

Rev. Adam Turner or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Become an Ordained Minister in Two Minutes or Less

It shouldn't be this easy.

It can't be.

Oh, but it is. And because it is, I will forever be known and addressed as Reverend Adam Turner.

A person can accomplish incredible feats in a short period of time if they put their mind to it. Languages can be learned, entire households can be cleaned and organized, and beautiful works of art can be created. I put mine to particularly impressive use on the loveliest day of the year, February 14, when I became an ordained minister in less than two minutes.

Like many great stories in our generation, this one began with a text message. One of my very best friends from high school, Ashlee Freeman, met one of the very coolest human beings on this planet, Joe Brown, and as awesome people tend to do, they fell in love. Time passed and he proposed, and Facebook collectively "aww'ed" the longest aww to ever be awwed.

It was beautiful and special, but a sudden urgency took hold of the proceedings: Joe, who is an ROTC student, was headed to Georgia for Signal Corps training in early June. So Ashlee is currently pulling off the Herculean task of planning a wedding in a matter of months. She is handling it like a champ, but I'm sure the years of daydreaming and planning for this very event have paid off some.

Anyway, on Valentine's Day morning, I woke up to a suspicious message.

"So Adam...you know me and Joe love you very much...right?"

Of course, I immediately assumed the worst.

"I'm kicked out. I can't come to the wedding."

The exact opposite, actually.

"I was about to ask a huge favor of you. Completely serious."

I was going to be in the wedding as a groomsman I thought. Joe had accepted me into their lives together in the best possible way. I started to tear up, because I am a completely emotionally stable adult and not a baby.

"So...you know how you can get ordained online for free?!"

I let out a shock-giggle and a huge grin hijacked my face.

"Ashlee, I will definitely marry you guys."

"Really??"

“Yes! Do you have a place in mind I should get ordained?”

Before she could even respond, I had opened up the 10 first Google results in different tabs.

I read through my options at lightning speed before Ashlee had replied with her recommendation: the Universal Life Church Monastery. I recognized it immediately. Conan O’Brien had used the site to marry his stylist to his boyfriend on live TV years back. This was the one.

“I think their wedding package is a little pricey though. Let me look around...”

“Nah, I’m already ordained. Just gotta go to the county clerk now.”

“What? Really?”

“Hahaha yes. It is that easy.”

It really was.

As I think back on the laborious seconds that went into filling in all the blank fields, the years of tireless practice it took to learn to properly spell my name and, most crucially, checking off that final ominous box that confirmed I was over 13 years old, I couldn’t help but feel like my entire life had been building up to this point.

I immediately chose my official title of Reverend and learned my new legal rights: I can perform weddings, funerals and baptisms, absolve you of your sins, perform last rites and even start my own church. I joined the site’s social media page to connect with the other 20 million who have been ordained through the site worldwide. “Hello friends! Thank you for welcoming me into this blessed community!” I sacrilegiously snickered.

Once the snarkiness settled and I’d had my good fun, I began to feel a hint of something usually foreign to me: sincerity. Though any website that allows people to legally give themselves religious authority and status deserves a little skepticism, so does religion itself. When friends continued to make jokes, I found myself surprisingly getting a little defensive about my church and the people who believe in it. The Universal Life Church Monastery provides a forum for people to share and practice their beliefs, religious or otherwise, in a completely welcoming community free from judgment and criticism. The site’s mantra states that we are all children of the same universe. If there is a higher power above, I could only hope they are so inclusive and accepting.

But more importantly to me, I felt the weight of my good friends’ decision to include me in their wedding in such an essential way. Ashlee said she thought it would make the entire ceremony that much more relaxed and fun than with some preacher they didn’t know. That they thought of me at all was deeply touching. A gift of love. And though I hope it will be fun and funny, I will put in the time and work to make sure it is also as special as can be. Because this day is all about them.

I’m just the Reverend.