

A CEREMONIAL MINISTER'S HAND BOOK



Hearth of the Dancing Drum Ritual & Ceremonial Ministry

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook has been endorsed by members of The Convocation of Ministers of The Church of the Dancing Drum Ministry, and individual members Karuna Gatton, Alida Birch and Reid Hart.

Welcome. I never thought I would be writing a minister's handbook, when I first became ordained through SHES – International Assembly of Spiritual Healers and Earth Stewards Congregation, in 1998. I am grateful to Karuna Gatton who urged me from advice from her helping spirits, to ordain me at that time. She/they understood something at that time about the course of my life, that took me a bit longer to see. I decided to trust her and the helping spirits, and went through an Empowerment Ordination Ceremony, which she guided me through in her healing yurt at the top of the hill on her land, a yurt primarily for healing and monthly Shaman Drum and Journey Circle, which continues to this day on the first Tuesday of each month, and is open and warmly receptive of new journeyors; I was 30 years old at that time. I knew the veil would be lifted over time to show me the deeper importance as to what would lay ahead for me on this particular part of my path, and what I would do with being ordained, and the meaning of it all. It had just been a few years prior in 1994, that I completed my Oregon Board of Massage Therapy training, and had proudly received in August of 1994 my license to legally provide massage in Oregon.

I met Karuna in the summer of 1995 through a collective healing center in Eugene Oregon called the Raven, which has dissolved since. She was an inspiration and magic to me and continues to be so till this day. She was then the age that I find myself at now. The healing work that I have done and still do has complemented well with the ministry work, and has opened up many doors for me that has altered the course of my life many times over. Over time, the ministry has developed into a lifelong devotion to work in ceremony, creating beautiful meaningful ceremonies for all transitional times in people's lives, centered first around Marriage Ceremonies and Shamanic Healing. My first wedding couple approached me not long after I became ordained asking me to be the officiant for their marriage ceremony. They were friends who knew that I had just become ordained. At first, I told them that I wasn't ready, and I repeated that a few times. I had been terribly shy and not comfortable speaking in front of groups at all at that point in my life, however they continued to press me towards accepting their request of which I finally accepted, and have been grateful for that jumpstart ever since. Much gratitude to Roger and Becky for initiating me in conducting my first marriage ceremony. From that more came, and the more ceremonies I did, the more my skills and confidence grew, and the more people learned about my abilities and services.

Through Karuna, I met Alida Birch, of whom I have great love and respect for. I am grateful to have both of these women in my life, as they have impacted and affected my life greatly. I received two years of extensive training from Alida and two powerful vision quests to go with each of the years. I continued for quite a few years to be a support person for subsequent questors for the years to follow, until it

discontinued. Alida and her husband, companion and counterpart Reid Hart, who are both amazing Shamanic Healers, along with Karuna Gatton were initially ordained in a circle of other healers, into The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation from SHES – International Assembly of Spiritual Healers and Earth Stewards Congregation. Alida and Reid both offer ongoing classes and trainings on Shamanic Healing, of which you can access through <https://www.alidabirch.com/>. Karuna Gatton can be reached through her website <http://karunagatton.com/>. Alida hosts the monthly Healing Circle, and Karuna Gatton hosts the Shaman Drum Circle, both circles have been ongoing since the birth of The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation, established in 1990???. Please refer to their websites to see the schedules and information to come to the monthly circles.

Up to this point I have grew and developed a business out of this all which includes many aspects of healing centered around massage and shamanic healing, in conjunction with ministry work where I offer services of a variety of ceremonies of which we continue to create a new for all life's transitions. My main intention that each ceremony be unique and meaningful to each person involved, honoring all life's transitional moments. Through the website presences I have developed at www.eugeneofficial.com Rising Heart Ritual & Ceremonial Ministers, I have taken on five amazing apprentices to work with me, who are each empowered healers in their own unique rites, of which all bio's and pictures can be seen on the site.

This handbook has actually taken me well over five years to complete. During that time I have been raising a son who has now just turned 11, that combined with being a full time massage therapist, working with couples and developing other aspects of my business and life, the process of writing and completing this handbook has taken longer to complete than I had initially envisioned, although I feel it is all perfect timing. And, now with where it is in my process of development, along with input from Karuna Gatton, Alida Birch and Reid Hart regarding the content information and approval to release this handbook, I am happy and proud to present this to you, and to offer you the skills and advice to sprout and grow your ministry endeavors, to help you work more easily with your clients, couples and all who you conduct ceremony with and for. Together we give you what we have learned and developed over these years, to help make it easier for you to go forward from here and start working on your first ceremony!

You are reading the first publication of The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation Convocation of Healers, Ritual & Ceremonial Ministers. This Handbook is intended as a resource guide for ceremonial ritual, and instructions on protocol for legitimizing marriages through the United States. Here we offer suggestions and advice from experienced ministers of The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Shamanic Community, based out of Eugene Oregon United States of America, and all you need to know about ministry and the legalities around being a minister.

We have included important documents for your reference and use as an Ordained Minister, as well as sample ceremonies which we offer as examples for The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation Convocation of Healers, Ritual & Ceremonial Ministers in their performance of their sacred duties. These ceremonies are only examples for The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum

Ministers to draw upon, not intended for you to use as your sole source of ceremony script material. It is for you to draw ideas and grow from, a starting place for you to begin conducting ceremonies.

Please refer to the appendices for the form **Code of Professional Conduct for Trusted Servants**; refer to this form in the ATTACHMENT section, [addendum A](#). All ministers ordained through The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Ministry must agree to these codes, as well as sign an agreement form stating they will agree and follow the codes, which if you are reading this now you have already done.

Through utilizing this hand book as a reference guide to build your ministry business and conducting your own ceremonies, you will grow over time reflecting your own unique ministry. If you have insightful tips or develop a ceremony or ritual in which you would like to share with other, we encourage you to do so to create a deeper well of resources for other ministers that have been ordained through The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum. Send us your submissions for us to include, as we periodically update our handbook.

Any suggestions or comments may be sent to us at me directly through become-ordained-minister.com.

MARRIAGE LAWS in the United States and Abroad

All Persons - Heterosexual & LGBTQ

Please note that I am not an attorney and this information can change from time to time. The individual laws vary slightly per state. Currently in 2020, once you are ordained as a minister, specifically through The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation, you have the right to freely perform marriage ceremonies throughout the entire USA and its extended territories. You should always verify with your local court house, or the county in which you wish to solemnize a ceremony, and allow plenty of time to make arrangements to jump through any hoops if needed, and as rulings vary from state to state and county to county, not to mention other countries. In the State of Oregon where we are based out of, you no longer need to file your minister's license with the state through the local court house. If you are planning on legally solemnizing a marriage in a foreign country, plan ahead and do your prep work to ensure with that country's government, that you will be able to perform a legal marriage, and to ensure you allow time enough to process documentation before you conduct any ceremony. In our modern times, it's sad to say that some foreign countries still have Rulers who make it illegal by death for same gender couples to be legally married, their punishments can be life threatening even by execution, so please make sure you are fully prepared and understanding of the rules per country before performing outside of the USA.

Regarding LGBTQ marriages, I suggest inquiring into the current law per state, county or country. At this point, I believe most states have legalized same gender marriages, although anyone who loves another should naturally have the right to love one another and solemnize their relationship legally, laws are always being changed periodically per state.

If you gain updated information that could be helpful to share with us regarding jurisdiction and legal ramifications, please contact us with it so we can compile and update it as a resource for others.

US MARRIAGE LAWS

PER STATE

Members of the clergy, judges, justices of the peace, and some notary publics are all qualified to perform weddings. Please research to understand the laws in your area by reading the current and most updated [rules](#) per state in the USA, as rulings can change and vary widely.

In some states, mayors can perform the ceremony. In New York City, leaders of the Society for Ethical Culture can officiate weddings. It is possible for anyone to [become ordained](#) or qualify as a [temporary officiant](#) to legally marry a couple. Many [wedding planners](#) now get themselves ordained so that if the

scheduled officiant doesn't show, the wedding isn't a bust. In fact, it's not a bad idea to have a family member or friend ready to officiate as a backup.

Oddly enough, in [some states](#) an officiant isn't required at all; check to make sure current rulings haven't changed. In Pennsylvania, Colorado, Wisconsin, and the District of Columbia, a couple can simply marry in front of witnesses and submit the required paperwork to the state, no officiant needed. Some couples prefer this method, but others would rather have someone lead the ceremony for them.

MARRIAGE LAWS ABROAD

To perform legal marriages outside of the US, you will need to do your research. We suggest looking over sites such as [Destination Weddings: Getting Married in Another Country Legally](#) & *Marriage Abroad* ([Travel.state.gov](#)) as you are planning your next abroad wedding.

WHAT IS A MINISTER?

A person acting for another as their agent and carrying out their orders of designs; specifically anyone authorized to carry out the spiritual functions of a church, conduct worship, administer the sacraments, preach, etc. The definition of a minister is, "To attend and serve; to perform service in any office, sacred or secular." Thus, it could be said that a minister is one who serves. This service could be to another person, a congregation or church.

A minister is a focal point for spiritual and religious observances. He or she can administer to those in physical, emotional, and spiritual distress. Ministers are the custodians of the Light and holders of the presence, i.e., God, the Divine, Higher Self, True Nature, The Tao, the Spirit, etc. From birth to death, a minister offers solace, support, instruction, forgiveness, understanding and their own self to all those who truly seek their service.

On a personal level, the minister practices what he or she preaches. There is a continuous attempt to be in contact with Spirit. This may be accomplished through prayer, meditation, and or daily actions. The minister must maintain contact with that divine energy in the performance of ministerial duties so that his or her actions will be directed from their higher Self.

MINISTERIAL DEFINITIONS

Titles, their Meanings & Legal Usages

The definition of a **Minister** – a member of the clergy, a head of a government department, attend to the needs of (someone), as well as act as a minister of religion.

The definition of a **Priest** is an ordained minister of the Catholic, Orthodox, or Anglican Church having the authority to perform certain rites and administer certain sacraments, a person who performs religious ceremonies and duties in a non-Christian religion, ordain to the priesthood and a mallet used to kill fish caught when angling.

Priest; 3rd person present: **priests**; past tense: **priested**; past participle: **priested**; gerund or present participle: **priesting**.

In both modern and ancient terms, a **pagan priest** is a high ranking member of any polytheistic or non-Christian religion who officiates ceremonies, rituals and marriages.

The definition of a **Priestess** a female priest of a non-Christian religion, a woman authorized to perform the sacred rites of a religion, a woman regarded as a leader (as of a movement).

1. **Reverend** used informally is referring to a member of the clergy, and when used as a title or form of address to members of the clergy.

The Reverend is an [honorific style](#)^[1] most often placed before the names of Christian [clergy](#) and [ministers](#). There are sometimes differences in the way the style is used in different countries and church traditions. *The Reverend* is correctly called a *style* but is often and in some dictionaries called a title, form of address or title of respect.^[2] The style is also sometimes used by leaders in non-Christian religions, such as [Judaism](#).

The term is an [anglicisation](#) of the Latin *reverendus*, the style originally used in Latin documents in medieval Europe. It is the gerundive or future passive participle of the verb *revereri* ("to respect; to revere"), meaning "[one who is] to be revered/must be respected". *The Reverend* is therefore equivalent to *The Honourable* or *The Venerable*. It is paired with a modifier or noun for some offices in some religious traditions: [Anglican](#) archbishops and most [Roman Catholic](#) bishops are usually styled *The Most Reverend* (*reverendissimus*); other Anglican bishops and some Roman Catholic bishops are styled *The Right Reverend*.

With Christian clergy, the forms *His Reverence* and *Her Reverence* is also sometimes used, along with its parallel in direct address, *Your Reverence*.^[3] The abbreviation *HR* is sometimes used.^[3]

LEGAL TITLES

Minister, Ordained Minister and Priest are legal titles in which the states recognize legal officiating clergy are.

MINISTRIAL DUTIES & FUNCTIONS

We are all healers and Ceremonial ministers, and bring our individual and unique healing skills into each of our ceremonial ministerial work and through our private practices.

The angels are ministers of the divine will — H. P. Liddon

So, what is a **Ceremonial Minister** you ask? Ministers are agents of the divine world of angels, helping spirits and guides. When you become an ordained minister, you are acting as a mediary agent between the divine unseen matrixes of the unseen that is weaved amongst and coexists within our physical world.

A **Ceremonial Minister** is an agent whose job involves leading spiritual services, performing a variety of endless ceremonies (such as rite of passages, relationship and marriages, celebration of beginning and

ending of life ceremonies), and providing spiritual or religious guidance to people, animals, planet earth as well as to the divine unseen world. A ministerial agent is a member of the clergy, and in this case specifically you are a clergy member of, The Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation.

As such, being a clergy member through The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation, gives you the opportunity to help other beings by offering counseling and guidance, and taking care of the sick and the poor, as well as to help or care for (someone or something).

A minister is a person who represents his or her own government while living in a foreign country. So, when you travel to a foreign country, you are representing your home country and state. In matters of ministering legal ceremonies specifically marriages in foreign countries, you will need to check specifically with the government of that country of which you wish to minister a legal binding ceremony; Individual countries have different rules regarding this.

The traditional roles or functions of a minister have included all or some of the following: Preacher, Priest/Priestess, Counselor, Administrator, and Teacher. The preacher deals directly with the congregation on a daily basis. She/he relates the activities of daily life in the community, the rest of the nation, and the world to the growth of the spirit. Sermons are based on the preacher's insights into life problems that he/she directly encounters personally or through the congregation. These insights can come from personal reflection, experience, or study on the part of the preacher. The reason for the giving of sermons is for the preacher to share higher insights concerning those life problems of significance to the congregation.

The priest/priestess function brings to the minister the cloak of Spirit. The minister allows the Spirit to flow through him/her in the performance of ritual, benediction, and ceremony in order to create a truly mystical experience for us all. As a leader in the worship of Spirit the minister focuses the flow of energy from all participants through prayer or guided meditation. This results in each individual participating both personally and as part of a united group with Spirit.

In spite of circumstances, a minister will find oneself in the role of counselor. In the preaching role, the minister gives counsel through the sermon; the priestly function allows counsel to come directly from Spirit to the participant. There are many instances where a minister can be a compassionate and understanding counselor. In those situations requiring counsel, a minister can serve to remind the individual of his or her own inner strength and wisdom. In some cases, a minister can assist the individual to experience counsel directly from the Spirit. By having a philosophy of life, some understanding of Spirit and of human personality, and ethical convictions, a minister can provide a perspective grounded in personal experience as well as the Spirit. A wise counselor knows how to listen and what to listen for. For a particularly difficult problem, the minister may at times refer an individual to someone else. The minister must keep in mind that information an individual has confided to him/her is confidential. Depending on state law, the courts have ruled that a minister is not required, any more than a priest, to reveal what is told to him/her as a pastoral counselor.

In some cases a minister may find her/himself as an Administrator of a church. Thus, one may find themselves in the role of an executive. This role requires dealing with people tactfully, some business knowledge, and excellent communication skills. Being an Administrator can be viewed as a complement and an extension to the roles of Preacher, Priestess, and Counselor.

A minister teaches by example as well as in the relating of knowledge. When performing the other roles or functions, a minister is also assuming the role of teacher. A teacher teaches by sharing understanding of a subject, by becoming one with the individual(s) seeking knowledge, and by allowing the students to become their own teachers.

A Minister has the opportunity to expand upon the traditional duties and functions of a minister. This may entail the creative addition of a new ceremony or the resurrection of a primal initiatory experience. The Congregation does not espouse a particular dogma, and each congregation is free to follow their own beliefs. The purpose of the Hand book is to give guidance, examples and suggestions to those ministers ordained through The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation, but it is up to each minister to create and follow their own ritual and ceremony. However, all of The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum ministers share a basic function to serve Spirit to the best of their abilities as a Trusted Servant.

WHO ARE THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH OF THE HEARTH OF THE DANCING DRUM CONGREGATION?

A minister in service through The Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation is a combination of some traditional roles in ceremony and service, and some exploratory roles in self, community and ecumenical awareness. The qualities of preaching, leadership or teaching are of little or no importance. Counseling is of importance only in the notions of caring and sharing of our experiences, strengths, and hopes. To us, a minister is no better at administration by virtue of being a minister than to the next person who has not chosen such work. Indeed, the minister neither possesses nor shares any exclusive or special attainments by virtue of her/his office.

Thus, we do not see ministers as special agents of God, special holders of light, or divine presence, true nature, the Tao, the Spirit, or higher self. To the extent any of those descriptive phrases refer to anything that can be held, we believe we are all equally as capable of holding and possessing such objects.

So, then what is the purpose of the title, minister? To us, this title denotes a personal avocation. It is a walking stick carried on the path chosen by some to further their own study of themselves, their universes and the wider universes; to further their own understanding of the greater presence of the universe, life, and their own participation with it. It is the steed on a quest for the Holy Grail that all may ride.

The title of minister is thus a tool given to aid, balance, and support the user. To those who are fully involved with their life work and life activities, to the full exclusion of any question of or need for their own personal identities, it is a completely unnecessary ornament. To those whose identity is still in question or of personal importance, it may be useful.

The tool can be somewhat of a key, opening the inner reaches of an entire branch of human activity, emotion, reasoning and philosophy. It may free intuition from the bonds of rational thought, so that the user can experience heretofore denied satori, spiritual enlightenment and illumination.

To gain freedom, a minister is offered the opportunity to participate in and take responsibility for many confidential and social actions, ceremonies, and spiritual observances that benefit from, if not require a full reliance upon intuition and imagination, non-linear thinking, and expression of emotion. It is

difficult to participate or lead such activities, without also exposing oneself to deep personal revelation through them.

For us, the term belief means investing an idea or object with one's own energies so as to support it. We can either accept or not accept God. But, if we believe in God, we invest that ideal with each our own power and enthusiasm. That investment of our own energies obviously involves how we steer the course of our own individual lives, and what we use our energies for.

To us, those who accept ministry are setting the course of their own lives and publically stating where they will invest their energies. Generally, this indicates they are steering a course along a spiritual path. To walk this path, they must expend their energy. So along this path, they may well come to believe in a spiritual or higher consciousness and other spiritual matters. It is extremely difficult for any animal, including humans, to extend energy on any activity where they have neither some expectancy nor at least hope of some expectancy. But the hope of expectancy, no matter how small, may well find the seeker no matter how avowed an unbeliever. And The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congressional Ministry does offer a path towards realization of that expectancy.

The path itself is important. Euphemistically, we could be ministers for heaven or hell; so, more than one path is available to us. We may use our walking stick to assist us and those around us or to hurt us and others. While the Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation espouses no dogma, the Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congregation does have an ethical base. The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congressional Ministry has a Code of Professional Responsibility for all of its Trusted Servants, Ministers, and Diplomats of Earth Stewardship. The code may well be imperfect, but the ethics behind it are grounded on the premise that we will not misuse these titles and the opportunities to serve our worlds and the inhabitants thereof. In our service activities, we will try not to bring harm to our fellow creatures of this universe or ourselves where we can avoid it.

To us, any socially responsible person who is willing to adhere to a path of light as opposed to a path of evil is qualified to undertake the obligations of ministry. The actual duties can be learned by those who conscientiously undertake this course while traveling the path. Indeed, it is the learning and exercise of these responsibilities that may actually empower the "belief" that can open the gates of personal enlightenment as well as the growth of any universal fellowship or spirit.

The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congressional Ministry welcomes all humanity, all levels of ministers, with open hearts. We will have good ministers, bad ministers, dedicated ministers, indifferent ministers, immature ministers, and true sages. The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congressional Ministries readily admits it is open to all humanity. We are hopeful all humanity will be open to the Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Congressional Ministry. We are at peace with All beings, as we are all One.

TRUSTED SERVANT

As mentioned at the beginning, a minister is one who serves. Then what makes a minister a trusted servant? During our ordination as Ministers, we each signed and agreed to a ***Code of Professional Conduct for Trusted Servants***. [Refer to Addendum A](#). This code states that as Trusted Servants, we shall render the utmost respect for the integrity of all individuals, whether or not human, and support the

holistic integration of all human communities within the natural ecological ecosystems of the planet, solar system, galaxy and universe. In this sense the word, trusted, takes on a new significance.

As ministers we are servants, servants to God, of individuals, of our congregations, and of the world. By signing the code of ethics, we have indicated our desire to be designated Trusted Servants. However, we must live our lives in awareness of that trust so that in all that we do as ministers, we acknowledge that sacred trust.

Now as we venture forth in our new and extended role as Ministers and Servants, let us always remember from where that power originates that activates our ministry. Let us not place our selves between those we serve and the Spirit, but instead, allow ourselves to be an open channel for Spirit to use to awaken others to their own true divine nature. All that we do we do in Love and all that we love supports us in our ministries.

REQUEST TO BECOME A NEW MINISTER - QUESTIONNAIRE FORM

We have developed an inclusive form to not only keep records of those whom you are Ordaining, but also to vet new ministers, to make sure they are in line with our values and belief, and are willing to follow the Code of Ethics.

For a copy of the Questionnaire Form [Refer to Addendum B](#)

ORDINATION DEFINED

Ordination is the process by which individuals are [consecrated](#), that is, set apart as [clergy](#) to perform various religious [rites and ceremonies](#). The process and ceremonies of ordination vary by [religion](#) and [denomination](#). One who is in preparation for, or who is undergoing the process of ordination is sometimes called an ordained. The [liturgy](#) used at an ordination is sometimes referred to as an ordination.

ORDINATION RECORD

Minister is required to keep an ordination record log of each legal marriage performed, as well as copies of the legal certificate for each couple married.

Once you have been ordained through the Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Ministries, you have the legal right to offer the ordination process to others. In doing so, you will need to complete an Ordination Record form to document and keep clear records. [Refer to Addendum C](#)

ORDINATION OF THE GENDERS

Ordination of Women & Non-Conventional Gender Identified Ministers

Main article: [Ordination of women](#)

The ordination of women in the past has often a controversial issue in religions, none the less anyone who identifies themselves outside of conventional gender associations, where either the office of ordination, or the role that an ordained person fulfills, is traditionally restricted to assumedly heterosexual men, for various theological reasons.

Ordination of homosexual, bisexual and transgender people

Main article: [Ordination of LGBT Christian clergy](#)

Most [Abrahamic religions](#) condemn [homosexuality](#); only recently have a minority of denominational or non-denominational sects of Christianity and Judaism endorsed the ordination of openly [LGBTQ](#) people.

The United Church of Christ ordained openly gay Bill Johnson in 1972 and lesbian Anne Holmes in 1977.^[43]

While Buddhist ordinations of monks have occurred, the more notable ordinations of openly LGBTQ [novitiates](#) have taken place in Western Buddhism.

WICCA ORDINATION

In the [Neo-Pagan](#) religion of [Wicca](#), a person's [initiation](#) is regarded as an induction and ordination as a [priestess](#) or [priest](#). The rites which a person undergoes to become a priestess or priest, and the education and years of study required differ according to denomination.

NON-DENOMINATIONAL

The term non-denominational refers to those churches that have not formally aligned themselves with an established denomination, or remain otherwise officially autonomous. This, however, does not preclude an identifiable standard among such congregations. Non-denominational congregations may establish a functional denomination by means of mutual recognition of or accountability to other congregations and leaders with commonly held doctrine, policy and worship without formalizing external direction or oversight in such matters. Some non-denominational churches explicitly reject the idea of a formalized denominational structure as a matter of principle, holding that each congregation must be autonomous.

Non-denominational is generally used to refer to one of two forms of independence: political or theological. That is, the independence may come about because of a religious disagreement or political disagreement. This causes some confusion in understanding. Some churches say they are non-denominational because they have no central headquarters (though they may have affiliations with other congregations.) Other churches say they are non-denominational because their belief structures are unique.

Members of non-denominational churches sometimes consider themselves simply "Christians". However, the acceptance of any particular stance on a doctrine or practice (for example, on baptism), about which there is not general unanimity among churches or professing Christians, may be said to establish a de facto creedal identity. In essence, this would mean that each non-denominational church

forms its own unofficial "denomination" with a specific set of tenets as defined by the beliefs and practices of its own congregation.

The following are descriptions and definitions of various non-denominational spiritual/religious groups relating to non-denominational aspects:

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM

As [Unitarian Universalism](#) features very few doctrinal thresholds for prospective congregation members, ordinations of UU ministers are considerably less focused upon doctrinal adherence than upon factors such as possessing a [Masters of Divinity](#) degree from an accredited higher institution of education and an ability to articulate an understanding of ethics, spirituality and humanity.

In the [Unitarian Universalist Association](#), candidates for "ministerial fellowship" are approved by Ministerial Fellowship Committee (MFC). However, individual congregations of the UUA possess final voting rights on ordination of ministers, and congregations may sometimes even hire or ordain ministers who have not received ministerial fellowship.

MARRIAGE LICENSE CERTIFICATES & LEGAL OBLIGATION

All marriage certificates must be purchased in person by the bride and groom to be, prior to their marriage ceremony date. Immediately following the ceremony, the minister orchestrates the proper signing of the bride, groom, along with their two witnesses and the minister's signature to seal the legal agreement. The minister then either delivers in person, or mails in the original document after it has been signed, to the appropriate legal court house or government facility the next business day. The minister keeps files a copy in case the couple ever needs to have it.

Marriage can only be legally solemnized with a legal license; No marriage shall be solemnized without a license. Marriage licenses may be issued by the judges of probate from several counties. The license is an authority for anyone qualified to solemnize marriage to join together in matrimony the persons therein named. Any license issued under the provisions of this section shall be invalid if the marriage for which it was issued has not been solemnized within 30 days from the date of issuance. No person now or hereafter authorized by law to solemnize marriages shall perform any ceremony or solemnize any marriage if the license issued for such marriage has become invalid. Said license shall have stamped or printed upon it the words: "This license is void after 30 days from date unless the marriage is solemnized within said time."

All persons or religious societies solemnizing marriage by virtue of a license or according to their peculiar forms must, within one month thereafter, certify the fact in writing to the judge of probate, setting forth the names of the parties and the time and place of the celebration thereof, which certificate must be recorded in the book kept for the registry of licenses. A certified copy thereof is presumptive evidence of the fact.

Failure by the minister to return the marriage certificate to the probate judge: Any judge, minister of the gospel or other person uniting persons in matrimony or any clerk or keeper of the minutes of a religious society celebrating marriage by the consent of the parties before the congregation, who fails to return a certificate thereof to the judge of probate, as required by law, is guilty of a misdemeanor.

MARRIAGE, A CIVIL CONTRACT

Considerations of Genders & Ministers

Marriage is recognized not only as a holy state by some religions, but also as a civil contract individually by each State in the USA. The States have the full authority to say before whom any vows must be taken before that state will recognize who has entered into the civil contract of marriage.

So long as the state does not discriminate between religions or the genders of the persons whom wants to enter in union of marriage, same or opposing genders, and therefore prefer one over another, the state may recognize ministers or refuse to recognize ministers as persons before whom marriage vows may be taken. It is important to refer to each State's current laws on Marriage regarding the genders of the individuals whom they accept as legal binding unions, and laws pertaining to religion and ministry.

When ministers are taking these vows to confirm a civil marriage, they are acting as officers of the State.

The state that allows persons who take religious vows to take civil oaths may inquire generally if such persons really are recognized as ministers or others who may take vows on behalf of that religion or congregation really exists. Beyond this, were the state to inquire into doctrine or dogma, the state would then find itself intruding into those areas that seem so strongly protected by our freedom of religion.

FREEDOM OF RELIGION & HEALERS, AND THE STATE

Religious rights vary from nation to nation. There is a long history of conflict over what may be the proper spheres for religious and the civil authorities. The first King of Israel, Saul, found his authority challenged and rejected by his people when they judged his commands to be contrary to the divine law (Samuel 22:17). David, the supreme civil authority, was later held accountable to divine law (II Samuel 11-12). Daniel of the lion's den fame resisted the civil authority of King Nebuchadnezzar. Christians also followed this tradition to the coliseum and other notable places of martyrdom, harassment and torture. More recently persons, such as Martin Luther King, used civil disobedience to oppose civil laws that transgressed divine law as that law protects the fundamental rights and freedoms of humanity. The present debates that have stretched over the years over abortion rights and responsibilities, as well as who we have the freedom to love addressing the LGBTQ issues, often reach a civil impasse over this fundamental issue. And, more currently issues that have surfaced in the Trump administration era over race, minorities and women's rights.

Under the *Helsinki accords*, August 1, 1975, Article VII, each signatory country pledges that it: "...will respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, including the freedom of thought, conscience, religion or belief, for all without distinction as to race, sex, language or religion."

“Within this framework the participating States will recognize and respect the freedom of the individual to profess and practice, alone or in community with others, religion or belief acting in accordance with the dictates of his own conscience.”

This follows the earlier ***Universal Declaration of Human Rights, articles 18, 19 and 20***, that declares:

18. “Everyone has the right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; this right includes freedom to change his religion or belief, and freedom, either alone or in community with others and in public or private, to manifest her/his religion or belief in teaching, practice, worship and observance.”

19. “Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers.”

20. “Everyone has the right to freedom of peaceful assembly and association.”

“No one may be compelled to belong to an association.”

The notion of these rights formally being recognized by the state has an illustrious and strife torn history. It reached a high point in the First Amendment to the United States of America Constitution, submitted in 1789 to the states for ratification, and thereafter adopted:

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.”

This has been applied not only to congressional action, but to all action of the United States, and even to state action through the application of the due process clause of the fourteenth amendment to the United States Constitution.

There was over a century of strife that preceded the adoption of the first amendment. During the civil war in England, on May 1, 1649, in a proposed “Agreement of the Free People of England” it was proposed that “[W]e... further agree and declare.

That we do not empower or entrust our said representatives to continue in force, or to make any Laws, Oaths, or Covenants, whereby to compel by penalties or otherwise any person to anything in or about matters of faith, Religion or Gods worship or to restrain any person from the profession of his faith, or exercise of Religion according to her/his Conscience, nothing having caused more distractions, and heart burnings in all ages, then persecution and molestation for matters of Conscience in and about Religion”....”

The ‘liberals’ of those times, then often known as the levelers, were unsuccessful in their bid to have this and many other ideals recognized as fundamental rights of humans at the time, but these ideals were written in the minds of men to be returned to each time the struggle for human freedoms was pursued.

The history of Freedom of Religion forms one of the great subjects for volumes in the history of humanity, and space does not permit hardly a further glance at it here.

What is important is that we recognize that we have two combined rights and freedoms:

- (1) The right to believe or not believe; and (2) the right to practice or not practice: any religion of one's own choice, publicly and privately, at least so long as the practice is peaceable in that it does not infringe on the rights of others to safely live their lives and practice or not practice their rights as they choose. The state is interested in the broader question of group intra-social safety and that is the specter that is usually raised to limit any "right" or "freedom."

There is a fundamental difference in law between a "right" and a "privilege." A right is something that one has by virtue of one's own existence and does not depend upon the existence of anyone else (unless that other being a supreme god who is not acting through a human agency to create the right). A privilege is a license to act or not act in certain ways by virtue of someone else's existence and approval, concurrence or at least benign neglect. Rights are possessed by virtue of their existence. Privileges are bestowed, given by virtue of the existence of some one person, group, community, or state that can give them.

It may be argued that rights should be recognized much more freely throughout the United States because of the very strong limitations on the grants of differential and deferential privileges in the restrictions on grants of titles in the United States Constitution (Art. 9 SS 9 & 10) when granted by either the federal or state governments.

From time to time, HDDC through its publication's, may come to address the questions raised by the Handbook Committee. These answers will be added by way of future supplement to this Handbook.

RITUAL

Ritual: 1) A form or system of religious or other rites. 2) Observance of set forms in public worship. 3) Ritual acts or features collectively, as in religious services. 4) Any customary observance or practice.

There are endless components of *ritual*. The Altar usually is a central point of the ceremony from which to set the stage of the type of ritual you have created can come from age old tradition, or creatively and sacredly inspired by you and the couple or persons you are working with. Components such as the sound of a bell, heart rhythm of the drum, a rattle, flame of a candle or sacred fire, the OM circle connecting hands, the cross, the incense, sage, cedar, or palo santo, the bread, mead or wine, blade and chalice, beads, ribbons, crystals, the prayer stick, the flowers, the icon, the water, or the music.

The list of *Rituals* go on that include many of the above mentioned components starting with ones such as the exchange of rings, Handfasting, jumping the broom, the breaking of glass, Candle Union Lighting, Sand, Wine, Burning away the old and invoking the new, there are so many more. Whatever the adornment or the setting of a ritual be, they all serve a principle purpose, which is to engage the conscious mind and heart.

The richness of traditional symbolism creates an atmosphere where one becomes focused and centered within the heart. The God Presence is felt and registered – “Something is going on here!” **Ritual** is for the consciousness to take an alteration, a shift and change. In the quietude of the moment a doorway is opened.

So, it is not so much that Spirit is invoked, as much as that the space is created to conceive that which is Ever Present. From there we consecrate, honor, dedicate or bless.

REMARKS ON CEREMONY

Ceremony is a way of working with the Spirit. It may include ritual, song, dance, speaking or magical formulas. It may be traditional, spontaneous or both. The outer and inner forms are created to achieve a specific effect.

No matter what the form, the essence of ceremony from the minister’s point of view is to function as an intermediary among all participants. This may include people, spirits of all kinds and functions, plants, rocks, animals, stars and planets, thoughts and feelings, hopes and dreams, etc. the participants need not be limited in space or time.

Some ceremonies may have definite end-results or uncertain final state. Exorcism, initiation, birth, and healing ceremonies are less predictable. There is more uncertainty in how things will go during the event, and this may require deeper attention and creative response.

And, there are ceremonies which commemorate events or the passage of time in celebration such as a birthday, traditional feast, or seasonal festival. These may involve established ritual or may be completely spontaneous.

This classification is meant only to stimulate your creativity. An initiation may be very cut and dried, and a birthday may mark a turning point in a life. The important thing is to be in the spirit of the moment; to allow the spirit of the ceremony to embody you so you are aware of all needs as they arise. Sometimes this is fairly simple and at other times it can demand the utmost in concentration and agility. You’ll never know how things will go when you are working with the Spirits. Ceremony can be very powerful, as can laughter.

As we are each unique and individual although all from the same source, so we each work differently with ceremony. There seems to be no right way; only to follow Spirit or the essence of the ceremony, which includes all participants, can open the way, allowing you to be deeply devoted in attention and playfully flexible in rendering the service. Ceremony has the capacity to bring many beings into alignment in space and time. Thus, it is a point of power and focus and will reflect your purity of motive. It can be full of wonder and mystery, much as life itself. We can be stimulated in many ways when we work as an instrument of the Spirit.

HOW TO SOLEMNIZE A MARRIAGE

A guide with general information

Congratulations! As a newly ordained Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Minister, you are now legally privileged to perform marriage ceremonies. If this is your first time, naturally you have many questions. What do you have to do to make it legal? What kind of ceremony will you use or create/write? How will you plan to make it an occasion that will be happily remembered in the years to come? In this guide, you will find the basics and some suggestions for planning. After you perform your first wedding, you will have gained your own experiences that you can build upon for future weddings.

Here is a list of basic “equipment” you will need to successfully complete a Marriage Ceremony:

1. Marriage License (engaged couple will provide – they need to pick it up from their local court house and bring to you on the day of their wedding).
2. Two witnesses over 18 years of age.
3. A black ink pen, preferably more than one.
4. A ceremony that includes vows.
5. Documentation.
6. A plan for the entire event.

LEGALITIES ON SOLEMNIZING MARRIAGES

Although we have notated resources throughout the United States of America, as well as abroad, please note that the procedures mentioned in the, “How to Solemnize a Marriage,” section are based around validation in the State of Oregon. If you are solemnizing a marriage in another state or country, please check the resource list in the contents below, as well with the local authorities regarding the proper rules to follow in that region.

(b) Pastor of religious society; clerk of society to maintain register of marriages; register, etc., deemed presumptive evidence of facts. Marriage may also be solemnized by the pastor of any religious society according to the rules ordained or custom established by such society. The clerk or keeper of the minutes of each society must keep a register and enter therein a particular account of all marriages solemnized by the society, which register, or a sworn copy thereof, is presumptive evidence of the fact.

(c) Quakers, Mennonites or other religious societies. The people called Mennonites, Quakers, or any other Christian society having similar rules or regulations, may solemnize marriage according to their forms by consent of the parties, published and declared before the congregation assembled for public worship.

THE MARRIAGE LICENSE

Addendums D, E & F

It is the responsibility of the bride and grooms to obtain the license. The agency that issues the license makes the determination as to age, consent, previous marital status, etc. The couple will receive a packet which will be given to you the day of the wedding to handle for them, so you need to be prepared ahead of time and be ready to handle this. They will look up to you as their expert and guide.

Make sure to remind the Bride and Groom to go together to their local county Marriage Desk Clerk to pick up the necessary forms, they will need to both show ID and sign some documents there in front of the clerk, and to bring the packet to the wedding to hand to you so you can orchestrate the signing and handle the documents, which you will take away with you to file on their behalf.

Inside the packet there will be:

1. The Marriage License/Certificate of Legal Marriage.
2. A copy of this Marriage License, which you as minister will also have them and their witnesses sign and date; this one you will take back to your office and file; both of which you will sign.
3. Some county court houses they will hand out an application for receiving their legal copy once it has been filed. This you can help them to fill out as well.
4. An optional fancy decorated Certificate of Marriage for the Bride and Groom. (not all couples purchase this; it is an option for them.
5. An envelope addressed to the Clerk of the County in which to mail back the completed forms after the wedding; or you could hand deliver the next business day.

I suggest before your first initial wedding, making a trip to your local marriage deeds and records clerk at your county court house. They are happy to show you exactly where to sign, and how everything needs to be filled out; they usually include an instruction sheet with the packet. The documents and the signing requirements can vary between different counties. [See Addendum D, E & F](#). These forms will show you samples of 1) that county's instruction sheet and how to fill out 2) an actual *Marriage License* form [Addendum D](#), it's 3) *COPY Addendum E* and the 4) the *Decorative Certificate Addendum F*.

Within the hour prior to the start of the wedding ceremony, ask the bride and groom to hand you the packet, of which you will hold for them to prepare right after you pronounce them legally married to their guests. This is a perfect photo opportunity, so get the photographer on board and facilitate making this an important part of the event, to document their legalities.

You can opt to require the bride and groom and their witnesses to sign during the hour prior to the start time of the ceremony, although if they opt to do it this way, to make it legal and binding, they would need to exchange vows to one another during that time. This way, your duties will be completed when you pronounce them legally married to their guests at the end of the ceremony, or do the signing right after the ceremony has completed, before they eat their meal and get swept away by their friends and family. Then celebration can commence, and you can relax!

NAME CHANGES – during the Marriage License process

Brides and grooms may wish to change their names other than the traditional way of the bride taking on the groom's name. This is a time if the groom or the bride wishes to change any portions of their names, to easily do it at this time through filing this document. We are in modern times and increasingly multi cultural as time goes on. Some grooms may wish to add their brides last names onto their own, couples may wish to change their last name by picking a new one together, individuals within

the union may wish to change their first or middle names as well; anything goes here regarding changing names. Double check with your local court house to make sure the laws regarding this are the same in your county as I have stated. Any variances, please report to the Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Ministry, so that we can edit this information.

It may be an option for either or both the Bride and Groom to change and parts of their names when they purchase their Marriage Licenses. Examples of how individuals could change their names could be to create a new last name together, combining their last names, dropping a maiden name or previously married name, changing their individual first or middle names. Each county is different with these rules, so calling your local court house Marriage Deeds and Records clerk is recommended. In Lane County Oregon, it is an option for the Bride and Groom to change their names in any way shape or form they choose during the process of purchasing the Marriage License from the courthouse, as part of filling out the Marriage License form in front of the County Clerk; these would be the initial forms the couple would fill out with the County Clerk, of which they would bring to the wedding for the officiating ceremonial minister to sign after the ceremony has been performed. For all other counties in Oregon, as well as all other states and individual counties in each state, you will need to check on their ruling regarding this question, as the procedures could be different.

WITNESSES

Days prior to the wedding, ask the couple to select their witnesses for the signing on the day of their wedding. There are two documents in which the witnesses will need to have their names. The primary is the Marriage License. In our based area of Eugene Oregon, the county clerk prefers the minister to clearly print the witnesses names onto the legal *Marriage License* form [Addendum D](#); although it is okay if legible, do not have the witnesses print their own names here, so that you as minister can ensure the names are clearly printed for the county clerk to transcribe, however on the ***Decorative Certificate*** [Addendum F](#) they are free to print or sign any way they wish and that the couple agrees to. On this form, they are not required to add their addresses if they wish to omit. On this document, the witnesses are welcome to print or sign in any way they desire as long as the newly married couple are in agreement, keeping in mind that this document is a keepsake for the couple to place on their wall or Altar in their home. Witnesses must be at least 18 years old.

PENS

A pen that has black ink is required. Make sure to have a spare if needed.

CEREMONY SCRIPT COMPONENTS

A ceremony must include actual vows. It must contain words spoken to the effect: “I take you for my wife/husband or husband/husband or wife/wife, or partner on my path.” Beyond this, you and the bride and groom are free to create a unique ceremony or combine the best elements of ceremonies. Start a first draft, and put a complete ceremony script together as a first draft., using the information you have gathered by getting to understand how to best reflect the couple’s belief system, background,

and passions; this will help you choose the readings, poetry and wording. Send them a first draft a few days after they hire you. Keep in contact from that time till the day of the wedding, to reassure them that you are on board, and am taking care of them. Do this by sending emails, texts or a call once in a while to reassure them. A good way is by working out their ceremony script with them. Start it out as a first draft promptly after they have paid for the service, and signed the contract binding their agreement with you outlining your agreements, date and location of their ceremony, etc. Ask them to give you feedback from the first draft, and let them know that your goal is to create a unique and meaningful ceremony for them, and that their feedback is crucial in creating that for them. Go over the ceremony with the bride and groom until it is reflective of them as a couple in a reflective meaningful and unique way; until they love it and you feel really good about delivering it. An easy way to do this is to type up a word document and go back and forth through email until the final version is perfect. Make sure they have read through it, catching any mistakes before the ceremony. You want there to be no surprises when you are finally at the Altar conducting the ceremony.

A day or so prior to the ceremony, you will print out your final version, especially right before you go to the rehearsal. At the rehearsal you might end up making some edits at the last minute as you're doing the run through. I suggest printing it out on nice decorative thicker paper, cream colored or white. Make sure your version is readable to you so you can easily read it during the ceremony. Create a ¼ page book by taking a full 8 ½ x 11 card stock, preferably an alternative color to the one you choose for the actual pages, keeping it a neutral color. Fold the card stock paper in half long ways, then take about a 1 ½ inch at the bottom and do an additional fold so that when you put the written papers inside it, they will be held tucked into the fold. You can experiment.

DOCUMENTATION

Be on top of it. Make sure you have had a detailed conversation with the bride and groom that could be part of the conversation during the consultation or one of the initial meetings, making sure they understand the necessity and importance of purchasing their legal Marriage License documents in a timely fashion from the courthouse before the actual ceremony. Each county has been known to vary as well as change their rulings from occasion, so keep yourself informed by periodically checking on the rulings. The county clerk will not reach out to you to update you, it is your responsibility to check and keep yourself updated. They have a certain amount of time from purchasing their documents, to wait to have the ceremony, although in some counties if they pay an extra fee, the couple will be allowed to have the marriage legalized within a shorter amount of time.

Connect with to remind them to bring the documents to the ceremony, and suggest they place the documents either by the door or directly locked overnight in the car, and remind the bride and groom before the day of the wedding to be prepared to sign the documents shortly after you pronounce them legally married; make an agreement as to when they will do this with you, and remind them that the signing is the final legal act before their local court house files. Let them know you need them to sign the documents immediately following the procession, and definitely before they start eating and partying and before they are swept away to one thing after another, which happens fast at a wedding. If you don't state the boundaries, then you could be left waiting all night for them to be ready to sign

the documents with you. Get them while they are fresh and still looking good for pictures. Get the photographer on board with you, so they can be prepared to snap some shots of the signing ritual.

There are up to four forms you need to pay careful attention to. For the license and the additional copy if there is one, all spaces must be filled in using black ink. Ball point pens are acceptable. The spaces are small, so a fine ball point pen works best. On a separate piece of paper, you could jot down all names and addresses in order to be sure all the information is correct before printing it on the form. Take your time. Fill in all information neatly.

1) The Instructions, Marriage License & copy [See Addendums D, E & F](#)

When you are together with the bride, groom and their two witnesses at the ceremony, take as little of their time as possible. To attain this feat, be prepared ahead of time so that you are not standing there trying to figure out how to fill it out. Go directly to the lines you need to fill out in their presence. On both copies of the documents, you will have the bride and groom sign their names. They will already have done this on one of the documents; it should be already signed and dated, which they would have done in front of the county clerk when they initially purchased their license. The copy if they have one for their county (it could vary county to county whether or not the county gives out a copy to be signed) – this copy is the copy that you get to keep and save in your files for the couple if ever they need for any reason. I suggest scanning and saving and storing in a safe place, like in a safe, in addition to filing the hard copy. In addition to having the bride and groom sign their names, make sure on the copy you have them sign the correct dates; this will be the date of the actual wedding. When they signed in front of the clerk, they would have used that day's date, not the date they planned to get married. Then, you will get the witnesses to clearly print their names so that the county clerk can easily read them, using the exact same lines to mimic on each form that is a copy to the other. As minister, there will be lines to fill in your name sign and print, address phone number, and name and address of the congregation you have been ordained by. Do this on your own when you're back at your home or office, away from the wedding party, so you can take your time filling these lines out. They don't need to stand around watching you do this.

Remind them to contact their local court house where they purchased the documents, to arrange for them to pick up their official copy. This will be ready as soon as the county clerk has the signed documents in their hands. Almost immediately they will seal it with their official stamp and file it. At that time is when they can make a copy for the newly married couple to take home.

2) The Decorative Certificate [See Addendum F](#)

This, you will need to fill out completely with the bride, groom and their two witnesses, as they will want to take it home with them right after the event. The way these documents are laid out, it is often tricky filling them out. The tricky part is where you add the dates. There will be one area to fill in the date they purchased the Marriage License from the court house, and then there will be an area to fill in the date the actual marriage took place. Please review [example Addendum F](#) before you show up to conduct your first wedding.

HANDLING & DELIVERY OF MARRIAGE DOCUMENTS

Refer to Addendums D, E & F

Decorative Certificate of Marriage – Give it to the newly married pair right after you help them fill in the blanks and sign it at the wedding.

Marriage License – You will see two of the same; the second will say **COPY** stamped on the top of the page; some counties continue to include this page, some are not. If the couple was given this **COPY** from the clerk in the packet, you will need to fill out the form to mimic Addendum B, the actual Marriage document that needs to be either handed or mailed in to the court house. Some couples do not realize that the **COPY** needs to be handled and filed by you, so it is important that you go over this with them prior to the ceremony. Note: less counties are sending couples home with this document.

As soon as you put the envelope in the mail, the legal requirements have been met. In Oregon, we are now required to get it to the clerk's office within 5 days of date of ceremony. This is another piece of information to keep updated about, as these rulings have also been known to change. It is always a good idea, if you are not able to hand deliver in person the license to the clerk for filing, to go the extra mile and pick up the phone and make a call to the clerk and make sure they received it. Then, you can relay this to the couple who will be happy to hear the confirmation from you. Again, you have 5 days to get it back into the hands of the Marriage Clerk (according to Lane County in the State of Oregon) to the county of which it was originally purchased and no other. Do it right away; the sooner you do it the better, so you can avoid any possible issues associated with not making the deadline. Couples usually are eager to have this end process secured for affirming their legal matrimony. It's the most important aspect of making their bond legal.

PLANNING THE MARRIAGE CEREMONY

Get a special folder to use during the ceremony. It can be plain or fancy. It will be your "prop." I suggest making one from scratch by taking a cardstock paper - cream colored 8 ½" x 11". Fold it long ways about an inch along one of the longest sides. Then fold it in half making a book to set the papers into. Once the entire script is completely worked out, after getting the final approval from the couple, which you can do via email so that edits are easy and folks can proof at their leisure, then shrink the pages down so to fit into the little book you just made. Work out the entire scenario or program in the form of a script. You will design the ceremony and its wording with the couple, keeping in mind that it is their ceremony and they may have ideas, and much of the time, they have no idea of what they want to say or how they want to do it, or what their options may be. You have to spend a little time getting to know them, so you can do your best at collaborating with the couple, always getting their ideas and offering up your suggestions throughout the entire process. Some bride and grooms are shy and don't want to do a lot of talking, so for those shy folks, create as many, "repeats after me," areas in the script as possible. Encourage them to speak their personal vows to each other by reading from a paper they will have prepared ahead of time. You will be the director of the flow and they are looking up to you as the expert. When you write the script, include such things as who stands where, pauses for the music,

when to ask for the ring, etc. (An example ceremony with script is included at the end of the text.) it is helpful to leave spaces between sections for your notes, in case some come up once you are at the wedding, you might need space to add some unexpected info into the written script.

A rehearsal is advised. This can be a fully elaborate detailed rehearsal, to a very casual rehearsal, where you just talk about how the procession and recession will flow. Even a small, very private wedding should be reviewed with the wedding party, unless it is so simple that it's just the bride, groom, their two witnesses and you. Be sure everyone is clear and feels comfortable about what will happen.

Be prepared to take charge in a calm reassuring manner. The bride and groom are sure to be nervous. You can help them by being a calm soothing presence, calm, grounded and collected yourself. There is a greater potential for a state of high anxiety to exist the bigger the wedding. You may arrive on the scene where several people are in a state of near hysteria with last minute preparations.

There is an old saying that the mother of the bride "isn't worth shooting" on the day of the wedding. The same could be said of the other relatives. Be supportive and keep things moving along. Everyone will be taking their cues from you. Shine forth the light and love that you are, and help everyone keep the joy in their hearts and help them to relax.

A very nice finishing touch is to place a copy of the ceremony script booklet that you made, and the decorated Certificate of Marriage in a pastel blue or pink theme folder. If you wish, you can add a reduced copy of your Ministers Certificate, and some business cards. Give this to the bride and groom for a keepsake. A nice touch would be to slip a Hallmark greeting card in the mail the day prior to the wedding, so that they receive it in the mail from you with another few business cards for referrals, with your well wishes.

Remember, this is a big day for you too. Knowing what to do and planning ahead will eliminate complications, reduce stress and anxiety, and assure that you will have a wonderful experience. Enjoy!

We believe that our ministers should be qualified to conduct marriages anywhere in the United States and probably in many other parts of the world (keeping in mind each country has its own rulings, and you should do some research if interested in a particular country). We cordially invite all who have direct knowledge of local laws and/or customs and requirements to correspond with us so that we may share this information throughout the HDDC; the laws and procedures are often updated, and change frequently. We certainly want to know if any of our ministers have any problems with local governmental authorities or any legal problems in being recognized in their ministry or carrying out any of their functions as a minister of their congregation and trusted servant of the Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Ministry community. We will do our best to help you resolve any issues of these kinds.

MARRIAGE CEREMONIES ACCORDING TO BELIEF SYSTEMS

We welcome additional information from you to insert here. So, please email us with any of which you could feel to be helpful to other ministers, and we will add it to this section.

Types of Marriage Ceremonies are endless, and vary greatly from culture, to religion and spiritual belief, to personal preferences and more. We have collected a few diverse belief systems to share with you, starting with a little education on Paganism. We chose to include information regarding more complicated systems of belief, with information that can help in planning ceremonies with your clients for those who prefer to plan ceremonies within the parameters of the following belief systems.

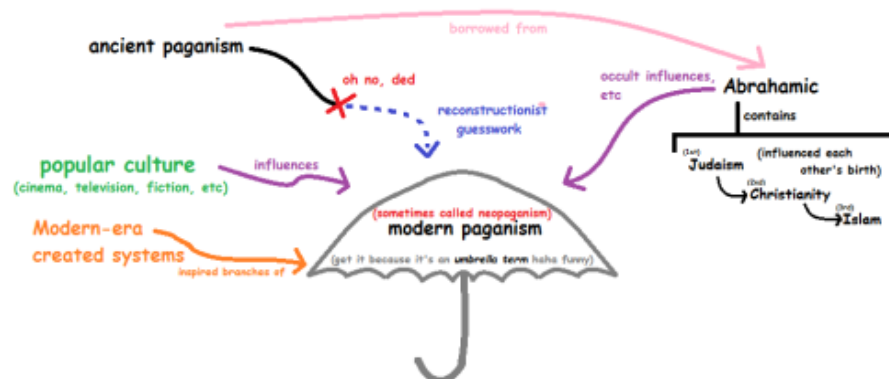
Beginning with an outline on Paganism, as it is actually a complicated system. We have had brides say they want a Pagan wedding, however, in order to create a ceremony, it is helpful to know what type of Pagan ceremony they are looking for. Unless they are a fully practicing Pagan and educated, they may not fully realize the details of what they are looking for. Reading the below information will help guide you.

PAGAN WEDDING CEREMONIES

There are several types of Pagan beliefs around the world. If you are asked to put together a Pagan ceremony, you might think to ask what branch of Paganism they are identifying with, in order for you to help to create a ceremony script with the ritual components of which the couple of whom you are working with, will be able to identify mostly with.

According to *Tyger of PAGAN PATHS* <https://sites.psu.edu/tygertyger/2015/02/26/pagan-paths>:

“The main Pagan paths are Wicca, Norse Reconstructionist, Stregheria, Buddhism, Alexandrian, Dianic, Voudon, Hinduism, Satanism, Celtic Reconstructionist, Christian Pagans, various Native American Beliefs, and so many more.



Explaining each one of these paths would take ages, so perhaps ages from now I will have been able to briefly summarize all major paths. But for now, I will try to just do a brief summary of what it DOES means to choose a Pagan path and what it does NOT mean.

Time for a brief history/language lesson!

So, the term “Pagan” is derived from the Latin word “paganus.”

Paganus: Latin word that means a country dweller, civilian, rustic, or rural.

When Christianity was the great religious trend sweeping the Roman Empire, those who were out in the country were the last to stay in fashion. So, originally, Pagans were the country bumpkins behind in the times. Since then, the word has taken on several different meanings, including: A person who is not a Christian, Jew, or Muslim; one of a people or community observing a polytheistic religion, as the ancient Romans and Greeks. These other definitions are closer to how the term is more often used today.

It gets a little tricky when you apply this term to religion, however. Technically, I am not a Pagan in that I do not practice in the same way ancient Romans or Norse peoples did. You will not find me offering up a cow sacrifice in the middle of July. Or any other time of the year for that matter. And I really hope none of you do either. Many of the Pagan religions derive parts from actual old religions, but they do not actually practice them in the same way. Because of this, the term Neopagan is a little bit closer to accurate.

Neopaganism: A movement by modern people to revive nature-worshipping, pre-Christian religions or other nature-based spiritual paths, frequently also incorporating contemporary progressive values

So why do I, and many others, still refer to ourselves as Pagan? Just because it's easier, really. I'm lazy, and it takes less time to say Pagan. It also sounds nice. But I do know the difference and I wanted you to as well.

Still with me? Great!

Before I get too much further, I want to say a few things Paganism is not. First off, no, Paganism is not devil-worship. Worship the devil, you have to believe in the devil; the devil is a Christian concept, and therefore not a part of Paganism. Pagans also do not sacrifice animals. It serves no purpose and harms another being. And no, we cannot turn you into a toad. Basically, anything that you've heard from a movie about witches is likely untrue.

Now, learning about all of the different forms can be overwhelming. Just keep in mind that you need to find what feels right for you. Don't choose a Greek pantheon just because they're more well known, especially if you find yourself drawn to Egyptian Gods. Also, keep in mind that eclecticism is a thing. Eclecticism is when you put together something with parts from various locations. In this context, it is taking bits that feel right from, say, Buddhism, and combining it with aspects of Native American Beliefs and Dianic Paganism.

Now, there are several aspects that change from branch to branch of Paganism. These include: the number of deities, the gender of the deity/deities, the afterlife, and how one actually practices spells, rituals, and through other services. Again, go with what works for you. Sometimes what works for you can change. Starting out, I was much more steeped in Wicca. Now, through events in my life and my own soul-seeking, I've come to have more Buddhism influenced beliefs.

With this information, I think it will be a little easier navigating through this website and understanding what you will read here and elsewhere. The biggest thing is just to learn and find out about yourself,

what you feel, how you think, and what you believe. I will go in more depth with a lot of what I touched upon here at another time, but I think it is enough to get a grip on what we'll be exploring.

Until we meet again,"

– Tyger of PAGAN PATHS <https://sites.psu.edu/tygertyger/2015/02/26/pagan-paths>

Check out more on the above link, to help explain and describe the many different Pagan paths, which umbrella a variety of beliefs, ceremonies and rituals which may vary.

ALTARS, SACRED OBJECTS & ORNAMENTALS

We suggest you incorporate sacredness into all of your ceremonies, Weddings, Rites of Passages, Funeral End of Life Ceremonies, etc. by creating Altars honoring every occasion, reflecting the nature of the people in which you are conducting ceremony for, by helping them to co-create *Sacred Spaces* and an *Altar*.

CEREMONY SCRIPTS

NOTE: Have the couple pay for the services and sign a contract binding them to the agreement prior to presenting them with a ceremony script. There have been a couple times I have presented my proposed script to a couple, and then they ran with the script and severed the services. Remember writing the script takes time and energy; even just cutting and pasting from previous wedding scripts along with any internet/book research takes time, and your time is valuable. Keeping boundaries with your energy output will keep the drive to help couples with their ceremonies fresher and more vibrant.

We have compiled hundreds of unique, sacred and meaningful ceremonies. We have selected a few to share with you and get you started. In addition, with the internet it is easy to research and pull from findings to help you create unique beautiful ceremonies. We have included a few varying ceremony scripts for you to model from. See attached [Addendums, I-R](#), which includes several Marriage Ceremonies to view. The flow of a legal binding ceremony goes like this: The Procession, Welcoming, Stating Intentions for the Ceremony, Vow Exchange, Ring Exchange, Pronouncement, The Kiss, Recession, and don't forget The Signing afterwards!

We welcome you to share your favorite ones as you start to collect them, which we will add upon your permission to our PDF file collection. Just send us your scripts through email if you'd like to share any with us. If you would like to share, please keep in mind to change or remove the names of the actual wedding party involved, as to keep their information private and confidential. These ceremonies are personal experiences for the couples and persons in initiated through the ceremony, and insights that a minister has experienced or gained.

Please keep in mind that these are only suggestions given by others for your assistance and consideration. Feel free to modify, copy paste, edit, and to make them unique as possible to reflect the couple you are working with.

As can be seen from the **RESOURCES PAGE** where you can find the Addendums containing sample forms and details of important instructions regarding forms, signing and handling, there are many more ceremonies listed than are described offered to you as direct samples. This Handbook is intended to be a dynamic and changing vehicle for the minister. As such, from time to time, there may be supplements to update the PDF, of which you will have access to. (**How to make this Handbook and Addendums easily accessible to the new ministers as time goes on??? Ask WP Live for suggestions)

So, in whatever way you make use of these sample ceremonies, please remember that we are all sharing a common experience. Both the celebrant and the participants are joined together in the act of the ceremony and equally reap the final results.

PROTOCOL UP TO AND ON DAY OF THE WEDDING

The divine rites you've been appointed to embody spirit, exercising your right as a spiritual conduit, messenger and healer. Channel the ancient priestess & priests that have come before you throughout time. Embody and feel the empowerment and immerse your senses into it during these ceremonial occasions, as you have been chosen to lead sacred ceremonies. Embody these sacred ceremonies that have been led and conducted by others throughout time and space, through many diverse cultures, religions, countries, events and festivals.

Take time to meditate, vision quest, soul search, shamanic journey, cleanse & purify yourself as you prepare for sacred ceremony, especially for your first few.

The day before the wedding, send the couple a text reassuring them that you will be there at the agreed upon time, which should be at least 30 minutes ahead of the ceremony start time. Remind them to make sure they have their documents packed to bring the next day. If they haven't gotten it by now, they will need to go to the court house the next business day to acquire it. That day will be the legal day at that point of their wedding, and you will need to arrange to meet them at the court house or thereafter. Try not to let this happen. I had an awkward situation in which a couple in which there had been a communication error about the fact that they would need to go there themselves, and that I as minister was not able to get the documents for them on their behalf, as the couple needs to show ID and sign in front of the county clerk. Suggest they place them in the car ahead of time. If you haven't been there for a rehearsal the day before, give yourself a little extra time to get there.

Never be late, early is best. The day of the wedding, send them another text letting them know when you are on your way.

Once at the ceremony location on the day of the wedding, immediately go to the bride and groom. The groom is likely to be mixed in with the guests, and the bride is likely getting ready in her dressing room with her bridesmaids. Once you find them, with a relaxed feeling and a smile, let them that you are there on duty and ready to be of service to them, they will immediately be relieved and grateful. If you

have any nervousness, keep that private, and work those feelings out inside yourself, only showing your calm confidence. If you are a new minister and new at conducting weddings, “Fake it till you Make it,” is a good motto. Let each of them know that you will help them with the timing and flow. You should have already chatted with them about this prior to this day about this, but this is a time to remind them, and let them know that you are on it to lead them through the ceremony. They will be looking at you for direction the entire time; you are leading them and their entire wedding party through the procession and ceremony, as in their eyes, you are the expert. On occasion, I have had a twenty something bridesmaid Leo type try to lead the directions, being helpful, but gently take charge in the kindness of ways.

IT’S ALL ABOUT TIMING

Find the DJ, and chat with them about coordinating the procession with the music and discuss the timing. Make sure the two of you are on board with each other and the music cues. The DJ may have a lapel for you to put on. When the bride says she is about 5 minutes from being ready, then quickly go let the DJ and groom know, and quickly spread the word, so everyone can get seated and the bridal party can get in line.

At some weddings, the couple will have asked you to stand up at the Altar and let the guest know the wedding is about to happen within moments, and for them to be seated. At other weddings, someone else may be designated to do that. At some weddings, the minister will stand a few moments alone at the Altar to watch as the rest of the wedding party starts the procession. At other weddings, you will be walking up to the Altar alongside the groom, with the remainder of the wedding party to flow behind you, all taking their places at the Altar after you.

The groom should stand in an easy position in which he will be facing the bride as she walks towards him depending upon which direction she is coming from, and that could put the groom on either right or left side.

PROCESSIONAL – WEDDING MARCH

Each wedding procession and positioning can be done uniquely. I invite you to be expansive in your creative thought on how this could all look ahead of time, and explore this topic with them beforehand.

What is traditional is for all the guests sit in rows looking at the bride and groom and their wedding party at the Altar. Some couples might like to be in the center of a circle with the guests standing or sitting all around them.

The Minister and groom could be awaiting the bride and the wedding party at the Altar. The Minister could be waiting the groom, bride and wedding party, as they make their way to the Altar. In this way, the Groom would come first, then the groom’s men and bride’s maids would come next, then the flower girl, ring bearer, bride then bride’s maid to help her with her dress. Then, they would all take their places around the Altar and Minister.

This can vary from situation of size of wedding, amount of people in the wedding party, location and personal preferences.

Each wedding procession and positioning can be done uniquely. I invite you to be expansive in your creative thought on how this could all look ahead of time. What is standard is all the guests sit in rows looking at the bride and groom and their wedding party at the Altar. Some couples might like to be in the center of a circle with the guests standing or sitting all around them. These are things to explore with them beforehand.

Once everyone is at the Altar, if you haven't already done a sound check (this is suggested ahead of the guests arriving), then engage with the audience, and say something like, "Greetings, can everyone hear me?" If some folks can't, then adjust your projection if needed.

There will be times when you are addressing the guests, and during these times, look out at the guests as you speak. At other times, you will be talking directly to the bride and the groom, adjusting your focus back to them.

When you are speaking to the bride and groom, you will adjust the projection of your voice. At tender moments, either the bride or groom may get emotional. These are times in which you can pause and allow them to have their moments, being there to hold space. If you notice them getting nervous, breathe and smile, and say gentle quiet words such as, "just take your time...this is your time, there's no rush, etc." Remind them that this is about them, and not being a show for their guests.

Usually all the guests want to hear everything that is said (keep in mind those with hearing loss in the audience), but at times it may be quieter when you are speaking directly to the bride and groom.

Have a little humor, and be in the moment. Notice and acknowledge any natural gifts that spirit brings to the moments while you are at the Altar. Often times humming birds, butterflies, dragon flies or other creatures may pay a visit and offering during the ceremony.

Try to memorize as much as possible the beginning statements or at least the first line so you can speak and look out at the guests at the same time, rather than looking down at your booklet. Get good at reading a few words ahead of time so that it will create a nice flow as you are speaking. You do not need to memorize the whole ceremony, that is impossible for most people to do. But do try and read a few words or a line ahead in your mind before you speak it so that there can be a nice flow, and take your time with speaking the words. If you go too fast, the words may twist in your tongue and you might slur or mispronounce, so be mindful of not doing that. Also, try to memorize the PRONOUNCEMENT at the end; beginnings and endings are important to try and speak by at least some memory and at times you might find yourself speaking the concept of the beginning or ending and may not get every word exact. Although, if you miss a word here and there (try not to though), pretend to be smooth through the mistakes; the rare person will catch it, most will not and in the end, it's not what they will remember for years to come of their ceremony. It's likely no one will notice.

For the Altar table, make sure everything is set up ahead of time with all the increments and necessary tools you will need to conduct ritual.

It's extremely important to get the pronouncing of words and names correct, especially the names of the bride and groom and their last name if the bride is taking the grooms name. You don't want to be caught mispronouncing their names, so make sure ahead of time that you have it right. In these times, there are so many names that are spelled one way, that sound another to the owner of the name. You will always need to speak the bride and groom's names first and last, but you can choose the other words in the script to say out loud. If you know you are likely to get one out wrongly pronounced, it's best to avoid saying the word all together. Here are a couple of examples I have. Early on in my career of officiating weddings, I had only emailed with bride Jana, and never spoken to her. My mistake was that I failed to ask her at the wedding when I met her for the first time, to sound her name to me. I wish I had, because oops, I pronounced it incorrectly; I said Jana vs. Jayna. There are so many names like this, so please learn from my mistake. It changed the mood for the remainder of the ceremony and evening.

Another incident was with a word from the bible that was a tongue twister to me. When it twisted my tongue up for the second time, I decided I would not attempt it again. You can write words and names phonetically into the script, but make sure you are confident on your delivery. If you can't be certain that your delivery will be smooth, then take it out, and make sure the bride and groom understand's. Maybe they can agree to speak it during the ceremony instead of you.

Once you pronounce them husband and wife, or "now married," etc., then "kiss the bride!" stand back or step aside as they kiss so they can have pictures of just the two of them kissing, and not you overlooking the kiss. Think of these pictures on their walls at home. They may not necessarily want all the kissing pictures with you in it watching them.

SIGNING AND HANDLING THE LEGAL DOCUMENTS

Do so Immediately Post-Ceremony

This will save you time in the end. I highly suggest that you have already let them know ahead of time to be prepared to do the signing of the documents sometime shortly after their recession and before they eat. There may be some lag time here, but if you wait to sign till after they eat, you might be waiting all night to get home. This way, you can have the option to stay and eat, or scam after the signing.

You will need to coordinate with the photographer, and remind both the couple and photographer when you are ready to do the signing. Ask both the photographer and the couple where they think a good spot to sign would be, and that it is a great photo op, since the document signing is the piece of the puzzle that make their wedded union legitimate.

You as the minister will take hold of the documents and lead them through the entire signing. Take care of them through this process, and train yourself ahead of time to know exactly where they and their two witnesses need to sign, so you are not fumbling about in front of them and hoarding time, plus you want to look like a relaxed, happy confident professional the entire time in front of them. Their time is

precious, and they will want to get back to their guests, eating and the party as soon as possible. Only have them sign the minimum, and you take home the rest to complete. If they have the decorative script to sign, you will need to complete that there in front of them, because you will be leaving that with them. See below for more complete instructions on filling the form out.

Always keep yourself in the role you are playing at the ceremony; professional and caring. Most of the time, the bride and groom will invite you to join them the reception and have dinner. It is usually assumed that you are invited to stay if you would like, and sometimes they will have set a seat aside for you. Don't assume that your partner or child can come to the wedding and dinner without asking them early on when you are going over everything initially. If you stay, please don't allow yourself to get too intoxicated by drink too much alcohol and tell inappropriate jokes, or find a date at the party. People will see you as the minister who conducted the ceremony, and want to chat with you about your spiritual beliefs, theology and religion, and tell you their stories. Remain the minister at all times. This is a time to mingle with the guests keeping yourself appropriate at all times, handing your business cards out, and then knowing when to slip out, but not before you walk up to the bride and groom to say your well wishes, thank, "You's! & Good-byes!"

OTHER CEREMONIES TO CONSIDER

Be expansive and creative in the repertoire of ceremonies that you have the ability to offer. There are many more life transitional ceremonies to honor and heal all transitions and stages of life.

Consider the idea of offering, "Releasing Ceremonies, Healing with Love & Kindness." Divorce & Break-up ceremonies, loss of pet end of Life Ceremonies, Self-Initiation Ceremonies and more. Be expansive in your healing ideas for your community.

We welcome you to share your ideas with us. We are happy to add your information here to share with other ministers.

DEATH, LOSS & GRIEVING

Funerals and End of Life Services

It isn't necessary to be a legal Ordained Minister to officiate end of life services as needed for solemnizing marriages. Although it is your right as an Ordained Minister to perform end of life ceremonies which include Celebration of Life Funerals and any and all end of life services to include Bereavement support for the dying and supporting friends and family. Embody these times in peoples lives and these rites as officiating minister. Seize the opportunity to help those around you and beyond which you can affect in a positively supporting manor during end of life times.

THE MINISTER AS SHAMAN AND WORKING WITH THE DEAD

After a death, the first duty of the Shaman Minister is to take care of the Dead. If necessary, the shaman slash Minister must help the soul continue the journey on the other side. Perhaps this all of the Dead is bound to Earth due to the limitations the soul had created during the lifetime. Or perhaps the loved ones left behind or not willing to let the soul of this person pass on. In any case, so soft and need

guidance in leaving this plane. The minister must speak with the soul about continuing the journey, (the Shaman will actually escort the soul to the other world). None of this is required to be done in the Gathering of people but rather, the ceremony is conducted in solitude.

Another duty of Minister is to speak to the loved ones of the Dead Soul, telling of the importance of why they must release the soul. They may honor memories, but they must release the soul. If it seems all too impossible for them to release the soul, then ask them this, “would they want anyone to prevent them from growing?” Certainly not!

As the loved ones are gathered together, the minister can have them give a last gift to the soul of the Dead, i.e. their approval to release the soul to continue on its Journey. A ‘group release’ will lift the soul into a loving departure, freeing it from further obligations to fulfill on the Earth plane.

The Shamans / Minister also believes that the dying process is the same as the birthing process. From the moment of death, the soul enters a tunnel, traveling towards the light. Moving through the tunnel, i.e. the birthing canal and finding a new body to continue on in is the death and rebirth process. To die is to be born. Both are the same.

IMPORTANT QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

(Please note: due to the fact that this handbook has been designed for general circulation between ministers ordained through The Church of the Hearth of the Dancing Drum Ministry, there has been no specific response to questions addressed to particular laws of particular jurisdictions. Answers to those questions should be sought from competent legal counsel in those jurisdictions).

Q: What is the law concerning the confidentiality of discussions between a minister and a person who has come to the minister for counseling?

A: Client confidentiality. A minister acting as counselor is required to keep all information in confidence, and is not to share a client’s name or any other information regarding the communication or relationship between client and minister that would be considered personal information with anyone, not even your spouse.

Q: How does the IRS view income earned by clergy? Are donations for services rendered as clergy treated differently than being paid a salary or charging a fee? What are the deductions that can only be claimed by clergy?

A: For detailed answers, start your research by checking out this link:
<https://finance.zacks.com/list-ministers-tax-deductions-10252.html>

Q: Can I get tax deductions on my property as an Ordained Minister?

A: For detailed information in Oregon, visit:
<https://www.oregon.gov/DOR/programs/property/Pages/exemptions.aspx>

Q: In regards to the current laws on separation of church and state, what areas according to the law belong exclusively to the church?

A: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Separation_of_church_and_state

Q: What are the legal rights and protections for a minister? Can a minister be sued, denied the right to practice her/his religion and/or to administer to her/his congregation?

A: This is another big answer that needs to be researched. Try using this book purchasable on Amazon.com: The Rule of Law and the Rule of God, by Ilesanmi, W. Lee, et al. | Oct 9, 2014

https://smile.amazon.com/s?k=9781137447760&i=stripbooks&_encoding=UTF8&linkCode=qs&ref=smi_www_rco2_go_smi_8217842112

Q: What can a minister do to protect her/himself from frivolous law suits?

A: By understanding the laws and rules of the state or country you are in.