Greetings from your Region Missionary

We have had a tremendously fruitful fall in the North Central Region with new gatherings and new networks emerging. What a gift it is to witness your work in community as you try on different ways of living into God’s mission. Thank you for sharing your stories with me and with our region community. Together you have met at convention and convocation; committed to engaging in this year’s Boot Party; explored a call to digital ministry; examined your baptismal covenant; learned the art of engaging in civil discourse; made new friends over bowls of chili; and gathered as families with young children to explore faith formation and fellowship. You have done all of this and more! Your work in community inspires me and I hope by sharing your stories below you all will be inspired by each other. If a story captures your imagination click on the links, and reach out to the authors/parishes for more information. Let us all share and rejoice in God’s work.

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Reflection on the 234th ECCT Annual Convention

On Friday, October 26, 2018 the Annual Convention of the Episcopal Church in Connecticut was called to order by The Rt Rev. Ian Douglas, Bishop Diocesan. Following opening prayers, a Blessing of the Space was offered by Bruce “Two Dogs” Bozsum, Chief of the Mohegan Nation. As is our normal procedure, The Rev. Tracy Johnson Russell, President of the Standing Committee, presented the rolls of clerical
and lay members of convention. The order of the day was adopted and convention began its business as usual. Committees were appointed, new clergy were introduced, and 6 resolutions were presented for the convention to consider, with an additional resolution added on the floor. Throughout the resolutions, Bethany House of Prayer led us in reflection and prayer. At the conclusion of business, the convention was in recess until Saturday morning.

**Resolutions addressed on Friday included:** Budget of Convention • Clergy Compensation • Affirming Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation • Episcopal Elections • Definition of Clergy in Good Standing • Status of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Darien • Transgender Recognition and Affirmation.

On Saturday morning the convention was called to order by The Rt. Rev. Laura Ahrens, Bishop Suffragan with the Bethany House of Prayer leading us in meditation and prayer. We spent time "Dwelling in the Word" together and then listened to Bishop Douglas' address to convention. Our next order of business was an orientation to our new Convention process followed by the celebration of the Eucharist, in which Bishop Laura offered a homily. We adjourned for lunch.

The afternoon session was a new process designed by The Rev. Adam Yates, Secretary of Convention. Something New, never done before, and no one ran for cover with the idea of trying it on. We were ready! Well before we came to convention, delegates were asked to submit questions that they felt were relevant issues facing the church today. The questions were then sent to delegates to rank which they felt were most relevant; the top four questions were selected for convention.

**Questions addressed on Saturday included:** How do we meaningfully engage ECCT in the existing work of serving God’s mission among the poor & marginalized? • How can ECCT raise awareness of the sin of racism in our Church and promote healing toward true racial reconciliation? • In these changing times and consequent needs of our worshiping communities, what are our expectations of priesthood leadership currently defined in ECCT as missional, provisional, conditional, or part-time? • How would the practice of Open Communion change the life of the church?

Delegates met to engage these questions with more questions using The World Cafe format. They asked: Why does this question matter? What are we overlooking? What are we not seeing? What connections are we seeing emerge? What would it take to create change on this issue? After extensive conversation, the working groups were ready to report back to convention with recommendations on what work is needed to move forward.

- June Aziz, Member of Mission Council for the North Central Region
God's Mission in North Central Connecticut

Glory to God whose power, working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine:

Glory to God from generation to generation in the Church,
and in Christ Jesus for ever and ever. Amen. - Ephesians 3:20,21

North Central Region Fall Convocation

Food and sweet treats were plentiful at the North Central Region Convocation on September 15th at St. Alban’s in Simsbury led by the North Central Region Leadership Team. Attendees from 19 parishes, both younger and older, ordained and lay, attended and were led through a Dwelling in the Word exercise.

We saw some photos of the 2017 Boot Party provided by The Rev. Bonnie Matthews, Deacon, and discussed the ability to be involved in the 2018 event in December. The party needs volunteers for intake, escorts, and care givers. Volunteers will distribute a morning snack, clean feet, and hand out lunches and personal care packages. Most importantly, clients will have their feet medically examined and they will be given a new pair of winter boots, as well as being treated with kindness and dignity!

In addition to introducing ourselves and finding some new friends, we had time to color, decorate and cut out our own “Flat Jesus” (a variation on a General Convention exercise from this past summer). People were creating some beautiful robes for their respective Jesus. (The activity was a bit like the old “Colorforms” activity, except this outfit was the only one that fit him.) We were encouraged to take our Flat Jesus with us and share our postings on Facebook at: www.facebook.com/groups/ECCTNC/.

As you may have guessed, there is much happening in the region. A big thanks goes out to the volunteers and clergy that helped the event go off without a hitch!

- Betsy Shelley w/ select photos from Geoff Mather
Members of St. Alban’s, Simsbury
**Boot Party Update**

The Footwear With Care’s Boot Party will be held at Our Cathedral at 45 Church Street in Hartford on Saturday, **December 8, 2018 from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm**. Several parishes in the North Central Region have already committed to creating care packages for our 500+ guests.

If you or your parish are planning to submit care packages, please email The Rev. Bonnie Matthews at bmatthews228@comcast.net to confirm your participation and to provide a count. Bonnie will work with you to arrange a pick-up of your items the week of Dec. 1. All items must be to the Cathedral by Dec. 7, the day before the Boot Party. **If you would like to volunteer to help at the Boot Party** please sign up with Bonnie.

Thank you to everyone who has said ‘Yes!’ to region ministry. If you would like to know how to make care packages or volunteer please click on the invitation above. **See you in December!**

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**#ECDigitalMission: An Emerging Digital Mission**

The Episcopal Church Digital Mission is a local project designed to re-conceptualize spiritual communities, while paying particular attention to the digital mission. The goal of #ECDigitalMission is to make the transition into digital mission easier by creating positive opportunities for people to work together to build an online presence, knowing that our online networks connect and empower us to play an active role in caring for our churches and communities.

#ECDigitalMission came into being this spring when two members from Trinity, Tariffville, Melien Lavoie and Carolyn Clement, realized that little of our parishes’ mission work is available and searchable online. As someone who specializes in search engine optimization (SEO) Melien felt that God had equipped her with a unique set of skills to help churches increase their online visibility. In September, she met with people from Trinity, Tariffville and the neighboring community to create a test group toward creating an Inter Church Event Commission – a group of people who plan to gather monthly to work together on digital tasks, such as promoting local events, using a systematic approach guided by online sorting rules. This methodical approach helps communities address the challenge of communication getting lost in the abundance of the internet.
#ECDigitalMission is founded on the principle that Christians can have a positive impact online if we understand how the internet works. If the church is empowered and better organized online, we can shift the narrative and actively participate. Future projects for the group include writing a curriculum for communities to use, hosting workshops, and creating an online movement to #FishNotPhishing.

For more information #ECDigitalMission visit facebook.com/groups/ecdigitalmission. If you would like to attend one of their monthly gatherings to work on digital tasks contact, Melien Lavoie at mel@pluginmatter.com. If you are interested in getting involved or becoming an advocate for digital communication in your church, please contact Melien Lavoie at mel@pluginmatter.com or read her blog at https://www.pluginstitute.com/blog for more info.

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**Is our Baptism in Gear? We met to find out.**

Lay and clergy members of the South East and North Central Regions of ECCT joined together Saturday morning, November 10, to explore the meaning of our Baptismal covenant. More than twenty participants spent a beautiful, chilly Fall morning indoors at St. Stephen’s Church, East Haddam at a workshop titled “Is Your Baptism in Gear?” which grew out of the Roland Allen Circle of Interest of the Southeast Region. Presenters were Victor Friedrich and Karen Otte, Education for Ministry mentors at the Church of the Epiphany, Durham. Other members of the planning committee were Rev. Peter Floyd and Gray Sawyer.

Inspired by Gospel hymns played by Ruth and Frank Vitale, of St. Stephen’s, participants shared stories and reflections of how they live out their baptismal vows and explored connections between the promises of the baptismal covenant and the Beatitudes. The group then celebrated our discoveries in a joyful renewal of our baptismal vows.

- Karen Otte  
  Member of Epiphany, Durham

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**Civil Discourse: Learning a Way Forward**

Last spring a group of clergy made a commitment at the Day of Lament at our Cathedral to continue the conversation about the gun violence that plagues our communities, and the ways in which the church might respond. As part of this commitment, we invited Alan Yarborough of The Episcopal Church Office of Government Relations (OGR) to come up from Washington D.C. to Hartford to train us in the art of civil discourse using a five week Curriculum published by the ORG.

On September 5th, 18 people (primarily clergy) from around ECCT gathered for a full day of training. At the beginning of the day we were introduced to the Office of Gov't Relations which "represents the priorities of the Episcopal Church to the policy community in Washington, D.C." and strives "to equip
Episcopalians to become advocates themselves.” Everything they do is grounded in the resolutions of General Convention. Their work is intentionally non-partisan. As people who engage with the episcopal, ecumenical, inter-faith, and secular communities, the members of the ORG are well versed in civil discourse: defined as “engagement in conversation intended to enhance understanding.”

As our day progressed we discussed the principles of value-based conversations, noting that often we agree on values, even when we disagree on how to live into them. We ended our day by creating a sacred space to practice civil discourse. Breaking into small groups – we sat around tables and shared one-by-one our views on gun-violence/reform/control with a partner who listened without interruption. The partner then shared back what they heard. It was an exercise in learning how to speak and how to listen with an open posture, without giving in to knee-jerk reaction. The space created was truly Spirit filled. At the end of the day we were left with the idea that civil discourse offers us a slow and deliberate way forward into courageous conversations.

If you are interested in learning more about civil discourse, please visit the ORGs website and download the curriculum; it is an asset to any community that seeks to enter into difficult and necessary conversations.

- Erin Flinn
North Central Region Missionary

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**Chili + Rice & Beans Cook-Off**

September 30, 2018 was the 11th time that the Outreach Committee at Trinity Parish, Wethersfield held a Chili + Rice & Beans Cook-Off, hosting for 10 of the years. The Faith & Action Group at St. James’, Glastonbury has joined with us for the last two years. In spite of a Hallmark Christmas movie being filmed diagonally across Main St. causing big problems with parking, we had a record crowd of over 90 people, and there was a community Spirit like never before. We were blessed to have Sal Basile singing and playing his guitar during dinner.

This annual outreach project is a fund-raiser for those less fortunate – local, regional, and many times worldwide. Together Trinity and St. James’ chose “Hands On Hartford” as our 2018 recipient as we both support this organization which helps Hartford’s neediest residents in the areas of food, housing, and health. A check for $874 was forwarded and much appreciated.

There were 14 cooks with outstanding recipes – 7 Rice & Beans and 7 Chili. We have a Judged and a People’s Choice Competition, and the winners were pretty close for both competitions. The judges were one each from Grace, Newington; St. James’, and Trinity. Trinity is helping a Syrian Family in Wethersfield and the wife/mother won first prize in both competitions for her delicious Rice and Beans with Meat. Some of the other winning recipes were Calico Beans, Boy Scout Chili, Rick’s Sunday Football Chili, International Chili, and Total Vegetarian Rice & Beans.

A large crowd came from St. James’ and a good number also from Grace. Our local newspapers gave us good “community event” publicity. The Cook-Off has now become a multi-community event and has taken on a “life of its own”. One of the St. James’ cooks, who had never participated before, told me she never expected to have such a good time, and many of us feel that it was the “best Cook-Off ever”.

- Marilyn Ford, Outreach Chair
Trinity, Wethersfield
Talking about Faith & Family

Over the summer a number of parents from across the North Central Region gathered together to discuss the unique needs of families with small children. We met in a library children’s section and via our computers after our own small children fell asleep. We discussed what we felt a longing for--from early childhood faith ministry to the potential of family retreats and the desire to live full spiritual lives while also supporting these small, unpredictable spiritual children with whom we have been entrusted.

From these discussions grew a gathering on September 22nd called Talking about Faith & Family. This playdate brought together parents and children from around the region for informal conversation, networking, and, of course, lots of play. St. James’ Church, West Hartford graciously hosted us as we shared resources in between nibbling on cider doughnuts and preventing apple juice spills. Many of us were introduced to the excellent book Faithful Families: Creating Sacred Moments at Home, by Traci Smith. We also learned about CIRCLES, a faith formation program that welcomes families at the Church of our Saviour in Plainville, CT.

During this playdate we created a small community in the hopes of determining what our needs as a community might be. As people of faith, parents of small children are struggling to continue on their own spiritual journeys while also struggling to either incorporate their children into their practices or find childcare for them. In the weeks since our meeting, our planning committee has been stretched thin between new jobs, the resumption of the academic year, and the general predictable unpredictability of new developmental stages at home. We don’t have another event scheduled but we do hope that parishes across the Region will share events that are appropriate for families with small children.

-Katy Reddick
Member of Epiphany, Durham

If you would like to join this emerging network for families with young children, please email the region missionary at eflinn@episcopalct.org. She would be happy to add you to our contact list.

OPPORTUNITIES for Families with Young Children:

CIRCLES of Central CT, Plainville - 11/25/2018 from 2 - 3 pm: At CIRCLES we celebrate the things we share, rather than focus on the things that separate us. We share songs, stories, crafts, food, fun, and fellowship for ALL persons of ALL ages, we welcome families with children. We meet next at Church of Our Saviour in Plainville, CT. For more information about Circles contact Rev. Link Huller. To read more about CIRCLES click here.
Family Advent Day at Camp Washington - 12/02/2018 from 2 - 6 pm:
As your family awaits the coming of Christmas, spend an afternoon together. Make an Advent wreath, dip Advent candles, participate in crafts & more. The afternoon ends with worship & dinner. Cost: $15/person, $50/Families of Four+ [To register click here].

Living Nativity, South Glastonbury - 12/16/2018 at 3 pm - St. Luke’s, South Glastonbury, presents a Christmas Pageant in collaboration with St. James Episcopal Church. Everyone is encouraged to join in. Little ones 2+ can be added in last minute. The Pageant is held at Beacon Woods Stables in S. Glastonbury, CT. Neighboring farms provide us with the chickens, roosters, sheep, goats, donkeys, cows, horses, rabbits, dogs, and cats for our “living nativity.” If you know your child would like to participate email Kathye Flanagan at kathyeflan@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

PARISH & MINISTRY NETWORK EVENTS:

11/27 - North/South Central Regions Clericus Gathering at St. Paul’s, Southington from 10 am - 1 pm. For clergy registration [click here].

12/01 - Advent Quiet Day: Engaging the Senses, Opening to God at Trinity, Wethersfield from 9:30 am - 2 pm. Through listening, touch, vision and quiet, we will make time to connect with God and each other. This is an opportunity to ground ourselves in the practice of being with God in all things. We will call upon God’s grace to help us find stillness, peace, and hope in the very midst of getting ready for the holidays. For more information [click here].

EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT DIOCESAN EVENTS:

11/28 - Racial Reconciliation Planning Summit at The Commons, Meriden from 6:30 pm - 8 pm. The purpose of this gathering is to share ideas regarding, respond to, and establish the next steps in result of our Annual Convention’s Resolution 3, “Affirming Racial Healing, Justice & Reconciliation,” and Convention’s question: How can ECCT raise awareness of the sin of racism in our Church and promote healing toward true racial reconciliation. [Click here to register].

12/06 - Faithful Futures: Communications at The Commons, Meriden from 6:30 pm - 8 pm. Join Karin Hamilton, Canon for Communications and Media and Alli Huggins, Digital Communications for an evening discussing best communication and media practices. [Click here to register].

04/27/19 - Save the Date! 7th Annual Spring Training & Gathering from 9 am - 4 pm at Lincoln Middle School, 164 Centennial Avenue, Meriden, CT 06450. More information to come!

I know we have much, much more going on in the North Central Region, please add your events to the ECCT calendar so that we all might see the abundant offerings of the region. [Click to SUBMIT AN EVENT] or send your event announcement to the North Central Region Missionary
Communications for the North Central Region

* Join the North Central Region Facebook Group, a community bulletin board for the region. This is your place to share parish/community events, photos, videos and more.

* Like and follow the North Central Region Facebook Page. This is where the Leadership Team will post news of upcoming Region events, gatherings, conversations, resources, etc.

* If you want to know what your Region Missionary is up to, like and follow her Facebook Page.

* Subscribe to this Quarterly to have stories from the Region delivered straight to your inbox

* Reach out to your North Central Region Leadership Team members

* Check out the Region Calendar on the ECCT website. Submit your parish events to the Region Calendar here and they will be added to the ECCT Weekly eNews. Be sure to select 'North Central Region' under category.

Please note that all of these links can also be found on the ECCT North Central Region webpage.

Almighty God,

You sent your Son Jesus Christ to reconcile the world to yourself: We praise and bless you for those whom you have sent in the power of the Spirit to preach the Gospel to all nations. We thank you that in all parts of the earth a community of love has been gathered together by their prayers and labors, and that in every place your servants call upon your Name; for the kingdom and the power and the glory are yours for ever. Amen.

Thanksgiving for the Mission of the Church 1979 Book of Common Prayer p. 838

Click Here to Receive This Quarterly in Your Inbox

Would you like your community or event to be included in the next North Central Region Quarterly? Contact me, your North Central Region Missionary, and let's set up a time to chat so that I might hear your story and be a witness to God's work in your community. The next Quarterly will be sent out at the end of January.