Marriage Celebrancy Services and Network of Officiants
Description of Services

Since the founding of its Marriage Celebrancy division in 2006, Muslims for Progressive Values has helped hundreds of couples from diverse backgrounds formalize their marriage vows while incorporating the traditions of Islam.

We strive to give a presentation that is grounded in tradition but at the same time, we make extra efforts to understand your unique situation and develop a program that meets your needs and those of your families. Our service is an excellent fit for couples that are non-traditional within the Muslim community, as well as more traditional couples that seek a progressive and inspiring Nikah presentation that will be enjoyed by Muslims and non-Muslims alike.

Today we are pleased to offer you the opportunity to connect with our Network of Officiants. Each one brings their own unique background and experience to their work while pledging to uphold MPV’s Principles of Inclusion (see next page). For booking information, see Booking Your Officiant towards the end of the package.
**Collective Identity:** While we accept as Muslim anyone who identifies as such, the veracity and integrity of that claim is between the individual and God, and is not a matter for the state nor an issue which other individuals can or should judge. We welcome all Muslim and Non-Muslims who share our belief in a world where each person has value and deserves respect.

**Equality:** We affirm the equal worth of all human beings, regardless of race, sex, gender, gender identification, ethnicity, nationality, creed, sexual orientation, or ability. We are committed to work toward societies that ensure social, political, educational, and economic opportunities for all.

**Separation of Religious and State Authorities:** We believe that freedom of conscience is not only essential to all human societies but integral to the Qur'anic view of humanity. We believe that secular government is the only way to achieve the Islamic ideal of freedom from compulsion in matters of faith.

**Freedom of Speech:** We support freedom of expression and freedom of dissent. No one should be prosecuted, imprisoned, detained, or persecuted in any way for declaring or promoting unpopular opinion.

**Universal Human Rights:** We are committed to social, economic and environmental justice. We believe that the full self-realization of all people, in a safe and sustainable world, is a prerequisite for freedom, civility, and peace. We support efforts for universal health care, universal public education, the protection of our environment, and the eradication of poverty.

**Gender Equality:** We support women’s agency and self-determination in every aspect of their lives. We believe in women's full participation in society at every level. We are committed to reproductive justice and empowering women to make healthy decisions regarding their bodies, sexuality, and reproduction.

**LGBTQI Inclusion:** We support full equality and inclusion of all individuals, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, in society and in the Muslim community. We are committed to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity. We endorse the human and civil rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersex (LGBTQI) individuals.

**Critical Analysis and Interpretation:** We believe that critical thinking is essential to spiritual and social development. We promote interpretations that reflect traditional Qur'anic principles of inclusiveness, mercy, compassion, and fairness. We call for critical engagement with Islamic scripture, traditional jurisprudence in current Muslim discourses.

**Compassion:** We affirm that justice and compassion should be the guiding principles for all aspects of human conduct. We repudiate the use of violence whether on an individual, organizational, and/or national level.

**Diversity:** We embrace pluralism and the diversity of inspirations that motivate people to embrace justice. We affirm that one’s belief system is not the exclusive source of truth. We engage with a diversity of philosophical, spiritual and non-spiritual traditions to pursue a more just, peaceful and sustainable world.
Nihal is originally from Egypt, and is fluent in both Arabic and English. A pharmacist by training, Nihal began officiating in 2020. She is well versed in Arabic cultural marriage ceremonies, and can officiate hybrid Arab-Western marriage ceremonies while keeping both Islamic and American traditions in mind. She is an experienced reciter of the Qur'an. Nihal is available for ceremonies in the Cincinnati area, and can travel in limited situations when her schedule permits.

CINNCINATTI, OH

CONTACT
nihalelrouby@gmail.com

COST ESTIMATE
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Kandeel Javid has found officiating marriages to be one of the most rewarding things in life. With a strong focus on embellishing the uniqueness of the couple, Kandeel officiates marriages with care, compassion and inclusion of both parties within this sacred communion. His progressive views allow him to be inclusive and welcoming, congratulating attendees at each ceremony in multiple languages. He recites Quranic verses in Arabic with fluency and conducts the khutbah in English. He speaks fluent Urdu and knows scriptural Arabic. Kandeel is available for ceremonies in the Boston area and can travel when his schedule permits.

CONTACT
kandeel.javid@gmail.com

COST ESTIMATE
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Imam Philip Tuley has been performing weddings and Nikahs for over 35 years and is one of our traveling officiants. Originally ordained in the Church of Amron, San Francisco, in 1984, he officiated numerous weddings, often involving interfaith or interracial couples and informally at first, then legally binding, LGBTQ+ couples. His own marriage is interfaith, Phillip is a Muslim while his wife Lea is a devout Christian and their daughters are agnostic.

Philip feels it is a blessing to join two souls in marriage, as the unity of the couple into a single unit draws the couple closer in spirit to the singularity of the All-Loving, Allah (SWT). Philip has a diverse background in theology & spirituality. Born in Phoenix, Arizona, his studies have taken him across the United States, into Southeast Asia, & Europe. He converted to Islam in 1989, after a long period of spiritual search. He brings a distinctive Sufi approach to his officiating and to his activities within MPV & his local mosque. He brings this broad exposure to every spiritual endeavor he undertakes. His goal is to share the love and the oneness of The Beloved with all whom he encounters. Imam Phillip is available for weddings in the San Francisco area and is willing to travel when his schedule permits.

"Thanks so much for facilitating our ceremony and the amazing process of marrying us. The Nikah was great & Alicia's family could not stop raving about how much they loved it! My family of course appreciated the inclusivity & loved learning more about the Muslim wedding tradition in the process. Thanks again for being a rock on this tumultuous journey getting married has been a very challenging process. But you have been a breath of fresh air through it all."
Dr. Mike Mohamed Ghouse is the founder and President of the Center for Pluralism, an organization committed to building cohesive societies where every human feels secure in their faith, religion, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual orientation and political orientation. As a part of his service to humanity, he officiates interfaith marriages and believes that God puts love between two individuals and brings them together. When two individuals fall in love with each other, the ultimate milestone in their relationship is marriage. Mike has officiated weddings between Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews, Atheists, Jains, Sikhs and Buddhists.

Through consultations with the couple, he customizes the proceedings and sermons in both their faith traditions if they choose to remain in their respective faiths. If one decides to become a Muslim out of free will, the conversion ceremony will take place minutes before the wedding. Counseling is also available in handling conflicts that may arise out of different religious and cultural practices. Mike has written a well-researched 5000 words chapter, "Can A Muslim Woman Marry A Non-Muslim?" in his book America Muslim Agenda, available on Kindle & Amazon. He also manages a think tank called World Muslim Congress.

Everything about him is at his website. He will travel within the United States when his schedule permits.
Ani pioneered MPV’s Islamic interfaith-nikah service & has officiated hundreds of weddings since 2006. An award-winning songwriter and a singer, Ani’s presentation of the Qur’an at weddings is unique & memorable, the perfect touch for a distinctive and elegant Muslim wedding. Ani’s work as an Imam, marriage officiant, founder of the progressive movement and her human rights work can be viewed in the documentary "al-iman".

Ani was born and raised Muslim from Malaysia, and as the daughter of the Malaysian Ambassador to Germany, Egypt & India. Her work as a human rights activist takes her to many disparate parts of the Muslim world & she has regularly led prayers as an Imam in the Los Angeles area. She & her husband of Dutch heritage have been married for over 30 years; together they have one adult daughter.

Ani conducts a very limited number of weddings in the Los Angeles area & is available to travel for select engagements when her schedule permits.
Jamal Mahmood has conducted Nikah ceremonies as a madhun (officiant) with MPV since 2016. He is credentialed as a civil celebrant through the Celebrant Foundation and Institute. Jamal’s services have been documented on multiple occasions in The New York Times’ Wedding Section, as well as "The Knot" magazine & Reddit. He has received dozens of glowing reviews from couples. He is the author of the essay "Reflections on Muslim-Interfaith Marriage", available for purchase on our website.

Jamal is of Pakistani and Dutch descent. He grew up in the United States in an interfaith household with a Muslim father and a Jehovah’s Witness mother. His primary occupation is a financial planner. He and his wife have been married since 2003 and they have two children together. Jamal conducts a limited number of weddings in the New York area and is available to travel when his schedule permits.

"We cannot thank you enough for yesterday. You truly made the ceremony go as seamless as possible. You truly amazed both sides/cultures of our families. Everyone could not stop talking about how touching everything was. It was everything we wanted out of yesterday’s ceremony. Would you send us your address? My parent’s want to send you a thank you card and so do we!"
Is a Nikah a legal marriage? To be legally married in the United States, you need to obtain a marriage license from the county in which you are getting married. We do not issue these licenses. You need to contact the appropriate county clerk to find their procedures for obtaining a marriage license. Usually, you can obtain one 24-72 hours in advance. A Nikah by itself constitutes a religious marriage, but not a civil (legally binding) one.

Can you sign our civil marriage license? In most states, yes we can. Almost every county permits clergy to solemnize a marriage. Some states require pre-registration of out of state clergy, which is sometimes difficult to obtain without advance notice. As long as the county permits it, we are happy to sign your civil marriage license at the same time that we conduct your Nikah.

Must we be legally married prior to (or during) our Nikah? No. Some couples do it shortly after, while some even postpone it indefinitely. We can conduct your Nikah without signing your civil marriage license, but you must understand that without a county marriage license, neither one of you gains the protections and legal benefits afforded by a legally recognized marriage.

Who qualifies as witnesses? We welcome anyone of good character and of sound mind as a witness. Though the minimum number of witnesses is two, we allow up to four witnesses, so some couples choose to have two witnesses from each side (for example: two Muslim witnesses, two non-Muslim).

Is a wali required for women? No. We do not require consenting adults of legal age to obtain the consent of a male relative before proceeding. There is no official role for the wali in the ceremony (the bride speaks and signs for herself in the proposal process) but we can have the wali greet and welcome the groom as part of the presentation, on request. However, it is tradition in many Muslim families that the bride's father (or another male relative, such as a brother or uncle) give official permission for the marriage. As an organization, we encourage couples to seek the blessing of their parents before proceeding.

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1 Most states allow clergy to perform weddings "on their honor," but a few counties (in VA and MA, to name a few) actually require judicial appointment for out-of-state clergy. This is not hard to obtain, but it requires several weeks notice.
If one spouse is not Muslim, do you require them to convert? No. Although we recognize that there are many in our community who feel it is a requirement (especially in cases of Muslim women wishing to marry non-Muslim men), it is our belief that marriage is a very personal decision. Additionally, there is no prohibition for Muslim women to marry non-Muslim men in the Quran and it would be wrong to deny a Nikah to anyone in our community who wishes to get married to their non-Muslim partner; or to require their non-Muslim partner to choose between converting without being ready, or not getting married (1). Additionally, We are happy to share our knowledge and positive experiences with Islam with couples who are interested, and to start their marriage off on a positive note, in the hope that they can draw upon the Islamic tradition in their marriage.

Can you do an “interfaith” ceremony with clergy of another faith? Yes. We have done it before, and it can be discussed. Whether it is a good idea or not depends on the vision you have in mind, and our ability to develop a good program with the other wedding officiant. Typically, we seek to emphasize the unifying aspects of different faith traditions in a way that brings people together.

Do you offer counseling? No, but we can refer someone. Premarital counseling is not part of our Nikah services. In preparing you for your Nikah, we may offer marital guidance and advice in a general sense. And at times, family dynamics related to the Nikah may put us in a position where we may offer some suggestions for how to best approach your Nikah. But our service is centered on the ceremony, not premarital counseling. If you or we feel you could benefit from premarital counseling, we have resources that we can direct you to upon request that may be able to help in this regard.

Are your officiants Imams or Sheikhs? Some of our officiants, like Philip and Ani, are Imams, while others are not. However all officiants are leaders from within the Muslim community who are knowledgeable about the traditions of marriage in Islam, and traditionally that is all that is required for this role. The officiants are not religious scholars, and do not give religious advice or advise couples to do anything that will take them away from their religion. We are offering this marriage service to couples who find it is right for them, given their circumstances.

2 There are several resources available to couples who are struggling with this issue available on our website http://www.mpvusa.org/marriage/
Can someone witness via video-conference or telephone? We prefer to have everyone physically present. But if travel causes undue hardship, we can discuss and see what is the best course of action.

What counts as mehr (bridal gift)? Mehr is a traditional gift, given by the groom to the bride. It is important that mehr is exchanged, because it is said in our tradition that “there is no valid marriage without mehr.” However, the substance of the mehr can vary widely. It can be elaborate and expensive, or simple and nominal. Like an engagement ring, it is a display of the groom’s good faith, means, and intentions. Like a prenuptial agreement, it is meant to be agreed on prior to the marriage, and remains with the bride even in case of divorce. It can be given prior to the marriage, or simply stated as a promise, to be given at a later date. The substance of mehr is not required to be disclosed to the officiant, or to the guests on the day of the wedding. But the couple should understand the meaning of the mehr, so that they can honor the tradition. On the day of the wedding, when they are asked if mehr was exchanged, they should be able to answer without hesitation: “yes, mehr has been agreed upon!”

Can we include a cultural tradition, such as presenting gifts, flowers, or laddu, or a special reading of our choice? Yes. Cultural traditions like this can be included. Usually we do this between katb al-kitab and the exchange of rings. Cultural traditions can be included as long as they don't contradict our values of inclusivity and gender equality. A reading that is meaningful to the couple can also be accommodated.

Can we write our own vows? Yes. Personalized vows are not included in a typical Nikah, and we do have some standard vows that we can go over with you that suffice for most people. But personalized vows created by you can be accommodated if you wish to include them.

Do I have to say anything in Arabic? No. Although the procedure varies by officiant and some will include Arabic in their vows, none of our officiants require you to say anything in Arabic in order to get married.
Booking Your Officiant

1 - Browse our list of officiants and contact them directly. Interview whomever you would like. Agree on the price and a date with your chosen officiant directly.

2 - MPV's required donation for this service is $250, payable directly on our website upon booking with your chosen officiant. This covers the cost to MPV for running the Celebrancy Program, and provides a baseline level of support for our advocacy activities, which are meant to make a better Muslim community for Muslim and interfaith couples who support our mission. Please note: this donation is in addition to Nikah service fees that your officiant will charge you for directly.

3 - To make your donation visit the Muslims for Progressive Values website, navigate to the menu, click "Donate/Zakat". On the "Donate" page, click "Make A Donation" then select one time donation of $250. A portion of your fee presents a charitable contribution to MPV and may be tax deductible. You will receive a charitable donation receipt at the end of the year.

4 - Important: From the drop-down menu, choose to "Apply My Donation To" Marriage/Nikah Donations and in the donor scroll, put the date of your event and the name of your chosen officiant.

5 - Your officiant will be notified once you have made this donation.

6 - Once you are certain of the exact date of your marriage and the city and state in which you will get married email this information along with your full names exactly as you want them printed, share them with your officiant. MPV will provide you with a marriage certificate like the one below to be signed at your event. To allow for enough processing time, submit your request at least 7 to 10 days before your event.

![Certificate of Nikah](image)