

Godparents' Sunday

An all-age service outline "Love at the heart"

Recent research undertaken on behalf of the Archbishops' Council revealed that godparents are hugely important to baptism families. This isn't just a recent phenomenon: for generations, godparents have been playing their part in family life, being there to support young people, helping out, praying for them, and encouraging them on their journey of faith. So this service is to help celebrate this very special relationship.

It can be used when there are families and children present, or it could equally be used to recognize and encourage all those in the congregation who are godparents and/or godchildren themselves, perhaps over many years.

The outline can be used for a Eucharist, but could also be adapted for a Service of the Word. As this service is designed to take place on May 6th, 2018 [Easter 6], the recommended lectionary readings and authorized collect must be used. This outline uses those readings.

Lectionary readings:

Acts 10: 44 - end: "Powered by the spirit"

Psalm 98: "Sing praises!"

1 John 5: 1 - 6: "Love God"

John 15: 9 - 17: "Big love, big living"

You will need:

Large sheets of paper e.g. lining paper on a roll or a large sheet with the heading "Memory Wall"; felt pens for directly writing on paper/fabric OR post-it notes and pins

Four reels of wide florist ribbon in yellow or gold; pink or red; green; white (this is readily available from good craft shops and can be used over and over again once purchased. It costs around £2.50 per 100 metre reel).

Heart shaped chocolates or godparent/godchild badges (available from www.churchprinthub.org) to give away (optional)

Before the service: Place the paper or fabric somewhere accessible. Along the top, draw a scale of years ranging from 1 year to 60 years. As people arrive invite them to either write directly or use the post-it notes to put down the name of their godchild or godparent under the number of years they have been in that relationship. If you are really organized, you could begin this a couple of weeks before and also get people to bring along photos to create a 'memory wall'.

NB This outline does not include suggestions for hymns/songs. However, using hymns that are familiar to different age groups from church or school may be helpful.

We gather

Formal introduction:

Minister: The Lord be with you

All: And also with you

Informal welcome

Use the informal welcome to explain that Godparents' Sunday is a day to celebrate a very special relationship, whether we are godparents or godchildren. Refer to the memory wall to highlight what a long-lasting relationship it can be, perhaps recognising the longest and the newest.

If you have a lot of visitors, you may need to explain that in the church, it is still Easter, which means that we get to shout Alleluia very loudly. Explain that each time it is said it will get louder [as in the chorus to the carol 'O come all ye faithful']. If appropriate raise hands high on the last shout.

Minister: Alleluia! Christ is risen [softly]

All: He is risen indeed. Alleluia! [softly]

Minister: Alleluia! Christ is risen [strongly]

All: He is risen indeed. Alleluia! [strongly]

Minister: Alleluia! Christ is risen [really loud]

All: He is risen indeed. Alleluia! [really loud]

We say sorry

Making connections..

Minister: *God's love is great. God's grace is endless. Let us tell God the things we have done wrong and ask his forgiveness:*

Look at your feet:

We are sorry God, that we have not followed your ways.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Look at your hands:

We are sorry God that we have not cared for the world

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Place hands over lips:

We are sorry God for all the words we say that hurt.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Place hand over heart:

We are sorry God that we have forgotten your love for us.

Lord have mercy

Lord have mercy

Minister:

May the God of love bring us back to himself,

Forgive us our sins,

And assure us of his eternal love

In Jesus Christ our Lord.

Amen. [*New Patterns for Worship B73*]

Hymn/Gloria

Collect or prayer for the day

Risen Christ,

By the lakeside you renewed your call to your disciples:

Help your church to obey your command

And draw the nations to the fire of your love

To the glory of God the Father.

Amen [*Additional Collects Easter 6*]

WE LISTEN *Please sit*

Reading[s]:

At a Eucharist you must use the Acts reading and the Gospel.

If you are only using one reading in a Service of the Word, use the Gospel

You may like to use a family-friendly version such as Big Bible Story book.

Talk

All of the readings for today have rich themes appropriate for Godparents Sunday, particularly for thinking about how we live as followers of Jesus. This suggested talk focuses on the idea of love that shapes us and changes the world, love that is shown to us and by us as followers of Jesus.

This is quite hard to describe in words: but at the end you will have created a coloured cross in the church, and you will need to work out the logistics in your own space. Florists ribbon is 100 meters on a reel – and is more than enough for even a cathedral!

Invite four pairs of people to volunteer – ideally a godparent and godchild BUT they must be at least 10 years old – tall enough to hold a ribbon high up!

Hand a ribbon reel to each couple – one of whom stands still, one of whom will need to walk. Place the couples with red/pink and green at the far end of an east/west axis; and the couples with yellow/white as the far end of a north/south axis in the church.

Then invite anyone present who is either a godparent or godchild to stand/sit near the central nave/aisle.

Invite the person holding the end of the pink/red ribbon to walk the length of the building from east to west – invite those near the aisle to step out and help to hold the ribbon high.

Talk about how pink/red is often used as the colour of love. Invite people to call out the names of those who love them, and those whom they love. Love is the foundation of our lives – from even before we are formed God loves us, and many of us know love every moment of our life [be sensitive to those who may not!] Godparents are some of the many people who show love to us in our lives, and as followers of Jesus we want to show that love to others. Sometimes that is people close to us, sometimes people who are finding life hard, sometimes people who are far away. Suggest that prayer is one of the best ways we can show our love for other people.

Invite the person holding the end of the yellow/gold ribbon to walk across the church from North/south, dipping under the pink ribbon. Encourage people to help hold it high.

Talk about how yellow is the colour of joy – ask people to suggest things that make them feel joyful, drawing out ideas about fun, play, being with people, but also sharing and being generous. Joy is one of the things that mark people out as followers of Jesus and giving thanks and praise is one way we can share joy.

Invite the person holding the end of the green ribbon to walk the length of the building from east to west – again encourage those nearby to help hold it high.

Talk about how green is the colour of growing; all of us grow in our lives, and as followers of Jesus we also change and grow as we discover more about him and try to live like him each day. You might ask for ideas about how we do that. When we were baptised our godparents promised to help us to do this, to grow in faith and love each day. Learning more about Jesus in the bible and being together with other Christians is one way of doing this.

Invite the person holding the end of the white ribbon to walk across the building from East to west – again going under the pink/green ribbon, encouraging people to help hold it high.

Talk about white – maybe reminding people that at their baptism they may have worn something white, or been wrapped in a white shawl. White is the colour of new beginnings and new life – the new life that we have been celebrating in the Easter season and the new life of Jesus in which we share as baptised people. Sharing the good news of Jesus with other people is one of the things we do as his followers.

If this has all gone to plan – you will now have a giant cross stretching across the church. You can invite people to name the shape that you have made.

You should have godparents and godchildren helping to hold it up – the cross is the great Christian sign of how much God loves us in sending Jesus into the world so that we might have life in him. All of us walk out into the world as people of God, carrying the cross as a sign of love. We are all united under the colours that remind us that as followers of Jesus we are people of love, joy, faith and life,

Today we say thank you to the godparents who do all these things with us and for us. We pray for them and for ourselves as we continue the journey.

[You may wish to invite godparents and the congregation to remember the promises they made in some way]

Invite all who are godparents [of whatever age] to stand:

Minister: In baptism your godchildren began their journey of faith. Today we continue to trust God that they will continue to grow in faith and love. Will you carry on praying for them, caring for them and helping them to take their place in the life and worship of Christ's church?

Godparents: With the help of God, we will

Then invite the rest of the congregation to stand:

When a child is baptised we promise to welcome each child and support them in their new life of faith. Will we continue to pray for those who come to our church to be baptised, their parents and godparents, encouraging them on their journey of faith?

All: with the help of God, we will]

WE RESPOND:

Creed or statement of faith e.g.

Making connections .. We've thought about being on a journey together, encouraging each other as we follow Jesus. Let's remind ourselves of the things we believe as we say:

**We believe in God the Father,
from whom every family
in heaven and earth is named.**

**We believe in God the Son,
who lives in our hearts through faith
and fills us with his love.**

**We believe in God the Holy Spirit,
who strengthens us
with power from on high.**

**We believe in one God,
Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.**

Prayers:

Invite people to imagine they are holding a candle – we are given candles at baptism and invited to shine as lights in the world. OR invite people to point upwards with the forefinger of one hand – this represents a candle. The forefinger of the other hand represents a match – at the beginning of each section of the prayers invite people to light their candle, either in their imagination or with a simple ‘striking’ action.

Before returning to seats, encourage people to go to the font, and use the water to make a simple sign of the cross on the back of the hand and remember their own baptism.

Use the following or similar words:

As we light this candle, we think of all those places in the world where being together with family and friends brings strength, and of all those places where families are struggling to find peace

Loving God, you created us to be in families and communities and we give you thanks for the joy of being together. We pray for families in the world, especially those struggling to find peace, safety and security, and we ask that this day they may know your hope and joy
Lord, hear our prayer

All: Please

As we light this candle, we think of our own town, village, suburb, we think of the streets where we live, the places we work, the schools we go to. We think of all those who come in and out of our communities helping and supporting others, whether in their work or as volunteers, and as we think of them, so we pray:

Loving God, we give you thanks for the places where we live, and we pray for all those who show love and care for others: for doctors, nurses, social workers, teachers, police officers, care workers and so many others. Be with them in their daily work, and help them to know and to share the great love of God each day
Lord, hear our prayer

All: Please

As we light this candle, we think of those with whom we share a home or share a story; those who encourage and help us remembering our godparents and godchildren; those we take care of and those who take care of us, and so we pray:

Loving God, we give you thanks for the blessing of friends and family and we pray that you will be close to all whom we care about this day, especially praying for godparents and godchildren. We remember those who may be struggling this day especially..... and ask that you would draw close with your healing love

Lord: hear our prayer

All: Please

As we light this candle we remember our own journey of faith as we follow Jesus. We remember those who have supported and encouraged since our baptism and welcome into the church, and those we still see and those we see no longer, and so we pray:

Loving God, we thank you for calling us to be your friends and followers and for calling people to help and support us as we discover more of your love. We give you thanks for those who have encouraged us, but whom we see no longer, and ask that you will help us to keep following you more closely each day, so that we day we will all be united in your presence for all eternity.

We offer all these prayers in the name of Jesus Christ, our Saviour.

All: Amen

[If the service is a Service of the Word, it may be appropriate to end the prayers with the Lord's Prayer, before sharing the Peace together]

[If the service is a Eucharist, continue with the peace followed by the offertory and the Eucharistic prayer. Involve different generations as appropriate]

The Peace

The minister introduces the peace, using this or similar words:

God makes peace within us— let us claim it.

God makes peace between us—let us share it.

The peace of the Lord be with you.

All: and also with you.

Eucharistic prayer

You might like to use either Prayer D or, if you are expecting a lot of children, one of the additional Eucharistic prayers.

We go out into the world [said by Minister or others]

Blessing

Minister:

May the God who calls us live in his love be close to you;

May the Son who showed us the way to God lead you;

May the Spirit who strengthen us with joy encourage you;

And the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

Be with you, and those you love,

This day and always. Amen

The dismissal

Voice; We go together with joy and laughter

All: We go!

Voice; We go together to love and to share

All: We go!

Voice: We go together to explore and to learn

All: We go!

Voice; We go in the name of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit

All: We go!

[adapted from Festivals Together Sandra Millar SPCK 2012]

Minister: Go in the peace of Christ. Alleluia. Alleluia

All: In the name of Christ. Alleluia. Alleluia

As people leave offer them either a chocolate heart and/or a godparents/godchild badge