

A religious or civil marriage isn't the only option. This issue we chat to Interfaith minister **Angie Alexandra** to find out about the types of ceremonies she conducts



# ask the celebrant

## Can you explain what the term interfaith means?

Usually it refers to dialogue and worship between people of different religions. However, interfaith ministers trained and ordained by The Interfaith Seminary expand the term to include ministering to the whole of humanity regardless of whether people have a faith or not; whether they follow a particular religious or spiritual path or not.

## What does an interfaith wedding generally consist of?

There are no set rules. I encourage my brides and grooms to be as traditional or creative as they choose. As long as the elements they choose are fitting and appropriate the couple can include anything they wish. Most couples ask for their ceremony to include prayers that welcome family and friends of all faiths and no faith. Also many couples include readings and music, which can be spiritual, religious or secular.

## Why should couples choose an interfaith minister?

In Scotland interfaith ministers can give couples a great degree of flexibility and choice with all aspects of their ceremony. We can marry you literally anywhere in Scotland – on a beach, in a castle, by a loch. Scotland is unique in that you can get married in your own front room or garden. As individuals, interfaith ministers gain automatic authorisation to carry out ceremonies, on account of our affiliation with the seminary we trained with and were ordained by. However, to make each ceremony legal, interfaith ministers must seek authorisation by the Registrar General. We can use the wording and language that best fits the couple and their community, whereas civil and Humanist celebrants won't include anything that could be classed as spiritual or religious.

## Would a couple need another ceremony to make the marriage legal?

No, you only need the one ceremony in Scotland. As long as it's with an ordained interfaith minister who has been authorised by the Registrar General and you include certain legal elements (such as having two witnesses and verbally agreeing to take each other as husband and wife) an interfaith ceremony is legal.

## How many weddings have you conducted?

Coming up to 20. About a third of them I've held jointly with my partner Will, who's also an interfaith minister. Some people have invited us to hold their marriage ceremony as a couple to honour the masculine and the feminine.



ANGIE ALEXANDRA,  
INTERFAITH MINISTER

## Won't the guests be confused by an interfaith ceremony?

They haven't been so far! Often I begin a ceremony by letting the guests know that the ceremony may be different to anything they've experienced before, and I explain that this is the choice of the bride and groom. The most common feedback I've had from guests has been one of pleasure and surprise. They've felt moved by how personal and intimate the ceremony has been. Occasionally brides and grooms have felt nervous because their parents or grandparents have been quite religious, but often it's those people who are most enthusiastic afterwards.

## Any advice for people who are worried about nerves on the day?

Whether you think it's likely you'll feel nervous on the day or not, the best advice I can give anyone about to get married is to give yourself plenty of time to think about the step you're going to take – don't lose yourself in all the outer, practical preparations (it's easy to do!). Avoiding thinking about the enormity of the step you're about to take is not the best way to go! It doesn't go away, and could bring on unnecessary nerves as the ceremony draws closer. It's much more enjoyable to feel calm yet excited than unprepared and nervous!

## In your experience what are the most common problems on the wedding day?

The most common problem I've encountered brides and grooms having is running out of preparation time and then feeling stressed and upset with themselves. This can easily be avoided with a little forward planning. Brides and grooms often take on too much of the last-minute preparations, which can end up being at the expense of them enjoying the final run up to the wedding.

## Anything else you think couples should know?

Interfaith ministers haven't been around all that long and not everyone knows that they have this option. There are ministers at your service throughout the UK and Europe, as well as in the US. Each minister has their own unique style but we all live and work to a code of ethics and practice. Ordained interfaith ministers who have been authorised by the Registrar General can marry you legally anywhere in Scotland, but this isn't the case yet in other parts of the UK and Europe. Outside Scotland it's most common to have a short legal civil ceremony in a Registry Office, which then gives you complete freedom to have an interfaith ceremony in the style and location of your choice. SWD



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