

Humanist Ceremonies



The Best Job Ever

Lucie O'Sullivan

I've had the privilege of working as an HAI Celebrant since 2015. I can honestly say it is the best job ever. I get to indulge in my two favourite pastime writing and talking!

Being a Celebrant encompasses my love of people, of writing and of providing Ireland's secular community with a great day out.

There is definitely craft and skill to writing and delivering a well-structured and personalised ceremony. After many years on the job I'm still learning new things every day. The writing part is a co-creation and collaboration with a couple and the ceremony itself feels like directing a mini theatre production. I enjoy working with a team of people, e.g.: event managers, musicians,

photographers etc., to deliver a smooth running and well-executed ceremony.

A big part of a Celebrant's job is to be a calming presence for the couple. Of course things do go wrong and they can be the funniest bits. Everything from; the groom's phone ringing during the vows to young kids squealing hilarious things during a solemn moment, I've seen it all!

I studied Theology in Trinity College Dublin (TCD). At the time, I was interested in a career in journalism. I was drawn to the academic study of religion as a social construct, rather than an inherited belief system, as well as environmental theology. In college, I was active in the debating club where students could openly

pontificate on such bizarre topics as "Barbie - an icon?" to "Would you like to live forever?". So, I guess I honed my writing and oratory skills in those college years.

However, I think what really piqued my interest in Celebrancy was the Church of Ireland ministerial students who would occasionally attend our lectures. I was fascinated by these clerical students and used to think "what a wonderful profession!" and women are allowed too!

I wondered about the possibility of a life in ministry but as I was a firm atheist I decided it wasn't for me. I forgot about that career and I went off to do other things such as working in a corporate law firm, radio presenting and the fashion industry.



Years later, when I was living in the US my mother, also an avowed atheist and member of the HAI, told me about a friend who was a HAI Celebrant. As she was explaining her friend's role, a light bulb went off in my head. I would LOVE to do that! I ended up studying Celebrancy at the Celebrant Institute and Foundation in New Jersey and loving it. When I moved back to Ireland in 2012 I joined the HAI, eventually got accepted onto their mentoring programme and the rest is history.

I've met so many interesting people and have conducted some really fun and personalised weddings with dogs as ring bearers, grooms singing on ukuleles and even a couple dancing down the aisle to the Beach Boys! One of my most memorable ceremonies was one of the first legal same-sex weddings in Dublin City Hall. They were a male couple who had been together over 30 years had been heavily involved in the marriage equality campaign. They genuinely thought they would never be able to marry in Ireland.

It was a massive wedding with a joyful, electric atmosphere. Much of the audience had been also involved in the campaign so, when I pronounced them "legally married and husbands for life" the cheer that went up nearly took the roof off City Hall! Needless to say there wasn't a dry eye in the house. It's a cause very close to my heart, so that wedding was extra special.

I have also had the privilege of conducting some funerals. Funerals are obviously a different tone but still a celebration of a life well lived, so not that dissimilar from weddings.

The Humanist Association of Ireland is such a fantastic organisation and Celebrants are the face and ambassadors of the organisation so I take that responsibility very seriously. The HAI has been to the fore of social change in this country - social trend setters and reading the mood of the population. I'm so proud to be a member and thankful to work as a HAI Celebrant.

Lucie O'Sullivan

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