

Persons Authorized to Perform Marriages in the State of Tennessee

The rite of matrimony may be solemnized by any of the persons listed in T.C.A. § 36-3-301:

1. All regular ministers, preachers, pastors, priests, rabbis and other religious leaders of every religious belief, more than eighteen (18) years of age, having the care of souls.
2. Current and former members of county legislative bodies.
3. County mayors/executives and former county mayors/executives.
4. Current and former judges and chancellors of this state, including federal judges and federal administrative law judges.
5. Current and former judges of general sessions courts.
6. Municipal court judges.
7. The governor.
8. The county clerk of each county, and former county clerks who occupied the office on or after July 1, 2014.
9. Current and former speakers of the senate and speakers of the House of Representatives.
10. Mayors of municipalities.
11. Members of the general assembly who have filed notice with the office of vital records.
12. Law enforcement chaplains duly appointed by the heads of authorized state and local law enforcement agencies.
13. Members of municipal legislative bodies.
14. Notaries Public (Public Chapter 255, effective 4/28/2021).

The statute provides that in order to solemnize the rite of matrimony a minister, preacher, pastor, priest, rabbi or other spiritual leader must be ordained or otherwise designated in conformity with the customs of a church, temple or other religious group or organization, and such customs must provide for ordination or designation by a considered, deliberate and responsible act. T.C.A. § 36-3-301(a)(2). Courts look to the tenets of the particular religion to determine whether a particular person is a regular minister or other spiritual leader having the care of souls. Op. Tenn. Att'y Gen. 14-90 (9/30/14). The county clerk has neither the authority nor the duty to examine the qualifications of persons seeking to solemnize the rite of matrimony. Op. Tenn. Att'y Gen. 97-139 (10/9/97). The county clerk cannot require proof that an officiant is, in fact, a minister or other authorized person. Op. Tenn. Att'y Gen. 87-151 (9/17/87).

The above information is taken verbatim from the University of Tennessee County Technical Assistance Service Marriage handbook.