

The Reverend Ranjit Matthews, Rector St. James, Diocese of Connecticut

I am thankful for how the death-dealing ways of the world have been overcome through the cross of Jesus Christ. It gives the people of Jesus this incredible ministry of “repairing the breach” of the world as it is, and the world as it should be. I am beyond grateful for the opportunity to walk with the disciples of Jesus Christ here at St. James, in New London, Connecticut, as we walk this journey of racial reconciliation within our community and the broader community of New London and southeastern Connecticut. It’s a matter of being pieces of scripture, as the great biblical scholar Verna Dozier said so well, pieces of scripture out in the world. It takes boldness to step into the power of the Holy Spirit, which has been so mightily given to us through the gift of baptism. We are disciples of the Jesus Movement and endeavor to dismantle the ongoing, systemic realities of racism in our local and broader society. I believe that this is, more broadly, the very calling of baptized Christians. And we should not be afraid of stepping out and claiming through the Holy Spirit the new eschatological reality - the realm of God breaking into the world, as C. H. Dodd has aptly put it. I wonder if, as Episcopalians, we take on the power of being alive in Jesus Christ. This may sound evangelical, but that is the calling: to be dead to sin and alive in Christ. And that’s the genius of Paul’s letter to the Romans. He’s exhorting them to cast off sin, but also to be alive in Christ. That means, then, that our lives are qualitatively different from where they once were and our life should take on a distinct saltiness. I am beyond grateful for the transformation that we have been invited into through Jesus Christ. Too often, as Episcopalians, our lives don’t give off that saltiness, and yet this is the ministry that has been entrusted to us as the Body of Christ. My sincere hope is that our group of disciples can dare to believe that the Holy Spirit is actually leading us out and about onto the streets of New London and into the neighborhood to BE the people that we so often pray we were. My prayer is that we take our calling seriously enough to venture outside our comfort zone and repair the breach through the power of the Holy Spirit.