



MUSLIMS FOR  
PROGRESSIVE VALUES

*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](#) at the end of the package.

---



# MPV Principles

---

**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.



# MEET OUR OFFICIANTS

## *Sabahat Ashraf*



SAN FRANCISCO,  
CA

Sabahat Ashraf is blessed to have been part of ecumenical and diverse communities on both coasts of the United States and on three continents. He grew up in some of the most traditional Muslim communities in the world and thus his progressive understanding and practice of Islam is sufi-leaning and informed by his family's traditional Hanafi maddhab, as well as the Maliki practices and ideas of the community in West Africa where he was born. He aspires to also draw from the wealth of wisdom in the writings and example of the one Muslim leader on whose authority almost no sects or individuals disagree; Maulana Ali Ibn Abi Talib. He loves to quote MPV's president, Ani Zonneveld when she says "I am progressive because I am Muslim."

All this shapes Sabahat's efforts as an Imam and an officiant. To put it simply, he says, Allah (SWT) is Al Wadud, the everloving. If our Beloved loves all, then we, who are beloveds of the Lover, and who serve the Beloved, must equally strive to love all. My personal commitment to the Beloved is the reason I perform marriages; for spreading love spreads the knowledge of Love, and the knowledge of Love leads to the love of the Beloved and for each other.

Sabahat believes that the bringing together of a family is a personal union, as well as a social one. He strives to find the right note and tone for a marriage, including tradition and faith while respecting both the individuals and the new world they are aspiring to build. Sabahat will work with you to craft the right ceremony. His Arabic recitation is fluent, he speaks English and Urdu, and is comfortable in Punjabi and Hindi. His Hausa is a little rusty and he speaks a smattering of German.

Sabahat says it would be an honor to be a part of bringing together a loving union. May Al Wadud, the Beloved All-Loving Allah, bless your efforts, your marriage, your families, and the family you will create as you come together.

CONTACT

[iFaqeer@gmail.com](mailto:iFaqeer@gmail.com)

COST ESTIMATE

\$\$



# MEET OUR OFFICIANTS

## *Summer Albayati*



LOS ANGELES,  
CA

Summer Albayati (she/her) was born in Hollywood, CA – the product of an interfaith marriage between her Iraqi father and American mother. She witnessed the love created by such a union, one focused on shared values and love as central to a lasting relationship. A graduate of the Claremont School of Theology, where she interacted with students and faculty of various faiths, she came to understand that there are many paths to the divine and that we are called by the Qur'an to understand one another. Summer has been creating spiritually healing spaces since she began Arabic drumming at 12 while performing with her late father, Saadoun Al-Bayati.

As an ordained Unitarian Universalist minister, Summer specializes in performing inclusive interfaith marriages that honor the spiritual and religious paths of all who participate and is proud to marry those within the LGBTQIA+ community.

Summer has written on Islam in various anthologies and has a book coming out soon in which she reflects on the Qur'an as liberative and progressive. Her original dhikrs, as well as her drumming and sermons, can be found on YouTube. Summer is available for weddings in Southern California, and is willing to travel when her schedule permits.

### CONTACT

weddingofficiantssummer@gmail.com

### COST ESTIMATE

\$\$



"Cris and I wanted to send our deepest thank you and appreciation to you as you guided us and helped us with our ceremony. We are grateful to have met you and worked with you, you are a wonderful person and your values made us feel so affirmed and embraced not just by you but by Islam as a whole."

# MEET OUR OFFICIANTS

## *Kandeel Javid*

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 & inclusion of both parties within this sacred communion. His progressive views allow him to be inclusive & welcoming, congratulating attendees at each ceremony in multiple languages. He recites Quranic verses in Arabic with fluency & conducts the khutbah in English. He speaks fluent Urdu & knows scriptural Arabic. Kandeel only officiates in the states of Massachusetts, Rhode Island, New Hampshire and Vermont.

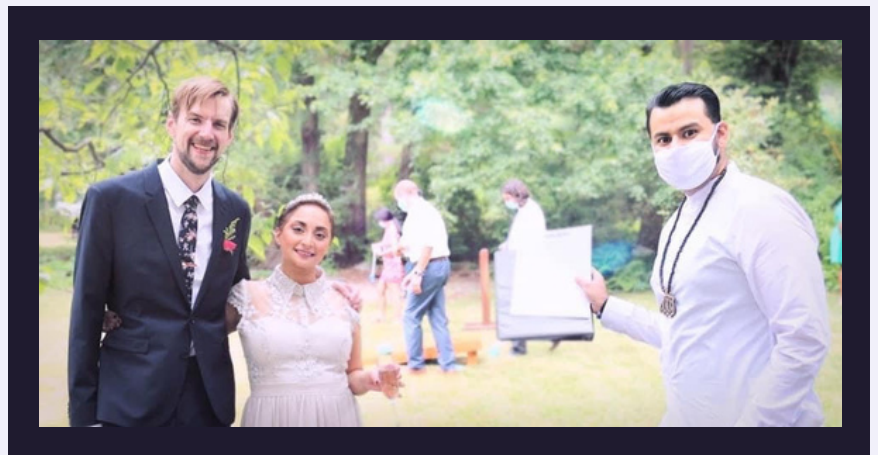
BOSTON, MA

### CONTACT

[kandeel.javid@gmail.com](mailto:kandeel.javid@gmail.com)

### COST ESTIMATE

\$\$





# MEET OUR OFFICIANTS

## Philip Tuley



SAN FRANCISCO,  
CA

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.

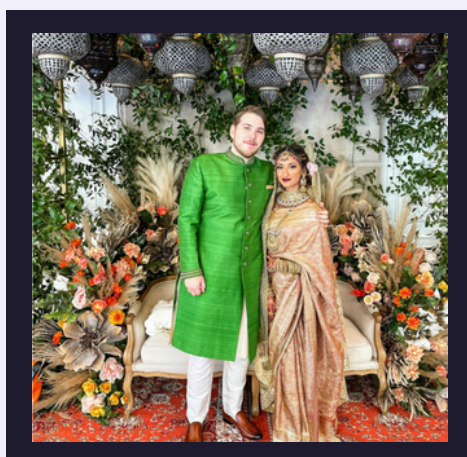
Philip feels it is a blessing to join two souls in marriage, as the unity of the couple into a single unit draws the couple closer in spirit to the singularity of the All-Loving, Allah (SWT). Philip has a diverse background in theology & spirituality. Born in Phoenix, Arizona, his studies have taken 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.

### CONTACT

[imamptuley@gmail.com](mailto:imamptuley@gmail.com)

### COST ESTIMATE

\$\$



"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."

# MEET OUR OFFICIANTS

## *Mike Mohamed Ghouse*

Dr. Mike Mohamed Ghouse is a social scientist, pluralist, and an Interfaith Wedding Officiant. Since 1999, he has officiated over 350 weddings between Muslims, Hindus, Christians, Jews, Humanists, Jains, Sikhs, and Buddhists; he has also officiated Nikahs between Sunni, Shia, Bohra, Ahmedi, and other denominations. Through consultations with the couple, he skillfully customizes the proceedings to include their faith and cultural traditions. He dedicates ample time to ensure everything comes together for their Dream wedding. He will travel within the US, Canada, Mexico, and other places when his schedule permits.

He has written a well-researched chapter, "Can A Muslim Woman Marry A Non-Muslim?" in his book [America Muslim Agenda](#). His article about Hindu-Muslim Marriages is available [here](#), and Muslim-Sikh Marriages will be available soon. He is the founder & president of the [Center for Pluralism](#), which is committed to building cohesive societies where people feel secure in their faith, race, ethnicity, culture, sexual, and political orientation. He manages a think tank, [World Muslim Congress](#), which is inclusive of all Muslim denominations and focuses on teaching the values of Islam.

He is a public speaker, thinker, author, consultant, pluralist, activist, and newsmaker. He is deeply committed to free speech, human rights, and pluralism in religion, politics, and the workplace.

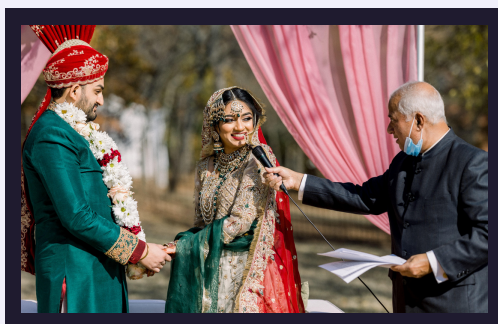
WASHINGTON  
DC

### CONTACT

mike@interfaithmarriages.org  
214-325-1916

COST ESTIMATE

\$\$





# MEET OUR OFFICIANTS



## Ani Zonneveld

LOS ANGELES,  
CA

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 the daughter of a 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 33 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.

CONTACT

[info@mpvusa.org](mailto:info@mpvusa.org)

COST ESTIMATE

\$\$\$

"Ani responded to us in a very timely manner and helped us coordinate everything seamlessly. Given that our families come from different religious backgrounds, we wanted to be very thoughtful about incorporating elements from both religions in an equal and fair way, and Ani was super helpful and accommodating. She came up with some lovely ideas for how we could organize the ceremony and we were very thankful for her thoughtfulness and creativity. She could also sense that my husband and I were getting nervous about how we would mesh the Muslim and Hindu aspects, but Ani helped us think through everything and gave us confidence that it would all go well -- and it did! We really appreciated the time Ani spent to prepare for the ceremony, including multiple calls with me and my husband, our parents, and the Hindu priest."

# MEET OUR OFFICIANTS

## Jamal Mahmood



NEW YORK, NY

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 essays "[Reflections on Muslim-Interfaith Marriage](#)" and "[Is the Islamic Declaration of Faith for your Vows?](#)", which are both available for purchase on Muslims for Progressive Values' 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!"

### CONTACT

marriedbyjamal@gmail.com

### COST ESTIMATE

\$\$\$



# Frequently Asked Questions

---

**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 (1) 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.

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.

# Frequently Asked Questions

---

**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 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 (2). 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.

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. In preparing you for your Nikah, we may offer marital guidance and advice and at times, family dynamics related to the Nikah may put us in a position where we may offer suggestions for how to best approach your Nikah. But our service is centered on the ceremony, not premarital counseling. If you feel you could benefit from premarital counseling, we have resources that we can direct you to.

**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.

<sup>2</sup> There are several resources available to couples who are struggling with this issue available on our website <http://www.mpvusa.org/marriage/>



# Frequently Asked Questions

---

**Can someone witness via video-conference or telephone?** Yes we are able to accommodate requests for virtual services and the incorporation of virtual guests into in person services.

**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 then agree on the price and a date with your chosen officiant.
- 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 those 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.
- 4) 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 as you want them printed, to your officiant. MPV will provide you with a marriage certificate (see below) to be signed at your event. To allow for enough processing time, submit your request 7 to 10 days before your event.

