

The parish has simple space available for those who wish to change into or out of the clothing they will wear for the ceremony. Both the library and the Undercroft provide space and a simple restroom. These spaces were not designed for this purpose and do not have full length mirrors, make-up lighting, etc. If you plan to use one or both areas, please make arrangements with the priest working with you well beforehand, to ensure they are available.

Rice and confetti may not be used, either inside the church or outside, nor may balloons be released into the air. We suggest you encourage your guests to use some other means of celebrating you, such as bubbles or simple applause.



#### Fees

|           |       |
|-----------|-------|
| Church:   | \$250 |
| Clergy:   | \$250 |
| Organist: | \$125 |

Fees must be paid by the second preparation meeting, unless other arrangements have been made. The "bench fee" due the organist if you choose to use someone else for music is \$80.

# HOLY MATRIMONY *and* HOLY UNION



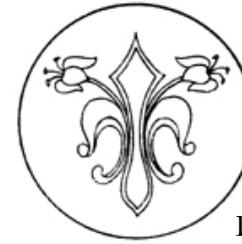
## *A Guide for Couples Planning a Wedding*

### **Immanuel Episcopal Church**

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### **CONGRATULATIONS!**

The people of Immanuel Parish are delighted that you are considering a service of Holy Matrimony or Holy Union at our church. Under the guidelines of the Diocese of Vermont, Holy Matrimony is the ceremony joining two persons of opposite gender in marriage. Holy Union is the ceremony joining two persons of same gender.



The day of your celebration will be the end result of a significant amount of planning on your part. This brochure is provided to assist you in that planning.

The day of your event will also be the beginning of a new stage your life together, which will bring its own set of challenges and blessings. We at Immanuel want to prepare for your wedding or civil union with that long-term perspective in mind. We hope to prepare you for making wise decisions and taking right actions throughout your life together as a committed couple.

#### **How soon can we be married?**

Please, do not schedule a date for your event or reception without first speaking to the parish clergy! It is best if you begin to plan at least six months prior to your expected date. The minimum preparation period is usually three months.

#### **Who can be joined at Immanuel?**

We welcome all people of faith to consider being joined in marriage at Immanuel. The ceremony, whether of Holy Matrimony or Holy Union, invokes God's blessing on your life together. A blessing is not just something you receive. A blessing is something in which you are called to participate. You are called to be active in living out the action of God in your life. A couple seeking to be joined in this way needs to take seriously the question: How can we participate in God's blessing of us? today? tomorrow? for the rest of our lives?

For couples seeking to be joined here, we therefore expect that:

- both individuals have an active expression and practice of faith that brings meaning to life and provides ongoing guidance in decision-making.
- at least one participant is a baptized Christian.
- the couple intends to continue to live their life together regularly supported, nurtured and challenged by a community of faith—either here or elsewhere.
- if only one individual currently has this faith perspective on life, that the other person promises to actively support his or her beloved in the pursuit of this faith and practice.



### **Who will perform the ceremony?**

Your ceremony must be performed by one of the current priests of this parish. We will assign one to work with you prior to your ceremony, and to perform the ceremony. You may request specific individuals, but please understand that he or she may not always be available. We are pleased to discuss the possibility of another member of the clergy sharing some part of the ceremony if appropriate.

### **Does the ceremony have to be in the church? Can we have it someplace else?**

While it is traditional to have the ceremony in the church, there are many other locations that are appropriate. If you want to have your ceremony elsewhere, the priest will work with you on the details of that when you plan the ceremony. By church custom, if you are not a regular parishioner here, and want your ceremony in a town with an Episcopal Church, it would be expected that the priest of that church perform your ceremony, and not a priest from Immanuel.



Our priests are authorized by State law and Church law to perform weddings only in Vermont. It is

possible, but not usual, for them to perform weddings out-of-state: it takes permission of both the Bishop of that diocese and the State courts of that state. Both these permissions take time to obtain.

### **What is involved?**

The laws of the Episcopal Diocese of Vermont require that any couple seeking Holy Matrimony or Holy Union meet with a member of the parish clergy for several meetings prior to the event. During these meetings you will learn more about your individual communication styles, and how knowing about them can help better support your relationship.

You will discuss your individual and shared views on finances, social interactions, sex, and dealing with families. You will be asked to consider how your family history, or your previous experience in relationships, might affect your marriage or civil union. If one or both of you have minor children from previous relationships, we will also discuss how custody issues have been worked out, and discuss the challenges that might exist in relationships with previous spouses/partners.

These meetings will be planned at the mutual convenience of you and the clergy member assigned to work with you. We usually schedule at least six meetings, which run about one and one-half to two hours each.

In addition, you will need a marriage license from the Clerk of the Vermont town in which you live. If you live out-of-state, you will need a license from the Clerk of the Town of Rockingham. Town offices are located in the Opera House building on the Square in Bellows Falls. The priest must have the license in hand before the ceremony can begin.

### **What if I was married or joined in civil union before?**

Any individual who had a legally recognized relationship previously, in this state or any other, must provide a copy of the divorce decree dissolving that relationship. The priest must obtain the permission of the Bishop of Vermont to move forward in such situations, and this must be done six weeks prior to the event. Individuals who have been divorced twice must also provide documentation from a professional counselor or therapist that they have resolved the issues which impacted those relationships. The Church generally cannot marry individuals who have been divorced more than two times.

### **What about the service? Can we write our own vows?**

Planning your service will be the last step of your preparation period. The service used for your wedding must follow the format established by the Episcopal Church in this diocese. There are a number of variations, but the service must include at least one reading from the Bible, and the invoking of God as known in Jesus Christ. Remember, the service is about more than you: it is about your entry into new life as a couple, loved and supported by God and this community of faith. The priest is the final authority for what may or may not be included in your ceremony. We will strive to help you find a balance between what is so personal to you, and yet expressive of this new life beyond your individual selves.

### **What about music, flowers, pictures, a place to change, etc.?**

The parish organist will play for your ceremony, and will work with you in selecting music appropriate for the event. Please note that popular and romantic ballads and songs are more appropriate for your reception than your ceremony, and may not be used in church. If you want to have someone else provide music, the organist must be paid a "bench fee".

You are responsible for making your own arrangements with a florist for flowers in the church. There are some restrictions concerning where flowers may be placed. Please discuss your plans with the priest working with you before making final arrangements. If you plan to take the flowers with you after the ceremony, you must make arrangements for that to occur immediately.

No flash pictures may be taken during the ceremony. Video is allowed only if it is done without added lights. Any photographer or videographer must remain in one unobtrusive location and shoot the event from there. They may not interrupt the ceremony, nor intrude into the aisle or chancel area.

