

**REQUIREMENTS FOR RELIGIOUS OFFICIANTS TO BE AUTHORIZED BY THE KING
WILLIAM CIRCUIT COURT TO PERFORM
RELIGIOUS MARRIAGE CEREMONIES**

The Judge will review your application to perform marriages, which you have filed pursuant to Virginia Code § 20-23.

Virginia Code § 20-23 provides that:

When a minister of any religious denomination produces before the circuit court of any county or city in the Commonwealth, or before the judge of such court or before the clerk of such court at any time, proof of his ordination and of his being in regular communion with the religious society of which he is a reputed member, or proof that he is commissioned to pastoral ministry or holds a local minister's license and is serving as a regularly appointed pastor in his denomination, such court, or the judge thereof, or the clerk of such court at any time, may make an order authorizing such minister to celebrate the rites of matrimony in the Commonwealth. Any order made under this section may be rescinded at any time by the court or by the judge thereof. No oath shall be required of a minister authorized to celebrate the rites of matrimony, nor shall such minister be considered an officer of the Commonwealth by virtue of such authorization.

As a secular statute the courts are not concerned with the religious aspect of the marriage ceremony. Cramer v. Commonwealth, 214 Va. 561, 565, 202 S.E.2d 911, cert. denied 419 U.S. 875, 875, 42 L.Ed 2d (1974). However, only "ministers" may qualify under this statute to perform marriages, and in that same case the Supreme Court of Virginia ruled that:

A Church which consists of all ministers, and in which all new converts can become instant ministers, in fact has no "minister" within the contemplation of Code 20-23. The minister referred to there is the head of a religious congregation, society, or order. He is set apart as the leader. He is the person elected or selected in accordance with the ritual, bylaws, or discipline of the order. By contrast, in Universal [Life Church, Inc.] every living person is not eligible for membership, but eligible for immediate ordination into the ministry, with all the benefits of that profession. We do not believe that the General Assembly ever intended to qualify for licensing to marry, a minister whose title and status could be so casually and cavalierly acquired. Id at 566-567.

Please provide the Judge with evidence of your ordination, such as a certificate of ordination from your church.

Please also provide the Judge with the following information:

1. Educational Background (This should include all degrees and courses there were completed as part of any training program that was required.)

2. How many members are in your congregation?

3. Where does your church hold its services?

4. How often do you hold church services, and how many people on average attend those services?

5. What are the requirements for ordination as a minister in your church?

6. How many ministers including yourself are members of your church or on its staff?

Pursuant to Cramer v. Commonwealth, 214 Va. 561, the Court **does not** recognize online ordinations.

Authorizations are effective immediately and are valid for marriage ceremonies performed under a Virginia Marriage License anywhere in the Commonwealth of Virginia. There is no expiration on the authorization.

Submit this information, the affidavit, any certifications, a copy of your driver's license, and payment in the amount of \$52.00 to the King William Circuit Court. Please mail to: King William Circuit Court, 351 Courthouse Ln, Ste 130, King William, VA 23086.

VIRGINIA: IN THE CLERK'K OFFICE OF THE CIRCUIT COURT OF KING WILLIAM COUNTY

IN RE: Affidavit Authorizing Minister to Perform Marriage Ceremony Under § 20-23

Under Oath, I state that:

I am an ordained minister (proof of ordination attached)

I am in regular communion with the religious society of which I am a member.

I am a minister of the following religious denomination:

I have been commissioned to pastoral ministry.

I have been elected or selected as minister in accordance with ritual, bylaws or discipline of my church, religious denomination, or society

I currently hold or have held the following leadership position in my religious denomination:

Name and location of church/religious organization or society of which I am a member:

Printed Name of Requesting Person

Signature of Requesting Person

Subscribed and sworn to before me on _____.

Clerk/Deputy Clerk