

ECCT Clergy and Lay Leaders Communication: COVID-19
Update #17: June 19, 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 on the occasion of Juneteenth, the oldest nation-wide holiday celebrating the end of slavery in the United States. We have already sent out a communication today calling the Episcopal Church in Connecticut to honor and celebrate Juneteenth through prayer, acts of witness, and education. Our communication [can be found here](#). As part of our commitment as individuals and as a Church to dismantle the sins of racism, white supremacy, and anti-Black bias, (particularly as it pertains to police practices) we commend the celebration of Juneteenth to you as a time of prayer, reflection, and action.

Two days ago, on June 17th, Connecticut entered Phase Two of reopening the state in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic. The protocols advanced by Governor Ned Lamont for Phase Two seek to balance the twin goals of keeping people safe from COVID-19 and the resumption of business and social activities across the state. As we have regularly stressed in our Wednesday morning zoom calls with clergy and wardens of parishes in the Episcopal Church in Connecticut and in our "Friday Updates" this is not a time to go rushing back to in-person worship as we have known it in the past. We recognize that many parishes are beginning to resume in-person worship and are using the "Living with COVID-19" protocols and directions that we have promulgated as guidelines. We appreciate the deliberate, careful and collaborative way that you, the clergy and lay leaders in ECCT, are considering what is best for your parishes in this new phase. Thank you for your ongoing faithful and inspiring leadership. Still we want to review again where we are with respect to in-person worship during Phase Two:

1. Care and caution to protect all is paramount. People at higher risk, including both clergy and laity who are 65 years or older, should continue to stay home and stay safe. If this means that a parish will not have the leadership needed to have in-person worship, we are fully supportive of keeping with online worship solely.
2. If you are considering returning to in-person worship, outside worship is safer than inside worship and is preferred.
3. There should be no distribution of communion. Services of Morning Prayer, Ante-Communion, or Spiritual Communion are best. See below regarding a new prayer for Spiritual Communion.
4. Online worship, if currently offered, should continue for those who cannot, or choose not, to participate in in-person worship.

5. The protocols and directions offered in “Living with COVID-19” remain in effect, with the number of people who can gather indoors changed 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.

With respect to Spiritual Communion, either online or in-person, some clergy across ECCT have expressed a desire for a Spiritual Communion prayer that underscores the community that is gathered, virtually or otherwise, around the sacrament and less an individualistic and petitionary prayer. At our invitation, the Rev. Bennet Brockman wrote a new prayer for Spiritual Communion. We are delighted with Ben’s offering and we offer it to you here for your use in your parish Spiritual Communion worship. It will also be available in the COVID-19 Worship Resources on the ECCT webpage.

God of love and grace, of justice and peace, we give you thanks that in the Sacrament of the altar you assure us of your presence within us and within the body of Christ, the faithful through all the generations; grant that we who have witnessed anew these holy mysteries, though unable to receive the physical elements of the Sacrament, may be moved by your indwelling Spirit ever more fully to embody your holy and life-giving presence, reshaping in your likeness the world around us, until we are gathered at last into the fullness of your glorious and eternal presence; through Christ our Risen Lord, Amen.

As we live in this transitional time of Phase 2, there are still many regular parish functions that we need to attend to as clergy and lay leaders. Canon Rosanna Rosado, our Canon for Mission Finance and Operations reminds us that many 2020 Parish Surveys still need to be completed/updated. In an effort to have the most current data regarding the parishes and leaders in ECCT, Parish Surveys are now required to be updated annually. To complete/update your 2020 Parish Survey online see: <https://www.episcopalct.org/church-login/> Please note that the first part of the survey providing information on Parish Leadership was due on June 1, and the second part on Parish Facilities is due on December 1. Also, please make sure your canonically required Parochial Report is now complete. If you need to file your Parochial Report please file online at: <https://reports.dfms.org/> We encourage you to reach out to Karolyn Nicolaides at knicolaides@episcopalct.org if you need assistance .

Our 2018 Annual Convention, in our resolution on “[Affirming Racial Healing, Justice and Reconciliation](#)” called on all parishes to include a simple report, which will be submitted to the Mission Council with their Annual Parochial Reports, detailing how they have engaged in conversation, study, and action regarding racial healing, justice,

and reconciliation. The link for submitting your parishes report regarding your efforts in racial healing, justice and reconciliation for 2019 [can be found here](#).

In our conversations with clergy and lay leaders, we are hearing that many parishes seem to be doing well with respect to finances during the COVID-19 pandemic. We give thanks to God for the generosity and faithfulness shown by parishioners who continue to support the mission of God through financial contributions to your parishes. Still, Canon Rosanna reminds us that we are not yet out of the woods with respect to the financial ramifications of COVID-19 and the third and fourth quarters for 2020 might still be very difficult for parish finances. Rosanna also notes that the Paycheck Protection Program was funded at \$310 billion dollars and more than \$120 billion is still unallocated for small businesses. If you suspect your parish will need the assistance of the Paycheck Protection Program going forward, the application deadline is June 30. The PPP application [can be found here](#).

For parishes that are already participating in the Payroll Protection Program, an updated memo from Zach Kohl on the PPP Flexibility Act [can be found here](#).)The Small Business Administration has recently released [a three-page "EZ" Paycheck Protection Program loan forgiveness application](#) requiring less documentation and fewer calculations than previously required. We commend these resources to you.

As we honor and celebrate Juneteenth today, we want to also draw your attention to the fact that tomorrow, June 20th is World Refugee Day. Episcopal Migration Ministries and the Washington Office of The Episcopal Church invite us all to join in the work that God calls us to do in "welcoming the stranger" through acts of advocacy and generosity. We invite you to [visit](#) their website for advocacy toolkits, resources, and other opportunities to engage virtually in World Refugee Day. In addition, we invite you to make a generous financial contribution to IRIS - [Integrated Refugee and Immigrant Services](#) our immediate partners in the work of resettling refugees here in Connecticut.

Thank you, once again, for your incredible leadership in these challenging and difficult times. We hold you in our daily prayers for wisdom and guidance.

A prayer "For Guidance" from the Book of Common Prayer, page 832:

Direct us, O Lord, in all our doings with thy most gracious favor, and further us with thy continual help; that in all our works begun, continued, and ended in thee, we may glorify thy Holy Name, and finally, by thy mercy, obtain everlasting life; through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

Faithfully,

The Rt. Rev. Ian T. Douglas The Rt. Rev. Laura J. Ahrens
Bishop Diocesan Bishop Suffragan