



# EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

ECCT Clergy and Lay Leaders Communication: COVID-19  
Update #15: June 5, 2020

Dear Clergy and Wardens in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut:

It's been a very tragic week for our nation as our country continues to be wracked by both the effects of COVID-19 and the rise in violence as a result of racism and white supremacy. Even as we begin to see a downturn in the metrics of COVID-19, our hearts and minds are consumed with the killing of George Floyd at the hands of police officers. Appropriate expressions of outrage and peaceful protests against the misuse of force by those who have sworn to serve and protect our communities have been met with, and resulted in, even more violence. Such violence cannot be condoned. It is contrary to the Way of Love. It is contrary to the way of Jesus. We must do all in our power to stand in the face of violence, especially the violence that has been and continues to be perpetrated against people of color because of racism and white supremacy. As Christians, especially those of us who are white Christians, we must challenge and deconstruct all forms of anti-blackness in ourselves, in our churches, in our neighborhoods, and in our nation. A resource to do this work and to support black lives, compiled by Kelli Ray Gibson our ECCT Racial Justice Resource Coordinator, can be found here [episcopalct.org/blm](http://episcopalct.org/blm). We commend this resource which will continue to be updated and its suggested actions to you and your parishes as we work together to build God's beloved community of justice, love, and peace for all.

The twin realities of COVID-19 and the violence as a result of racism and white supremacy in our nation has multiplied the feelings of trauma we are experiencing. In our weekly zoom call last Monday with the Presiding Bishop and his staff, along with the staff of Episcopal Relief and Development, we learned about the multiplying effects of concurrent crises. It was noted that when there are concurrent "disasters" the emotional life cycle, including the stage of disillusionment, grief, anger and sadness becomes even more extended and pronounced. The slides from the Episcopal Relief and Development presentation on "concurrent disasters" can be found here. During this difficult time we encourage you to do everything you can to take care of yourself, those you love, those in your parish, and those in your neighborhood and community. Helpful resources for leaders in times of trauma can be found on the website of the Institute for Collective Trauma and Growth at: <https://www.ictg.org> .

As your bishops, we want to do everything possible to support you in these difficult times. Next Thursday, June 11, we will meet via zoom for our Clergy Day from 9:00 am to 2:00 pm (with appropriate times for breaks, lunch, and rest!) We will not have an outside resource person or presenter for our Clergy Day. Instead, we will have time to be together and share together as clergy colleagues how we are doing in these difficult times of living with COVID-19 and the violence in our nation perpetrated by the ongoing sins of racism and white supremacy. Questions that we will consider together include: What does it mean to be the church living with COVID-19? How are we called to challenge and deconstruct racism and white supremacy? What are we learning about God, about the church, and about ourselves in these difficult times? What is God



saying and what are we called to do as clergy leaders at this time? [Sign up for the clergy day here.](#)

Last Friday, May 29, after we sent our Update #14, Governor Lamont issued his Executive Order 7TT <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-7TT.pdf> This Executive Order was the first time the Governor addressed religious, spiritual, and worship gatherings since mid-March. In it the Governor lifted the 49 persons limit on in-person worship and instead limited indoor gatherings to 25% of occupancy up to a maximum of 100 people, whichever is smaller, and outdoor gatherings limited to 150 people, all provided that appropriate safety and physical distancing protocols be employed. In addition, the Governor's team also released a set of guidelines for the reopening of houses of worship. You can find these guidelines on the ECCT COVID-19 Website here at: [https://www.episcopalct.org/Content/www/CMS/files/Guidelines\\_for\\_Houses\\_of\\_Worship.pdf](https://www.episcopalct.org/Content/www/CMS/files/Guidelines_for_Houses_of_Worship.pdf)

Save for the new limits on numbers of people who can gather for both indoor and outdoor religious gatherings, our protocols and directions for clergy and vestries found in our document "Living with COVID-19" are consistent with the Governor's guidelines. We commend a close read of both documents as you work with your vestries and parish reopening committees/task forces to prepare for in-person worship. At this time we continue to urge you not to begin in-person worship during Phase 1 of the Governor's reopening plan, projected to last at least through June 20. As you plan for a return to in-person worship we know that you will have questions regarding the celebration of Holy Eucharist, baptisms, and other forms of worship. We are currently working on directions and protocols regarding the Eucharist and baptisms going forward and hope to have these to you in the near future. In the meantime, if you have any questions or issues you would like to discuss with us as you plan for in-person worship, please do not hesitate to contact us.

As you plan for a return to in-person worship, your parish will need significant supplies to appropriately disinfect and cleanse your worship space and building. Our Operations Manager at the Commons, Matt Handi, has made arrangements with our office supplier, Suburban, out of Middletown, to assist in providing cleansing and sanitizing supplies to our parishes in an effort to ease your transition into your buildings. Suburban has offered to put together a bundle of cleaning and disinfectant supplies that will include antibacterial all-purpose cleaner, bleach spray, foaming hand sanitizer, and hand sanitizer gel. The cost of this bundle will be \$90. Suburban will also be offering a hand sanitizer dispenser and stand for \$250. Please contact Matt via email at [mhandi@episcopalct.org](mailto:mhandi@episcopalct.org) or at 203-639-3501, x107 if you would like to order these items or have further questions.

As we contemplate a return to our church buildings, we have received questions relating to liability if a parishioner contracts COVID-19 at a parish sponsored event. Matt Handi has checked with our insurance carrier, Beecher Carlson, and we have been reassured that as long



as the parish takes the proper precautions regarding the prevention of the spread of the coronavirus, e.g. church is disinfected regularly, pews are wiped down, facemasks are worn, proper physical distancing is maintained, etc., then the parish will be covered under our general liability insurance. Any costs, including defense costs and damages, arising from a lawsuit would be covered under our general liability policy. Additional resources from Beecher Carlson to help prepare for a return to our church buildings can be found here: <http://info.beechercarlson.com/return-to-the-workplace>

We have just learned that revisions to the Paycheck Protection Program have just been signed into law. We do not have time to process the changes in the law in this Update. We will stay on top of this new legislation and will consult with our Chancellor, Brad Babbitt, as to the specifics and how the changes might impact ECCT parishes who have received PPP. We will try to have more information to you in next week's Update. In the meantime, please consult the PPP website at the United States Department of the Treasury at: <https://home.treasury.gov/policy-issues/cares/assistance-for-small-businesses> .

We close with a prayer for our country in this difficult time from the Book of Common Prayer, page 820:

Almighty God, who hast given us this good land for our heritage: We humbly beseech thee that we may always prove ourselves a people mindful of thy favor and glad to do thy will. Bless our land with honorable industry, sound learning, and pure manners. Save us from violence, discord, and confusion; from pride and arrogance, and from every evil way. Defend our liberties, and fashion into one united people the multitude brought hither out of many kindreds and tongues. Endue with the spirit of wisdom those to whom in thy Name we entrust the authority of government, that there may be justice and peace at home, and that, through obedience to thy law, we may show forth thy praise among the nations of the earth, In the time of prosperity, fill our hearts with thankfulness, and in the day of trouble, suffer not our trust in thee to fail; all which we ask through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas  
Bishop Diocesan

The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens  
Bishop Suffragan