

MAKING A CHILD NAMING AND DEDICATION SERVICE



First Unitarian Congregation of Ottawa

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CANADA

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A baby is not like a picture that you hang on the wall and enjoy forever afterward. A baby is not even like a house which, once secured, must be kept up, or the roof will leak, the paint peel off, and the plumbing give out. A baby, more than anything else in the world, will grow and develop in accordance with what you do or do not do; in accordance with the devotion and intelligence, the courage and the patience you bring to the task of caring for it.

Although there is no legal obligation for you to do so, you are considering the process of naming your child in a religious ceremony. You are responding to a tradition that has been a part of most cultures around the world, the tradition of recognizing your child before a fellowship of your friends and family.

This pamphlet has been prepared to assist you in developing the type of ceremony that you feel is most appropriate. Choices are offered in each of the ten sections of the service, and you have the option also of deleting some of the sections entirely. The sections of an extended service are listed on the back cover. Once you have made your choices, the minister or chaplain should be advised well in advance of the date of your service so that the official can assemble and prepare it.

Please return this form to the Minister/Chaplain

Child's Name: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Place of Birth: _____

Date of Naming/Dedication: _____

Location: _____

Father's Name: _____

Mother's Name: _____

Address: _____

email: _____

Siblings and Ages: _____

Godparents _____

or

Sponsors _____

<u>Page</u>	<u>Section</u>	<u>Topic</u>	<u>Your Choice</u>
p. 4-5	A	Opening	_____
p. 5-7	B	Parents	_____
p. 7-9	C	Address	_____
p. 9-10	D	Sponsors	_____
p. 10-11	E	Sibling(s)	_____
p. 11-12	F	Naming	_____
p. 12-16	G	Reading	_____
p. 16-17	H	Prayer	_____
p. 17-18	I	Child	_____
p. 18-20	J	Closing	_____

Selections for the Child Naming Service.

Use these selections to fill in the form above.

A. OPENING

- A-1. Dear friends: In the spirit of an age-old tradition and in recognition of the profound fact that they have brought new life into the world, these parents have brought their child before us to be named.
- A-2. Unto us our children are given as an encouragement of hope and strength. What tragedy it would be if humankind were never to be better than we, if the promise of the human venture were to be fastened and limited in us. Rather let this be our song, that new life as in a springtime freshet will cause sons and daughters, to flourish like the green grass of the fields. For unto us children are born; unto us new chances are given, generation upon generation.
- A-3. The coming of a child into the family circle widens its dimensions far beyond the simple addition of another member. It brings the miracle of a new personality struggling for its own fulfilment. Therefore it is quite natural for us to be thrilled at the sight of new births. However, as the years pass, it is too easy for us to take our children for granted.

Whatever their ages, they deserve the tender love and firm guidance, which only we as parents, teachers, and friends can give. It is to symbolize these possibilities

and responsibilities that we have come to this ceremony.

- A-4. In the old tales, the birth of a special child occasioned the arrival of supernatural beings (fairy godmothers, guardian spirits) bearing magical gifts. The gifts that we flesh and blood parents have to offer our children are no less magical. They will be needed, not because our children ride off on mythical quests, but - more important - because we want them to grow to be whole and loving people in a real world. In so doing, we know that a child will "climb to the highest heavens", and test not only "the furthest limits of the sea", but the limits of life itself.

B. PARENTS

- B-1. Every child deserves to be born of a great and true love. This child was. This child was wanted by two people whose love for each other needed him/her to be fulfilled and completed. All the years of his/her life this can be a blessing to him/her.

As parents, your affection and devotion will cradle him/her for many years. But the larger world into which he/she will enter offers no such assurance. You must help him/her find his/her own strength to face the world and to be a real person in it in his/her own right.

I challenge you to prepare him/her to be an independent adult, aware of the world as it is and as it ought to be, aware of the power of one dedicated

individual to change its course, aware of the tragedy and injustice which are also part of it, aware of the power of love to redeem it if that love has courage as well as affection.

Will you now pledge to him/her your passion for his/her individuality, and the love that will let him/her cherish his/her own uniqueness?

PARENTS RESPOND: We will.

- B-2. (Father) and (Mother), by bringing your child to be named you are acknowledging the wonder of life; you are proclaiming the importance of an ethical perspective; you are sharing with this assembly some of the joy that is yours as parents. As your child is here named, we all join in a re-dedication to life's larger purposes.
- B-3. (Father) and (Mother), we will work no magic upon your child. There is no magic save the infinite love and patience of parents for their children; the deep devotion of parents to the highest and noblest development of their children. We do not call upon you to dedicate your child to any church, as an institution. We call upon you, rather, to dedicate yourselves as parents to the task of training and guiding your child in a way of life fine and noble in its hopes and aspirations. We would charge you, then, to speak to this child of the great traditions of humankind, of what these things are and of what they ought to be. Recall with him/her the names and deeds of good

women and men who have worked and sacrificed that others might live more fully and beautifully,. Let your child learn from your lips how important and rewarding it is to be an apostle of truth, how fine it is to be dedicated to the good of others.

As parents of this child, then, do you solemnly promise that to the best of your abilities, you will instruct him/her and train him/her in the principles of right living?

PARENTS RESPOND: I do.

Do you promise that you will help him/her to be a fearless, impartial, and reverent seeker after truth, beauty, and goodness?

PARENTS RESPOND: I do.

Remembering that the calmness and cheerfulness which we display in our homes are reflected in the temperaments and dispositions of those around us, will you endeavour to set for this child such an example as he/she may safely follow?

PARENTS RESPOND: I will.

C. ADDRESS to the Assembly or Congregation.

- C-1. Each of us has a part in this act. Each of us has a responsibility for all children. Will you re-dedicate yourselves to active concern for all who are helpless, to setting a good example for those whose ways and

habits are yet to be established, and to creating family of faith in which this child may grow into a rich and full life?

CONGREGATION RESPONDS: We will.

- C-2. We are mindful that within each child there exists an immense potential that emerges as the years pass - and we realize that the quality of our own lives will determine how well this potential is realized in full bloom and flower. On this day of great promise, we dedicate ourselves to the child here presented, and to all children.
- C-3. For generations and generations, parents have brought their children to houses of worship to be named. At this service, the parents declare their responsibility for their child.

We come to a house of worship out of reverence for the mystery of life that we have seen in the miracle of reproduction and birth. We acknowledge the mystery of the power that is in us and works through us, and we are humble before that mystery.

We give the child a name in this ceremony. In this act we declare that the child is an individual, a unique and separate person with a dignity and life of his/her own. He/she comes from us, but he/she is not ours. In giving him/her a name we declare that we will respect him/her and give him/her the freedom to be him/herself.

We perform this ceremony publicly to declare that all of us, as parents and as representatives of society, are responsible for the care and development of all children. It is our task to give them a world of peace and justice in which to grow. It is our task to give them our ideals and our hopes. By presenting the child to the fellowship here, the parents acknowledge that the child is more than a private possession, but is a new being in whom we all have a responsibility, and whom we all welcome to the community.

We use a flower and water - time-honoured symbols - in this ceremony. They remind us of the beauty and wonder and freshness of life. We dedicate ourselves to the task of nourishing the beauty and wonder and freshness of this child, and all children.

D. GOD-PARENTS/SPONSORS

D-1. (Father's name) and (Mother's name), in thinking about the future of your child you have chosen to name God-parents/Sponsors who will be available to your child with love and caring as he/she grows. Will you now introduce the God-parents/Sponsors?

PARENTS SAY: _____ and _____ are the God-parents/Sponsors we have chosen.

_____ and _____, as God-parents/Sponsors, will you dedicate yourselves anew to that way of life which will fill this child's heart with memories of gladness and a sense of divine love and mercy?

GOD-PARENTS/SPONSORS ANSWER: We will.

- D-2. SPOKEN TO THE GOD-PARENTS OR SPONSORS:
_____ and _____, in consenting to become God-parents/Sponsors for this child, you are in accord with ancient custom - a custom which has its origin in the realities of the life situation when the span of life was shorter, and times more perilous than they are today. God-parents/Sponsors today may still render real and meaningful service. Will you, as God-parents/Sponsors for this child, continue to bear in mind your promise to befriend and guide and help this child?

GOD-PARENTS/CO-SPONSORS REPLY: We will.

- D-3. Do you, _____ and _____, who have been asked to bear a special relationship to the family, embrace the privilege and the responsibility to nurture, to defend and to support the freedom and the spirit of this child?

GOD-PARENTS/SPONSORS REPLY: We will.

E. CHARGE TO THE SIBLING(S)

It can be very important to a brother or sister to be included in a ceremony about the new baby.

- E-1. _____, you are special to (name of baby). You will help _____ to talk, to play, and to share. Will you try to be a good example to _____ and do everything

you can to make _____ a strong and happy person?

RESPONSE: I will.

E-2. _____, you are a very important person to (name of baby). He/she will think you know everything about how to get along in the world and will copy everything you do. Will you do your best to be a good example to _____, to teach him/her lots of interesting things, and to have lots of fun with him/her?

RESPONSE: I will.

F. NAMING

F-1. (Father's name) and (Mother's name), will you affirm that this child is a sacred responsibility as well as the embodiment of your love for one another? Will you dedicate yourselves anew to that way of life which will fill your child's heart with memories of gladness and a sense of love and mercy?

PARENTS ANSWER: We will.

THE CHILD IS PASSED TO THE MINISTER.

Will you name your child?

PARENTS NAME THE CHILD: _____

_____, with water,
the ancient and universal symbol of purity, and with

love - I name thee, and ask the blessings of God upon you and your family.

F-2. TO THE PARENTS: What name have you chosen?

_____, with water, the ancient and universal symbol of purity,. I name thee. May you carry this name with pride and bring love to all who watch your quest with interest.

G. READING

G-1. THE NAMING

The power to grant a name is one of the greatest responsibilities of human life.

Just as Adam was granted the power to name all other creatures of the earth, so we, as parents, are granted the power to name our children.

By granting a name, we bestow an identity.

In receiving a name, we become ourselves, in all the specialness of what we yet shall be.

G-2. READING

We are your children. Out of the infinite we have come to you and through you.

We are the old, yet ever new, miracle of incarnation.

Give us a chance to grow, within the warmth of your
unfailing love, into souls sensitive to beauty, hearts
open to love and hungry for the imperishable values of
life. Quicken with faith the wellsprings of courage
within us.

Enter with us through the gates of wonder.

Accept us, as we grow, into a fellowship of mutual
respect and shared responsibilities, that we, in our turn,
may be worthy nurturers of the coming generation.

G-3. READING from Sophia Lyon Fahs

And so the children come.
And so they have been coming.
Always in the same way they come -
Born of the seed of man and woman.
No angels herald their beginnings,
No prophets predict their future courses,
No wise men see a star to point their way
To find the babe that may save mankind.

Yet each night a child is born is a holy night.

Fathers and Mothers -
Sitting beside their children's cribs -
Feel glory in the wond'rous sight of a life beginning.
They ask: "When or how will this new life end?
Or will it ever end?"

Each night a child is born is a holy night -
A time for singing -

A time for worshipping.
For heaven and earth are joined in the new creation.

G-4. from "The Prophet" by Kahlil Gibran

One held a babe and said, Speak to us of children.
And he said:
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 tarries with yesterday.
You are the bows from which your children as living
arrows are sent forth.

G-5. e.e.cummings

up into the silence the green
silence with a white earth in it
you will (kiss me) go
out into the morning the young
morning with a warm world in it
(kiss me) you will go
on into the sunlight the fine

sunlight with a firm day in it
you will go (kiss me
down into your memory and
a memory and memory
i) kiss me (will go)

G-6. Kenneth L. Patton

Behold the child, a visitor. He has come from nowhere, for he was not before this, and it is nowhere that he goes, wherefore he is called a visitor, for the visitor is one who comes from the unknown to stay but awhile and then to the unknown passes on again.

The child has come forth out of the great womb of the earth. The child has come forth to stand with star dust in his hair, with the rush of planets in his blood, his heart beating out the seasons of eternity, with a shining in his eyes like sunlight, with hands to shape with that same force that shaped him out of the raw stuff of the universe.

When one baby is born it is the symbol of all birth and life, and therefore all must rejoice and smile, and all must lose their hearts to a child.

G-7. Robert Kaufmann

Oh, our children-
We wish for you a storm or two, that you may enjoy
the calm.
We wish for you tranquility in time of trial.

We wish for you a cool breeze on a warm day,
And pale white clouds that you may better appreciate
the blueness of sky.
We wish you darkness, that you may see stars.
We wish for you anticipation of high adventure.
And we wish for you the courage to avoid battle.
We wish for you a sense of wonder, and poetry, and
music.
We wish you companionship, that you may appreciate
solitude.
We wish you a friend who will understand you, and
understanding so that you may have a friend.
We wish you may become all that you wish to be, and
more than you hope you can be.
We wish you a flower to smell, a hand to touch, a
voice to cheer, a heart to gladden;
And we wish you someone to love, as we love you.

H. PRAYER

Prayer is a very personal thing. Your choice to include one, or which one to include, is very meaningful.

H-1. Let us pray:

For the gift of childhood, whose innocence and laughter keep this world young, we all rejoice and give thanks. May this life, which we welcome into our community of ideals and friendship, receive the blessings of health, love, knowledge and wisdom, and in its turn give back to the common heritage which endures from generation to generation. Amen.

H-2. Let us pray:

A new life, infinite in its potential, blesses us. We pray for the wisdom to help release that potential. May every grace be with this child and his/her parents and all who love them. Amen.

H-3. Let us pray:

We pray that _____ may bear his/her name with pride and that he/she will bring joy and love to all who love him/her. May (name) be surrounded by affection and tutored in the ways of wisdom, that _____ may make for himself/herself a special place among those dedicated to the transformation of the world into a community of peace and compassion and generosity of spirit. May _____ have a life of joy and service for and among his/her friends and relatives. Amen.

H-4. Let us pray:

Now for _____, we ask the blessing of a strong and healthy body, a clear and well-poised mind, a friendly disposition, and an understanding heart. May these things be his/hers and remain with him/her throughout all the days of his/her life. In the name of all who have worked to improve the quality of life and the circumstances of humankind, we pray. Amen.

I. CHILD (RECOGNITION OF THE CHILD)

(A flower shall be given to the mother or the father, whoever

is not holding the baby.)

- I-1. In this naming service, we give (name) a flower. Whether a flower is beautiful or not; whether it comes into full bloom or not; whether it fulfils itself as a flower or not - depends in part upon the nurture it receives. No flower grows alone, apart from the sunshine and the rain, apart from the soil in which it lives. So, too, no child grows alone.

The flower symbolizes the beauty of life. It also symbolizes the meaning of your dedication.

May the flower then be a reminder of the beauty of fulfilment, and of the reward which comes from love and understanding, from teaching and example.

- I-2. I present you, _____, with this flower. It is our hope that just as this blossom unfolds to maturity, radiating beauty and fragrance wherever it is, that you too will grow and blossom and reach a fullness of spirit which will allow you to find joy in your life and be helpful to others.

J. CLOSING

- J-1. CLOSING WORDS from "This World, My Home" by
Kenneth L. Patton

Nothing is strange to the child for whom everything is
new.

Where all things are new nothing is novel.

The child does not yet know what belongs and what
does not; therefore for him all things belong.

The ear of the child is open to all music.

His eyes are open to all arts.

His mind is open to all tongues.

His being is open to all manners.

In the child's country there are no foreigners.

- J-2. CLOSING WORDS

Let us go forward together, mindful of our great
freedom and of our precious responsibilities.

May we rededicate ourselves

to seek truth boldly

to show love constantly, and

to serve all humanity faithfully,

so that the blessings of peace

be in our hearts and in our world.

So be it.

J-3. CLOSING WORDS

We close this service of dedication with thoughts of a future centred around this child and coming from a past that encompasses our own childhood.

Let us aspire to keep from our past all that was good so that the child may grow from that starting place.

And let us work at making the present a place from which the child may develop a life rich and magnificent for all to behold. So be it.

J-4. CLOSING WORDS

We give thanks for the gift and promise of life. We wish for (name) the tenderness of love and the maturing of compassion. May each person here honour the trust of children by giving them, as they grow, the strength of a good example and the courage which comes from a sustaining faith.

