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**All You Ever Wanted to Know About Wedding Officiants**

**By Blake Kritzberg**

**All You Ever Wanted to Know About Wedding Officiants by Blake Kritzberg**

Tracking down a wedding officiant can be a little intimidating. Perhaps you remember a time when it was hard to get one if you weren't among the "regularly churched"! But times have changed, and hiring an officiant for your wedding is now standard procedure.

Basically, brides-to-be find themselves in one of two camps: Either they have a regular church and a favorite minister, who might be a longstanding family friend, or they need to find one through word-of-mouth or web sites.

The latter situation often costs more, but allows for a lot of flexibility. Depending on your tastes and faiths, you can often find a judge, a Catholic priest to marry you outdoors, a Rabbi to officiate at an interfaith wedding, a non-denominational officiant who encourages you to write your own vows, and so on.

**How to find officiants**

A good national directory for finding Catholic officiants is [www.rentapriest.com](http://www.rentapriest.com).

If you're stuck for ideas, try asking vendors. Your florist or caterer is probably well acquainted with local options.

Another excellent way to find officiants is to visit a large wedding forum, like The Knot, and post on boards for your local geographic area. You can often get an idea of the flavor, preparedness, flexibility and even appearance of a popular local officiant.

**When should you book an officiant?**

Some officiants book early. If you're really particular about whom you want to do the service and can't budge on the date, try to book more than six months in advance. Some couples book a year ahead.

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How much do officiants charge?

A minister at your own church may not charge anything at all, but may accept donations. In that case, a \$100–200 donation is about average. Ask the minister yourself if there's any doubt.

An officiant you engage yourself will set his or her own rates. Rates generally range from \$250–600, but some well-known officiants may charge more.

Do we send an invitation?

By custom, you invite your officiant to your rehearsal dinner as a guest. You also invite the officiant and his or her spouse to your reception with a formal invitation, just like other guests. Unless the officiant is

an old family friend, he or she may decline to stay, but an invitation is proper. You aren't expected to invite the officiant's children.

Can you use a friend as an officiant?

It's done all the time, and can make weddings very personal. A father, mother, or the friend who introduced you can make for an amazing event. Be sure to pick someone comfortable speaking in front of large crowds, and brush up on your state's laws and licensing requirements. Here's a good site to begin your research:

[www.northernway.org/mariagelaws.html](http://www.northernway.org/mariagelaws.html)

Your chosen friend or family member can become ordained "instantly and online" at the Universal Life Church, which in some areas will enable them to perform legal weddings. Again, be sure of your state's laws. Many times, ministers ordained by ULC will also have to register in their state and obtain a license before they can practice. Call your local county clerk for clarification.

Universal Life Church: [www.ulc.org](http://www.ulc.org)

Do I meet with the officiant before or after booking, and what should I expect at the meeting?

Ideally, an officiant will allow a "getting to know you" meeting before you book them, though not all will. Most at least offer telephone interviews, which helps you see how they fit with your personal style.

During your first meeting, the officiant will typically tell you about his or her background, discuss the logistics, bring up any premarital counseling requirements, ask some questions about your personal history, and show you a sample ceremony script. This is a good time to discuss special unification ceremonies or personal vows, bring up interfaith issues, and learn whether your officiant plans to attend your rehearsal.

Blake Kritzberg is editor at "FavorIdeas.com." Stop by for a huge selection of wedding favors, Bridezilla's weekly adventures, and free resources for brides: save-the-date eCards, screensaver,

wallpaper and web site templates.<http://www.favorideas.com>

## **Interfaith Wedding Ceremony Ideas**

**By Heather Greene**

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These days, it's becoming more and more common for couples of different religious backgrounds to get married. Many religions have embraced this fact— in two of the four major Jewish sects, interfaith marriages are regularly performed, most Protestant clergy are willing to officiate interfaith marriages, and more and more Catholic priests, Conservative Judaism rabbis, and Islamic leaders are conducting interfaith ceremonies. Ask other interfaith couples in your area for recommendations if you're having a hard time finding someone yourself. Or, you could have your wedding performed by a non-religious officiant. You will still have the opportunity to incorporate religion into your ceremony if you do this, but it will eliminate the hassle of finding a religious officiant who's views about interfaith marriage are the same as yours.

It may not be easy pulling off an interfaith ceremony. Your relatives may be upset that you are straying from tradition and even you and your fiancé may have some different ideas about how the ceremony should be run and which traditions and rituals should be part of the ceremony. You will need to take a lot of time to consider exactly what marrying someone of a different faith means to you and how you will handle your differences on the wedding day and beyond. With some compromising and understanding though, we're sure your interfaith wedding will go on without a hitch.

Since there is no traditional interfaith ceremony format, we can not recommend one that you should follow, but below you will find some tips for how to incorporate two religions into your ceremony.

**Involving Both Families—** Chances are, if anyone is upset about you having an interfaith marriage it's the older generation— your parents and grandparents. The best thing you can do to help them come to terms with your decision and understand it is to have both families participate in the ceremony. Unity candles are a wonderful idea to involve both parents and in this case, the candle lighting will have extra symbolism as you are not only joining your two families, but also your two faiths. At many interfaith marriages involving Christian and Jewish grooms and brides you will notice that the couple is taking a cue from the Jewish religion and having both parents walk the bride and groom down the aisle. This is sure to make both sets of parents feel special on the big day.

**Neutral Ground—** It's important for many couples and their families to have a completely neutral ceremony. Many officiants steer clear of using non-inclusive language and avoid using mentions of things unique to one religion (for example, mentions of Israel, Jesus as a savior, etc.) and instead focus on God's love and the theme of unity and togetherness. In general, we'd advise against having the ceremony in a place of worship unless it is special to both the bride and groom.

**Music and Readings—** Incorporate music and readings from both your faiths into the ceremony or you can have faith neutral readings and music. We have several suggestions for readings as well as tips

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for readers weddings in our ceremony section.

Programs— Wedding programs are almost a necessity at an interfaith wedding if you will be incorporating aspects of two faiths into your wedding. A good program will explain the meaning and

origin behind any religious rituals that take place at the wedding, that way, none of the guests will be confused about what is going on (your guests may not have attended a wedding outside of their faith group).

Having two officiants— Many interfaith couples are now deciding to have two officiants present at their wedding ceremonies, one from each religion. By having two officiants, you'll be making everyone more comfortable, plus two heads are always better than one and two officiants can give you more ideas about conducting and interfaith ceremony than just one.

Heather Greene is the head writer for the wedding planning site, Wedding Wonderful located at [www.weddingwonderful.com](http://www.weddingwonderful.com). This article originally appeared on Wedding Wonderful.



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