

# As my goddaughter turns 1...

One year ago I drove to the hospital to hold my niece for the first time. She was precious and sweet and snuggly and warm.

This weekend we celebrated her first birthday. Throughout her party, she was laughing and crawling and bouncing and reaching over to give her big sister a kiss. What a difference a year makes. And what a fast year that was.



I could say I wish time would slow down, and in a way I do. But to be completely honest, my favorite part is just ahead. Especially because I became a mother to two toddlers, I don't know much about babies. I love, love, love welcoming them into our lives, and I thank God for creating our little nephews and nieces, but I am not always sure I know what to do best for babies.

But toddlers? Oh, I know toddlers. I've raised two toddlers. I know their games. I know their language. I know the way they encounter their world—how everything is new to them.

And, as I watched our little niece at her party, as she realized the cupcake she was holding came in a paper wrapper—yes, a paper wrapper!—I was struck by how the best is still to come.



Then she opened our gift, a fox chair—because I am the kind of aunt who gives chairs that look like stuffed animals. I could hardly believe this climbing, smiling little girl who wanted to hug the new chair was the same one I held in my arms a year ago. I found myself thinking of her big brother Georgie in heaven, and feeling grateful that God has brought him and his sisters into our lives.



As I looked around the house, packed with smiling grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins, I wondered what it would be like if Georgie were with us, too. Would he be photobombing and putting bunny ears behind people's heads as my boys do? Would he be gobbling the pepperoni flame off the cheese tray? Would he be running outside to play and then running even faster into the house when he saw a bumblebee?



I can only guess. But I know he has a seat at the best party ever—and that he's

loving watching his sisters grow, just as we are down here on earth.

This adorable birthday girl is going to get more active and more mobile and more curious and more expressive and more everything. That little personality we can already see is only going to blossom. And, as her aunt and godmother, I get to be along for the ride.