



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

ECCT Clergy and Lay Leaders Communication: COVID-19 Update #20: July 10, 2020

Dear Clergy and Wardens in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut:

Grace to you and peace in our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We write to you with this regular Friday "update" regarding news and information on the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and the sin of racism, white supremacy, and anti-Black bias impacting our nation. This update will be a bit briefer as we do not have a whole lot of breaking news to share with you as we enter mid-summer.

As we probably all know by now, Governor Lamont has delayed the anticipated move to Phase 3 reopening of Connecticut because of the surge in COVID-19 cases across the United States, even as all markers for the spread of the pandemic here in our state continues to trend downward. While we are thankful for the care and caution that we in Connecticut have practiced to date in order to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus, we need to continue to be vigilant in our precautions in order not to have another surge of COVID-19. Last week in our "[Update #19](#)", **we urged extreme caution with any return to in-person worship you are planning at this time.** We continue with the same counsel this week. If you and your parish are beginning to worship in-person we strongly advocate for outside worship instead of inside worship as it is becoming increasingly well-documented that ventilation and air-transfer is crucial to keeping people safe. In addition, we stress the need to continue to follow all of the protocols and directions for safe and sanitary interactions as described in both of our "Living with COVID-19" documents, [Phase 1](#) and [Phase 3](#). We also urge you not to begin the distribution of Communion until Phase 4, which is, sadly, seeming to be increasingly far off.

Last Tuesday, July 7, we received from attorney Zach Kohl, who is generously providing information to ECCT on the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP), an in-depth review of changes to PPP brought about by the Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act. The review, prepared by Zach's law firm of Tobin, Carberry, O'Malley, Riley, Selinger, P.C. of New London, can be found [on our ECCT website here](#). **If your parish has received a PPP loan, and if you plan to apply for loan forgiveness, we commend a close read of the materials provided by Zach and suggest that you pass the document on to your treasurer for their consideration and action as appropriate.**

On a few occasions we have noted in our Wednesday morning calls the possibility of parishes in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut serving as sites to host COVID-19 testing sponsored by the State of Connecticut. And many parishes have expressed an interest in the possibility. Only this week did we receive information from Dave Reyes, Manager of Intergovernmental Affairs for the Governor's Office, regarding specifics as to how our parishes can apply to become COVID-19 testing sites. **If you are**



interested in your parish serving as a COVID-19 testing site please send to Bishop Ian at itdouglas@episcopalct.org the following information:

Name of Church:

Address:

Contact person:

Email:

Phone Number:

Please send along this information even if you already been in contact with Bishop Ian already regarding becoming a testing site. We will collect the information and forward it to Dave Reyes who will then follow up directly with your parish.

In the summer months, Alison Hollo, Senior Administrator for the Office of the Episcopate at the Commons is usually in touch with parishes in order to plan for Bishops' Visitations for the upcoming program year. **Unfortunately because of the vagaries of COVID-19 and not knowing what the fall will bring with respect to the pandemic, planning for a year of visitations is very difficult. We have thus decided to take a provisional approach to Bishops' Visitations beginning in September.** Alison will soon be in touch with parishes who are to have visitations in September and October. Depending on the state of COVID-19, Alison will present three possibilities: 1) If your parish is having in-person worship, would you like the bishop to preach and lead worship in-person (following all necessary precautions) and then do the Vestry meeting at a later date via Zoom? 2) If your parish is worshiping online, would you like the bishop to preach and lead worship and then do the Vestry meeting that day, or some other day, via Zoom? 3) Would you like to postpone your Bishops' Visitation to another time? If your parish is an interested in having confirmation as part of an in-person visitation, we will observe all protocols and directions for staying safe. Our preference would be for outdoor worship, and the bishop and anyone being received or confirmed will wear a mask. Alison will be in contact with parishes two months at a time in order to stay as flexible and responsible to the realities of COVID-19 as possible.

As many of you know and have participated in, in the early evening on the second Thursday of the month, the Bishops and Canons of ECCT present a "Faithful Futures" program. These programs are intended to resource ECCT parish leadership on a variety of topics from developing your parish website, to preparing for clergy transitions. During the COVID-19 pandemic we have moved the Faithful Futures programs online and this has greatly increased participation. Last night, with facilitation and planning by Jasree Peralta our Canon for Communications and Media, and Kelli Ray Gibson, ECCT's Racial Justice Resource Coordinator, **Faithful Futures presented: "Racial Justice in Connecticut: Police Accountability, Legislative Advocacy, and the Role of the Church."** It was an important evening of learning with panel presentations by leaders from across Connecticut in the fields of policing, legislative action, and



the church. A strong commitment to dismantle the sins of racism, white-supremacy, and anti-Black bias was voiced by all with specific, actionable steps offered. If you did not participate in the Faithful Futures program last night, we invite you to watch the video [here](#). With a new bipartisan bill designed to help make police departments more accountable to all citizens of Connecticut coming before the General Assembly in the near future, there is an opportunity for all Episcopalians to get involved in helping our state to address the sins of racism, white-supremacy, and anti-Black bias in concrete ways. We will say more about this as the bill proceeds forward and as the General Assembly is called back into session.

As we enter the middle of July, our wish for you is that you are taking, or planning for, vacation this summer (even if our regular vacation plans have been altered by COVID-19). **Time to rest and re-create is so important in order to have the resources we need as clergy and lay leaders living in the midst of the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and racism.** We close with a prayer of thanks "For the Beauty of the Earth" and we hope and pray that you all may enjoy some time in God's good creation this summer.

We give you thanks, most gracious God, for the beauty of earth and sky and sea; for the richness of the mountains, plains, and rivers; for the songs of birds and the loveliness of flowers. We praise you for these good gifts, and pray that we may safeguard them for posterity. Grant that we may continue to grow in our grateful enjoyment of your abundant creation, to the honor and glory of your Name, now and for ever. Amen

(Book of Common Prayer, page 840)

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas
Bishop Diocesan

The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens
Bishop Suffragan