

Office of the Attorney General  
State of South Carolina

March 29, 1973

J. Lawrence Duffy, Jr., Esquire  
Attorney at Law  
124 Church Street  
Charleston, South Carolina 29401

Dear Larry:

I am in receipt of your letter dated March 20, 1973, making inquiry as to whether a duly certified ordained minister of the Universal Life Church, Inc. may validly perform marriage ceremonies in this State under authority of section 20-2 of the Code of Laws.

This statute provides that:

Only ministers of the Gospel or accepted Jewish rabbis and officers authorized to administer oaths in this State are authorized to administer a marriage ceremony in this State.

It has been the previous opinion of this office that an individual who is authorized by the tenets of his faith to perform marriage ceremonies is a minister of the Gospel within the meaning of the marriage statutes of this State.

Although I express no opinion as to whether the Universal Life Church, Inc. is a bonafide religious organization capable of authorizing its ministers to perform marriage ceremonies or as to whether or not Mr. Mott in fact has been authorized by the tenets of his faith to perform marriages, if these conditions do in fact exist, it would appear that without question Mr. Mott may under the laws of this State perform marriage ceremonies.

If I may be of further assistance, please let me hear from you.

Very truly yours,

James C. Harrison, Jr.

Assistant Attorney General

