehead with oil in the sign of the cross.

## What are the Baptismal Promises?

During the service, the candidates and/or godparents make several promises to uphold in their lives as Christians:

- Will you continue in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of the bread, and in the prayers?
- Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?
- Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?
- Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?
- Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?

## What is a Sponsor or Godparent's Role after the Baptism?

After the baptism, we hope the baptized person, supported by his/her parents and godparents, will grow and mature in the Christian faith. Godparents should support the baptized through prayer and example.

- Remember the anniversary of the baptism with a prayer, card, and conversation.
- Note other life milestones in a Christian manner, for example birthdays, graduations, marriage, births, illnesses, bereavements.
- When possible, attend worship services with the baptized person, and be willing to talk about your own Christian journey and growth.
- Express an interest in how the baptized person is maturing in the Christian family, through formation activities and ministry participation.

There is no right or wrong way to be a godparent—this lifelong relationship will evolve over time as you both move forward in your journey with Christ.

*Resources Used:*

*"Chosen to be a Sponsor" from St. Columba's Episcopal Church in Washington, DC  
St. Ann's Episcopal Church in Woodstock, IL*