



Namings

It is natural to express your commitment to a loved child by welcoming him or her into the family and the wider human community with a simple ceremony. The deeply felt need for such a rite of passage at this time is something that goes back thousands of years: the religious have no special claim to it.

Humanist ceremonies are a sort of 'Welcome to the World', and are entirely non-religious. They can be held anywhere you like – for example, in the home, in a hotel, on a beach, at your local sports club, in a park – in fact, wherever you like. You won't have your baby taken from you and have water dribbled over its head.

If there are adults to whom you would like to give some responsibility for the child, they won't have to make ready-made vows, as godparents do in church. Any vows that are to be made can be agreed with those involved, and be such as they can freely undertake.

Humanist baby-namings are generally lots of fun for everyone, family and guests alike. Because you will be designing your own unique individual ceremony with the celebrant, you can include reference to serious things like the responsibility of parenthood and the importance of upbringing. But laughter is an important part of the ceremony as well.

Naming ceremonies are usually for babies and young children, but they can be for children of any age. For example, the ceremony can be a welcoming ceremony for children from another marriage into the new family. If the children are older they may want to write and read their own parts of the ceremony.

Naming ceremonies are generally not very long owing to the limited attention span of young children, who are likely to be much more interested in the cakes and sandwiches or the lunch which they can see waiting for them at the end of the ceremony. As in all humanist ceremonies, the structure and content of the occasion is very much up to you.

Of course, the celebrant will be able to guide and advise you on content, and matters such as appropriate poetry and music. The fee is usually about £160, depending on how much work and travel is involved.