

## **22 - Secret Marriage**

### ***What is a secret marriage?***

It is a way for couples to marry without public knowledge.

### ***Why would someone want a secret marriage?***

To protect themselves or their family from embarrassment. Perhaps a couple has been living together for a long time and everyone thinks that they are already married. Or an unwed mother thinks they are already married. Or an unwed mother planning on marrying the father may want the marriage certificate to show the wedding date as prior to the child's birth date.

### ***What is needed to apply for a secret marriage?***

If the couple is being married by a clergyman, they must present a statement written on church stationery signed by the clergyman stating that he is willing to perform the ceremony.

### ***How much does it cost?***

**\$20 license fee** (cash or check payable to the Court).

**\$10 marriage fee if judge is to perform marriage** (cash or check payable to the Court).

### ***Where do you apply for a secret marriage?***

See the clerk in the Family Division of the Court.

### ***Does the couple need to provide witnesses?***

The ceremony requires two witnesses. Court staff can be witnesses if the couple does not have their own.

### ***Who has access to secret marriage records?***

**All secret marriage records are strictly confidential.** The Court will not give out any information about secret marriages unless the person produces a picture identification showing he/she is one of the marriage partners and makes a written request.