



NAMING CEREMONY

For

JOHN WAYNE SMITH



SAMPLE SCRIPT



Ceremony composed and conducted by:

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a member of

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If children live with hostility,
they learn to fight.

If children live with ridicule,
they learn to be shy.

If children live with tolerance,
they learn to be patient.

If children live with encouragement,
they learn confidence.

If children live with praise,
they learn to appreciate.

If children live with fairness,
they learn justice.

If children live with security,
they learn faith.

If children live with approval,
they learn to like themselves.

If children live with acceptance, and friendship,
they learn to find love in the world.



DP. Good morning. I'd like to welcome you to the garden of Platform 22 for this naming ceremony for John Smith. My name is David Pattullo and I am a celebrant of the Humanist Society of Scotland. Although this is not a religious service we hope that you will find something in this ceremony that will find resonance with you whatever your beliefs.

On behalf of John's parents, Mary and William, I thank you all for attending. Your presence is a gift of support and caring, and they appreciate your sharing this special ceremony and celebration with them.

Mary and William wanted to celebrate the naming of John with some more formal than a simple party. Throughout the world and throughout the history of humankind, formal ceremony has been used to mark the rites of passage which all human beings experience in common. This is a meaningful way to celebrate John's life and for his family and friends to communally express their love for him and commitment to his upbringing.

As you'll be aware, baby John already has a name so this is not really a naming ceremony as such but more of a way of introducing John to the friends and neighbours that will hopefully support and encourage him through his early life. There is an old African proverb that states "It takes a village to raise a child", and so it does. Growing up in a close knit community such as Torphins John will be able to draw on many strands of experience and years of wisdom which will all help prepare him for whatever path he chooses.

As such each of you is here today because you are part of Mary and William's circle of friends and family and as such they will look to you to give them and their son the support and security that only such a fellowship can give. Each of us has played a role in the lives of William and Mary and as such we have already contributed something to the life of this child, but today is not only about celebrating what has already happened, though this is an important milestone, rather it is more about making a commitment to the future of this child. In the years to follow each of us may have the opportunity to contribute to the development of this child through the friendships we already have and the knowledge and experience we have gained in our lives and can pass on to this young life. Although these opportunities and possibilities lie in the future we can gain an insight into the challenges and pleasures of raising children through the experiences of those who have ridden that roller coaster of emotions and as a parent myself I would like to pass on my top ten tips:

Avenge yourself; live long enough to be a problem to your children.
If a child looks like his father, that's heredity; if he looks like a neighbour, that's environment.
One child is often not enough, but two children can be far too many.
If you have trouble getting your children's attention, just sit down and look comfortable.
It now costs more to amuse a child than it once did to educate his father.
It rarely occurs to teenagers that the day will come when they'll know as little as their parents.
Insanity is inherited; you get it from your kids.
There are three ways to get things done: do it yourself; hire someone to do it; forbid your kids to do it.
Those who say they "sleep like a baby" haven't got one.
Having children will turn you into your parents.

Following on from that I would now offer my a few words of advice for John:

If you're going draw on the wall, do it behind the sofa.
It's more fun to colour outside the lines.
Even Popeye didn't eat his spinach until he absolutely had to.
If your dog doesn't like someone you probably shouldn't either.
Even if you've been fishing for 3 hours and haven't caught anything except midges and sunburn, you're still better off than the worm.
Just keep banging until someone opens the door.
Making your bed is a waste of time.
It was like that when you got there
If you want a kitten, start out asking for a horse.
There is no good reason why clothes have to match.

Ask "why" until you understand.

Now some of you will no doubt be asking why John is having a humanist naming ceremony. Well, I have been asked to conduct this ceremony partly because I have known William and Mary for a good few years but also because in introducing their son to you they would like to have a ceremony that does not bind an individual to a particular code of ethics or burden them with imposed values but rather leaves the person free to decide, in their own time, which path to follow and which beliefs will support them through this life. In this they look to your support in the full knowledge that there are many different faiths represented here today and that in time it may fall to any one of you to give guidance to John.

This ceremony is done in the spirit of Humanism - a progressive life stance that, without supernaturalism, affirms our ability and responsibility to lead meaningful, ethical lives capable of adding to the greater good of humanity.

Since the beginning of history, questions about our origins and existence have been asked. There have been people who maintained that, by means of the study of life on the planet and our relationship with it, rational and acceptable answers to such questions have been available. This we believe to be a humanist attitude to life.

At the start of the 21st Century, we have a wealth of knowledge about the evolution of our planet and of the history of its various species, especially that of homo-sapiens. The evidence that we, like other life forms, are a product of the self-perpetuating process of evolution is overwhelming. As such, when we look for purpose or meaning in our lives we should look to ourselves and not to the supernatural. And it is important that we find that purpose for ourselves, it is not something that can be inherited and it is not something that can be forced upon us by those around us, no matter how well intentioned the motives. Purpose is something we put into our lives.

That principle is perhaps perfectly expressed in the prose of the mystic Kahlil Gibran in *The Prophet* when he writes on children saying....

Your children are not your children.
They are the sons and daughters of Life's longing for itself.
They come through you but not from you,
And though they are with you yet they belong not to you.

You may give them your love but not your thoughts,
For they have their own thoughts.
You may house their bodies but not their souls,
For their souls dwell in the house of tomorrow,
which you cannot visit, not even in your dreams.
You may strive to be like them,
but seek not to make them like you.
For life goes not backward nor carries with yesterday.

Aside from the traditional Christening that you are no doubt familiar with there are many other rituals and traditions surrounding the naming of a child. In many cultures one's name is a person's most precious and prized possessions, it should be fiercely guarded and only given out to those whom you trust absolutely. In Roma tradition a child is given three names, the first is whispered at birth by into the baby's ear by its mother and is known only to mother and child, the second is the name used amongst the Roma community whilst the third is used when dealing with those from outside the community. many native American names are derived from aspects of the environment or the virtues of the child and, again, this would often be kept only for use at special ceremonies. Then again, the Chinese wouldn't dare name a child before he is born. Instead they will give him a fake or "milk" name; something very undesirable, such as "mud face" or "turd," that is meant to disgust evil spirits and trick them to stay away from the child. These names may stay with children throughout childhood! Fortunately for John today's process is somewhat slightly less tortuous and definitely less scatological!

As a symbol of Liam's life and the hope for a bright and happy future, I invite you Mary and William to light this candle. A light representing your wish for a life full of everlasting love.

PARENTS LIGHT CANDLE

First and foremost, this ceremony is a celebration. But a second important element is the consideration of responsibilities, not just of John's parents, but of everyone connected to this family.

William and Mary, as parents, will you do all you can to help John become a responsible, self-reliant, caring person, and will you love and cherish him always?

WILLIAM & MARY: We will.

DP: I would now like to invite John's brothers and sisters and grandparents to come forward and, in turn, make their wishes for John, you may proclaim these out loud or whisper them in his ear!

Could the family now all join hands in a circle around John.

FAMILY FORMS CIRCLE AROUND JOHN

DP: A family is a circle of strength and love.

With every birth and every union, the circle grows.

Every joy shared adds more love.

Every crisis faced together makes the circle stronger.

John, may you find love and strength within this circle of your family
May they support and guide you through life's hardships and pleasures.

Will you now take John into your circle?

FAMILY: We will.

DP: Parents are supported by extended family, friends and community. In the spirit of love, I ask all present to make a solemn vow to John. Will you provide him with your unwavering love throughout your lives, support his highest endeavours, his growth and independence, and his wish to follow whatever path his heart chooses? If so, please answer "We do."

AUDIENCE: We do.

We wish for Liam the greatest love and peace, and the confidence and wisdom to find his own path in life.

Please be seated.

So it is that John has come to join us today becoming part of our circle. Although the greatest burden of raising a child falls to the parents each of us can in some way work to make a better world in which to live and no matter how indirect our influence it will all count in the lifetime of this child. As well as a wealth of opportunities there are many threats that surround this young life and there are many forces that would demand his loyalty, obedience or fear. However, at the same time we are a free people and as such we have an obligation to resist those demands and ensure that this child has the opportunity to grow up free and unafraid. To that end we would do well to remember and act upon the words of Voltaire....

"So long as the people do not care to exercise their freedom, those who wish to tyrannize will do so; for tyrants are active and ardent, and will devote themselves in the name of any number of gods, religious and otherwise, to put shackles upon sleeping men".

It is up to each of us to remain awake to the wiles of the world's tyrants, at home and abroad, and exercise our freedoms in their defiance, if we can do that we can nurture a society in which John will be able to both set down roots and spread his wings. That is the only lasting bequest we can give our children.

Now, we are almost at the end of the ceremony, it is almost time to begin the drinking! Indeed, virtually all my ceremonies end up with some drinking and this one is no exception so following on from here we will repair to the Torphins Village Hall for further festivities! There will be "Baby Book" at the reception and William, Mary and John would be delighted if you would take a few moments to sign the book and pass on any wishes or messages for the future.

Before we leave, on behalf of Mary and William, I would like to thank you all for being here and for all you kind gifts. There is also a special thank you to Jane Jones for providing today's music. For my own part I would like to thank all those fools who put their wit and wisdom on the internet and without whose contributions I would have been unable to put this ceremony together!

To conclude I would like to extend the following blessing to John.

May good fortune be ever with you and bless you;
May you see your children's children.
May you be poor in misfortune,
Rich in blessings,
May you know nothing but happiness
From this day forward.

May the road rise to meet you
May the wind be always at your back
May the warm rays of sun fall upon your home
And may the hand of a friend always be near.

May green be the grass you walk on,
May blue be the skies above you,
May pure be the joys that surround you,
May true be the hearts that love you.

May the road rise to meet you,
May the wind be always at your back.
May the sun shine warm upon your face,
The rains fall soft upon your fields.

And until we meet again,
May you rest safe with your clan and community.

Would everyone please clap to formally welcome to the world John Wayne Smith

END