



# EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT

PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

ECCT Clergy and Lay Leaders Communication: COVID-19  
Update #16: June 12, 2020

Dear Clergy and Wardens in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut:

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

Our country continues to be overcome with the twin pandemics of COVID-19 and the ongoing realities of racism, white-supremacy, and anti-blackness in our nation. The vulnerabilities and fear that we feel from these twin pandemics, especially those of us who are white and are used to being in charge, having power, and feeling secure, has broken us open in new ways to the truth of racial violence in the United States. The killing of George Floyd at the hands of a white police officer has focused our attention on the need to reform our police departments with calls and actions to: end police brutality that disproportionately singles out and targets people of color, reform police unions that protect “bad cops,” and reallocate financial resources from policing to social service responses. These positions are consistent with the call of the 2018 General Convention of The Episcopal Church to “Acknowledge Police Violence and Confront Racism – Resolution 2018-A229” ([https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts\\_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-A229](https://www.episcopalarchives.org/cgi-bin/acts/acts_resolution.pl?resolution=2018-A229)) We encourage you to lend your voices and bodies to bring about police reform and end racist violence of all forms. To support this work we recommend: “Learn, Pray, Act: Resources for Addressing Racist Violence and Police Brutality” produced by The Episcopal Church’s Department of Reconciliation, Justice and Creation Care, under the direction of the Rev. Canon Stephanie Spellers found at: <https://episcopalchurch.org/responding-to-racist-violence>. We will soon have more information on an additional ECCT offering regarding this work on a local level.

Recently Governor Lamont has adjusted the date for the beginning of Phase 2 reopening of some businesses and recreational facilities in Connecticut from Saturday, June 20 to Wednesday, June 17, 2020. In our “Living with COVID-19: Protocols and Directions for Clergy and Vestries in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut” ([https://www.episcopalct.org/Customer-Content/www/CMS/files/ECCT\\_Covid-19\\_Protocols\\_and\\_Directions\\_May\\_2020.pdf](https://www.episcopalct.org/Customer-Content/www/CMS/files/ECCT_Covid-19_Protocols_and_Directions_May_2020.pdf)) we urged clergy and lay leaders to keep church buildings closed and not return to in-person worship during Phase 1 of the Governor’s plan to reopen the state. At the same time, we provided general protocols and detailed directions for clergy and lay leaders to help prepare for in-person worship and the reopening of parishes offices in Phase 2. We know that many parishes have taken significant steps to prepare for in-person worship in Phase 2 beginning the last two weeks of June or the first week of July. If your parish does plan to hold in-person worship, we strongly urge you to follow all directions and protocols found in “Living with COVID-19” with the change of numbers who can gather indoors limited to 25% of occupancy up to a maximum of 100 people, whichever is smaller, and up to 150 people for outdoor gatherings per the Governor’s Executive Order 7TT <https://portal.ct.gov/-/media/Office-of-the-Governor/Executive-Orders/Lamont-Executive-Orders/Executive-Order-No-7TT.pdf>. The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland has put together a helpful “Covenant for Regathering” to assist worshippers in



following safe practices as they return to in-person worship

([https://images.yourfaithstory.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/05/20184353/Covenant-for-Regathering-5\\_20.pdf](https://images.yourfaithstory.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/6/2020/05/20184353/Covenant-for-Regathering-5_20.pdf)) We are looking into adapting and expanding this Covenant as a resource for parishes in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut.

We fully support clergy and lay leaders who, following a more cautious route, choose not to hold in-person worship during Phase 2. Please do not feel a compulsion to have in-person worship at this time. For parishes that are planning to have in-person worship during Phase 2, we stress the need to provide for online worship for those who choose not to attend in-person worship and/or who are in a higher risk group. Also, we believe that during this initial try-on of returning to in-person worship after June 17, parishes should not distribute communion to worshippers in any form, and should continue with services of: “spiritual communion,” Morning Prayer, Ante-communion, or other services that do not entail the distribution of bread and wine. We are consulting with our bishop colleagues in the dioceses of Province I in New England and we will have protocols and directions for the possible distribution of holy communion beginning in Phase 3 of our state’s reopening.

Over the last three weeks, we have been blessed to take part in online Region “Town Hall Meetings” organized by our Region Missionaries in each of the six Regions of ECCT. Over 350 people from across the diocese participated in the six gatherings focusing on the questions of: What are we learning, and what is God saying as we live into the realities of COVID-19. More recent Town Hall Meetings have expanded these questions to include discussion of the urgent call to undo racism and white supremacy. All six Town Hall Meeting were moving experiences, and we witnessed incredible faithfulness and energy to be the Church in new ways in these new times. Many of the discussions begun in the Town Hall Meetings continued in our Clergy Day on Thursday, June 11. As your bishops we want to say THANK YOU for your participation in the Region Town Hall Meetings and Clergy Day. We in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut are incredibly blessed by the faithfulness and dedication of the people of ECCT to becoming the Church that God needs to address the realities of COVID-19, and undo the endemic racism and white supremacy in our nation. It is an honor to serve alongside you in God’s mission of restoration and reconciliation during these challenging times.

During our Wednesday morning zoom calls with clergy and wardens, questions were raised asking if ECCT could offer some resources for parenting and the providing of care for children of all ages during COVID-19. In response, we invite ECCT parents to come together for zoom calls designed to create a sacred space of compassion and grace, hoping to provide some support and fellowship to those of us struggling to make it all work as we care for children. The meetings will gather together clergy and lay facilitators to hold one another up, and have a little fun too! The zoom calls will be held on the second and fourth Thursdays of every month beginning on June 25th and will be offered at 9:00 am, 12:00 noon, and 8:30 pm in order to provide a choice for parents with various scheduling demands. There will be no need to sign up or



preregistration. Please share plans for this new offering with parents in your parishes and watch the ECCT e-news for the zoom link and further information.

Finally, last Friday, June 5, the Paycheck Protection Program Flexibility Act was signed into law. This new legislation makes changes to the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP) including the extension of the covered period from 8 weeks to 24 weeks or December 31<sup>st</sup>, whichever comes first, and numerous other changes regarding use of funds received. If your parish is participating in PPP, we encourage you to review the memo provided by our colleague Zachery A. Kohl, Esq. who has been advising ECCT on the Paycheck Protection Program. Zach's memo [can be found here](#).

We end with a prayer of thanksgiving "For the Diversity of Races and Cultures" from the Book of Common Prayer, page 840.

O God, who created all peoples in your image, we thank you for the wonderful diversity of races and cultures in this world. Enrich our lives by ever-widening circles of fellowship, and show us your presence in those who differ most from us, until our knowledge of your love is made perfect in our love for all your children; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas  
Bishop Diocesan

The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens  
Bishop Suffragan