Weddings during pandemic
The Reverend Richard Munsell

- Risk: Weddings are counterintuitive to social distancing
  o Safety – contamination issue for couple, clergy, family & friends
  o Traveling presents potential for contamination from high to low and low to high risk areas
  o Air travel presents particular contamination issues
  o Worship area post wedding cleaning presents challenge

- Pastoral thoughts:
  o Weddings are a public celebration of a commitment that has already been made
  o Weddings are a sacrament that a couple gives to each other
  o The primary minister of a marriage are the couple – one to each other
  o The role of the church is to witness the love of Christ to the couple

- Leadership/Response:
  o Ban all weddings until post contamination period
    i. Very likely will driven by State authorities (Governor/Health Dept)
    ii. Recommendation: all weddings be delayed until post contamination period
    iii. No wedding should occur during time of pandemic without the permission/approval of the Bishop: as Chief Liturgist in the Diocese.
  o Options (lowering potential for contamination):
    i. Limit weddings to outside events
    ii. Limit participation to couple, two witnesses, clergy
      • Allowing for social distancing of 6 feet for minister, couple, and each witness
    iii. Encourage weddings to be done by Justice of Peace as available
  o Delay contact until post contamination period
    i. Follow up with marriage sacramental counseling
    ii. Follow up with public celebration of blessed commitment
  o Encourage pastoral counseling and blessing via electronic means (e.g. Zoom)

- Historical note: Weddings were not initially celebrated in the early ecclesial community
  o Ref: https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2012/05/09/marriage-myth/