

If you had planned to have your child baptised but it couldn't happen because of a national lockdown, you will have had to postpone this special day. Now that christenings are possible again, you can contact a church and begin to make plans. These are some of the questions you might have.

### **Do parents have to be christened?**

You can have your child baptized at a christening regardless of whether or not you, the parents, are baptized.

It is only the godparents who are required to be baptized, (so the only time a parent would have to be baptized is if they were also acting as a godparent).

### **Is a baptism different to a christening?**

There is no difference between a christening service and a baptism service.

Some churches will use the word ‘baptism’ and some the word ‘christening’. The moment when your child has water poured or wiped on their head is the actual baptism and is at the heart of the service.

Babies are baptized during a christening service just as couples are ‘married’ during a ‘wedding’ service.

### **Why is a christening an ‘amazing journey’?**

When a child is baptized with water, they are welcomed into the family of the church. It also marks the start of a lifetime of discovery about the Christian faith and how life-changing that can be.

It’s a journey of surprises, challenges and adventure. And through it all, God is always with us.

### **Can anyone have a christening service?**

The Church of England welcomes all babies, children and families for christenings – whatever shape that family takes.

You do not have to be married or have been a regular churchgoer – as a parent, you do not even have to have been baptized yourself – though you could be.

Everyone is welcome at their local church. Just [ask your local vicar](#) if this is something you are considering for your child.

### **What if I’m not really a churchgoer?**

Because of the very special role of a godparent, you have to be christened yourself and ideally confirmed too.

If you feel you can make those big promises in church on behalf of your godchild, you’re ready. [Take a look at the service to see those promises.](#)

### **At what age should a child be christened?**

There’s no specified minimum or maximum age for having a child christened.

When a child is christened, the parents and godparents will make promises on their behalf. Older children (perhaps around the age of 12) may be mature enough to make the promises for themselves.

Talk to your vicar about baptizing an older child and how this might differ from a baby’s christening service.

### **Where can we hold the christening?**

You can have your baby christened at your local parish church. If you’d like to have the christening at a different church, for example, where you grew up or where you were married, talk to the vicar at that church to see what’s possible.

Unless there are very exceptional circumstances, a christening must always take place in a church, so it’s usually not possible to have a christening at home, in a function room or outdoors.

### **How much does a christening service cost?**

The good news is that a christening service is free.

There may be costs for your family party afterwards, so you may need to budget for hire of a venue and refreshments.

You may also like to buy your child a christening gift, or christening robes, but these are not compulsory, (in fact, christening gowns that have been handed down through the family may have more meaning for you, as well as saving money).

### **Can we have a private christening?**

Christenings usually take place during the Sunday service of a church, so that the whole congregation can offer a warm welcome to you and your family.

There may be opportunities to have a service at a different time, again usually on a Sunday, but talk to the vicar and ask their advice about what is possible at your church.

### **Is there a minimum age for godparents?**

If you're thinking of asking a person who is under 18 to be a godparent, first talk to the vicar who will be taking the service. You will be able to talk together about whether this is the right decision, both for your child and for the young godparent.

There is actually no minimum age for godparents, but the chosen person must be mature enough to understand the lifelong commitment and responsibility they are taking on.

It's a demanding role, but some quite young people do feel ready for these responsibilities. The vicar taking your service can help you decide.

### **Do godparents have to be confirmed?**

Godparents have a really special role in supporting a child in their Christian faith. The preparation and promises made at a confirmation demonstrate a commitment to living a Christian life, a model for a child just beginning their own amazing journey of faith.

For this reason, it is preferable that godparents are confirmed, but if three confirmed godparents simply can't be found, the church's own law allows for these circumstances. The best thing to do is speak to the vicar who will be doing the baptism for further advice.

### **Is it possible to have godparents by proxy?**

Godparents are really important people at a christening. A person can only be an official godparent if they are physically present at the service, since they will make some big promises for and on behalf of the child on the day.

As they are already making promises on behalf of the child, to have another person making promises on *their* behalf confuses who is making promises on behalf of who! So there is actually no provision in the Church of England for 'godparents by proxy'.

However, if a special person who you wanted to be a godparent is unable to make it to a christening, there is no reason why they can't be asked to take on a godparent-like role unofficially, and that kind of relationship can be encouraged throughout the child's life, but they wouldn't be entered into the Baptism Register after the christening. If the church has the facilities, they could perhaps be linked via Skype or similar software, so they can still see the service.

### **Can parents be godparents?**

To ensure a child will have three godparents, it is possible for one or both of the parents to be godparents, so long as they are christened themselves.

If both parents are godparents, then just one additional godparent will be required for the service to make up the minimum of three.

If you're struggling to find godparents, talk to your vicar who would be pleased to advise.

### **Can we change our godparents after a christening?**

Godparents make big promises at a christening, and their names will be permanently recorded in the church's Baptism Register.

Because of the lifelong commitment of parents and godparents at a christening, there can be no 're-christening' once it has taken place, and there's no official way to change the godparents.

However, if a family finds themselves without the support of their chosen godparents, for whatever reason, they are free to ask others in their life to take on a similar role unofficially. It may also be helpful to talk to the local vicar for further advice.

### **Do we have to have three godparents?**

There should be at least three godparents at a christening – two who are the same sex as the child and one who is the opposite sex.

The Church of England laws about this will have been agreed long ago with the best interests of a child at heart.

But the laws also allow for the different circumstances of families, so if three really cannot be found, then two will suffice. Talk to your vicar if you're struggling to find three godparents and they'd be pleased to advise you.

### **How many godparents can I have?**

Every child should have at least three godparents, two of the same sex and at least one of the opposite sex to your child. Although there is no official maximum number of godparents, three or four is usual. If you'd like more than that, talk to your vicar about the practicalities and they'll be pleased to advise.

Both parents may be godparents for their own children, providing they are baptized themselves and providing they have at least one other godparent.

### **Do godparents have to be baptized?**

Godparents are really important people at a christening. They will make some big promises in church to support their godchild in their Christian faith for a lifetime.

For this reason, a godparent must be baptized themselves and ideally confirmed too.

Visit the pages below and right to find out more about why godparents are so special.

### **Do godparents have to be confirmed?**

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For this reason, it is preferable that godparents are confirmed, but if three confirmed godparents simply can't be found, the church's own law allows for these circumstances. The best thing to do is speak to the vicar who will be doing the baptism for further advice.

### **Do godparents have to be baptized in the Church of England?**

It is a basic requirement that godparents should be baptized themselves, and ideally confirmed too, but that doesn't necessarily mean their baptism/confirmation should have been in the Church of England.

People who have been baptized in the Catholic, Methodist, Baptist, United Reformed Church and other Christian denominations, can also be godparents at a Church of England christening.

### **Are godparents also legal guardians?**

Godparents are not the people who will care for the child should anything happen to the parents.

Arrangements for this would normally be made by a Will.

Visit the pages below and right to find out more about what being a godparent means.

### **How do I find out if I am christened?**

Every christening is recorded in the Baptism Register of the church where it took place.

Many christenings take place during infancy and often in the local church of the child. So a good place to begin searching for a baptism record is at the local parish church where you, (or the person whose record you're looking for), lived as an infant. Try finding this church by searching on [A Church Near You](#). If you know the postcode of where you or the person lived, enter that into the search box and that should give you a more accurate result. The local church will be highlighted in red.

Click on the church's name to see more details. The vicar or church office details should be given under the 'contact us' tab of each individual church.

Once you're in touch with the church, you can ask them to do a search in their Baptism Register to try and find your baptism record. Provide as much information as you can, including the year the christening took place, if you know it. There is a statutory charge for a search in the Registers, which in 2018 is £29/hour. If a record is found, an official copy can be made, which costs £14.

### **How can I be involved in a christening?**

Just being present at the service shows that you support the child and their family in the choice they have made.

As part of the service, everyone will be asked to promise to continue supporting the child on their journey of faith. A wonderful way to do this is to keep praying for the child and their family. Visit our [prayer pages](#) to see the kinds of prayers you can use before and after the day.

You may also wish to give the child a christening gift.

**Can my child be christened in a Church of England church if they weren't born in England?**

Yes! The Church of England welcomes children with joy wherever they were born.

You will need to be able to attend the service in person with your chosen godparents, and be available to take part in sessions to help you find out all that it means for the day and for life.

In baptism your child becomes part of the world-wide family of God, wherever the christening takes place. Please [get in touch with a church](#) to find out more.

[FAQs](#) | [Find a church](#) | [Service step by step guide](#) | [Contact us](#)

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