

The Episcopal Church in Connecticut - Annual Convention 2020

World Café Conversations Next Steps

Wednesday, October 14, 2020

The Big Question: What can ECCT and its members do to address the issue of wealth inequality, including: Developing a common language to assure that everyone is talking about the same thing; Understanding how it distorts the political decision making of our governments with examples; Understanding how wealth inequality intersects with other issues as racism, classism, etc; Understanding what is our role in politics as a church; Understanding how our Christian faith provides a standard for our participation in public life.

Continue the conversation:

#1 Resource Pooling

What would be possible if we tapped into our combined resources—both individually and as church communities and put them to use to address income inequality? Ideas ranged from sponsoring high-speed housing to homeless individuals, funding education or scholarship, and offering reparations. If you are interested in exploring this work more, please email the Rev. Tracy Johnson Russell, who has volunteered to setup the initial Zoom meeting.

First Meeting

November 14, 2020 @ 11:30am

Contact The Rev. Tracy Johnson Russell; tjr5683@gmail.com

#2 Direct Action

As disciples of Jesus, we are called to serve and care for those in need and for those who suffer injustice and oppression. This call to action is not just through our pocketbooks, it is through direct relationship with those we serve and direct involvement in their lives. If you are interested in exploring this work more, please email the Rev. Ron Steed, who has volunteered to setup the initial Zoom meeting.

First Meeting

November 11, 2020 @ 6:30pm

Contact The Rev. Ron Steed; ronaldsteed@gmail.com

#3 Political Action

To address the problem of inequality requires more than charity, it requires justice. This justice is pursued by creating change within our church; by lobbying our political leaders for reform and accountability at national, state and local levels; and by educating ourselves about the realities of income and wealth inequality in our own towns and neighborhoods. If you are interested in exploring this work more, please email the Rev. Tuesday Rupp, who has volunteered to setup the initial Zoom meeting.

First Meeting

November 19, 2020 @ 6:30pm

Contact The Rev. Tuesday Rupp; rector@stpaulswoodbury.org

The Full List of Try-ons

What will you be inspired to try yourself?

- Getting out of church and bringing church into the community to accompany community in their needs, to walk with.
- What if we tried traveling church moving to a different parishioner's house each day or week?
- Using our huge old parish buildings to help transform our neighborhoods and society.
- Build relationships with our legislative delegations to Washington DC and Hartford.
- Changing our concept of "success" – demographics and numbers and wealth aren't the center. God is! Share resources between wealthy and not-so-wealthy parishes.
- Try to dialogue openly in uncomfortable conversation to talk about these issues of income and wealth inequality.
- Mentorship and/or providing education to those who are not able to access it.
- Bring alive the gospel in our ministries so that the root causes of poverty are addressed. We do good and wonderful work by providing food and clothing. Along with that work, we need to work to address the causes of poverty. We can continue to give, and include that "AND" of addressing root cause issues.
- Try on "putting feet on our imaginings" or finding new ways to connect virtually.
- Attend other houses of worship – during co-vid make a connection of some kind until able to attend in person.
- Need for increased communication within the Church about the issue of wealth inequality. We need to be more aware of the political advocacy of the church.
- Make a stance in the 2021 Convention in favor of school-funding reform—to support and partner with those who are lobbying for or working for this. Education is central to opportunity. Organize this movement through the parishes—get the people in the pews to make calls, to vote, to advocate, to sign petitions.

- Tap into the wealth of Fairfield County, using this together with other donations: could every parish (or teams of parishes) fund six month's of "rapid rehousing" for a homeless person? (\$2k security deposit + 6 x \$1000 rent), working through your local shelter. Maybe a team of parishes (not all ECCT) could do this together. Practically, a parish could master-lease a shared housing situation, furnish the place, sublease it to homeless people or people leaving prison.
- Invite parishioners and clergy to review their local municipalities Comprehensive Plans, Study Your Neighborhood, and US Census map of Average Median Incomes per household, so that they may see the needs of the community and then support or create a ministry/mission to address those needs.
- Educate people on the difference between charity and justice.
- Develop house church models/ curriculum, house church lay pastor training and challenge churches to start house church small groups that do the following: care for one another in one another can homes and neighborhoods, Worship God, study the Bible, pray and serve together in a some mission outreach, and join the larger church for worship and accountability.
- Provide insurance to every employee of the ECCT regardless of how many hours they work.
- Region food programs. After school programs.
- We want to leverage the CT Church as a whole and regionally to address wealth inequality. We envision providing personal finance classes – similar to Dave Ramsey Financial Peace University. Secondly, provide Job Search support for those seeking a job or those who can help job seekers.
- What if we were about bridge building and convened various gatherings with the intention of inviting decision makers to consider the holy use of money and incorporating such values into their dealings, lobbying, legislating, etc.
- Listening sessions with community leaders and those in need to develop relationships, and assess and address needs.
- Each church take a portion of their endowment and create a credit union for members of the community that would have a hard time getting a loan from regular institutions.
- Church as a welcoming center that creates a space for hearts to connect by getting the church to remove itself from within the capitalistic model and becoming a place where our vulnerability can be real.
- Try on more healing prayer in our expanded neighborhood, build on other successful models.

Thursday, October 15, 2020

The Big Question: Which of the pandemic changes we have already made will we KEEP and thereby encourage a continuing culture of discovery in parishes?

Continue the conversation:

#1 Reach New People

The move to online, virtual church has vastly expanded the reach of our parishes. People are no longer limited by distance, geography, mobility, or health. What opportunities are there to reach people who we have not been able to reach before? How might we think outside of the box and imagine new and meaningful ways to connect with God and one another?

First Meeting

To be determined by Doodle Poll. Contact Rev. Baker for details.

Contact The Rev. Margie Baker; margie@siparish.net

#2 Improving Use and Access to Technology

Technology has allowed us to adapt church to today's challenges in ways that would not have been possible a decade ago. And technology can be a barrier to participation, either because of a lack of availability or a lack of familiarity. How can we support greater access and comfort to technology as well as access to the internet so that we don't leave people out and behind?

First Meeting

November 9, 2020 @ 11:00 am

Contact: Sheila Traub; sheilastraub@optonline.net

#3 Collaboration

Who knew we would all become video streaming experts in 2020? We have learned so much, now let us share that knowledge! What would be possible if we worked together on sharing resources, whether it is technical skills, worship services, or even pre-recorded sermons?

First Meeting

December 1, 2020 @6:30pm

Contact Casey Rousseau; casey@the-bat.net

#4 Building Community

Isolation and loneliness is a huge problem as we continue through this pandemic, and it is forcing us to be intentional about how we grow and foster community. In a

world now dominated by computer screens and video calls, how do we forge human connection?

First Meeting

November 12, 2020 @6:30pm

Contact The Rev. Diana Rogers; revdianamrogers@gmail.com

The Full List of Try-ons

What will you be inspired to try yourself?

- Use technology as an additional way to reach out to people who have been excluded (such as deaf or Spanish speaking)
- Encourage the expansion of the team responsible for Sunday worship, certainly beyond just parish clergy, so that sabbath is possible
- Obtain broadband access for everyone in order to foster connectedness
- Collaborate with other churches in the area and ask the diocese to help us get computers to the elderly along with WIFI so they don't feel left out of this.
- Try on using the building itself for new ideas/functions – Engaging the arts in new ways / providing safe study space / sheltering / community needs
- Explore an online platform for sharing and exploring ideas. Post images to Instagram of home sacred spaces; invite contributions. Make sharing sacred spaces the focus for a service every so often. Exploring the intersection of Jesus's teachings, and the symbols we have chosen for our homes and to express our faith.
- A monthly service with distanced significant speaker and small group follow up/interaction
- Collaborate without fear of giving up something or losing one's own church or way of doing things; we are a unique church which needs to share who we are with a world who needs to hear our unique message of God's love; try on a media ministry – diocesan-wide and maybe nationally.
- Pull people together in small groups beyond parish borders, sharing resources: examples were Bible Study, Racial Healing Conversations, Eco-justice events
- Maybe as a diocese we have learning communities, through prayer, conversation, discernment, continue to ask the question: What's God inviting us to do or to pay attention to? And, in the meantime, how to we share our resources (digital expertise, funds, worship) more broadly, and open accessibility. Take it out of silos and into an open source resource for everyone to participate in.
- Yoked parishes that use technology to share a priest.
- Gathering information through a survey of what other churches or non faith organizations are doing to help people connect., then share that list both within the parish and to the wider community.

- Create an intergenerational platform for all people. We need to educate upward so that everybody can participate and speak the language, technology being the language. Train all comers who need to learn how to use technology, zoom, systems, phones, computers, etc.
- More outside worship: Christmas outside, Christmas bonfire service (solo-stove) and take it on the road – connect with people who are isolated and can't come to us
- Create a loose federation of parishes that can come together and collaborate where we overlap and learn from one another. Share programs and outreach, build community in collaboration.
- Trying to bring our worship to outside the walls and around the town (Town green, front porches, etc)
- Topical sessions for sharing outcomes & cross-fertilizing, brainstorming eg. music, children, Christmas, those with internet access issues, charitable outreach
- Try building communities of connection – house church, electronic, with people we connect in public spaces.
- Have everyone (all clergy and laity) contribute to the library of sermons : grief, care givers, addiction
- Invite everyone, and do everything through mixed media.
- What if on Sunday morning we allowed more vulnerability at church? Wrestling more with the Gospel, conversation, allowing for more vulnerability. Don't have to have a stiff upper lip. More sharing at church: gratitude allows for some expression of vulnerability. Rotating preaching duties to allow for more voices in church.
- Agape feast instead of communion, lay led, bless the bread you've brought, grace over the meal
- Let go of things that aren't working to make room for trying on something new... or resting
- Seek those we are not reaching with a more personal invitation
- Pooling resources, through ECCT or through Regions, or informally through churches working together. What can we share? Finding money for technology, people with tech knowledge, help with production:
- ECCT TV!

Friday, October 16, 2020

The Big Question: How can parishes educate themselves about the reality of systemic racism, white supremacy and anti-Black bias, and feel compelled to take action as followers of Jesus?

Continue the conversation:

#1 Storytelling

The value of stories is rich. It helps us bridge experience, forge relationships, and honor the history and lives of those who have come before us. This is a group interested in fostering the sharing of stories, from one-on-one conversations, to larger storytelling events, to creating an archive of stories from people around our church to preserve our history and learn from it.

First Meeting

To be determined by Doodle Poll. Contact Rev. Handi for details.

Contact The Rev. Matt Handi; mhandi@episcopalct.org

#2 Building Connections Between Communities

We are stronger together. We can accomplish more as a community. This is true for us individually and for us as worshiping communities. What if we explored pulpit swaps, or in the age of online worship, what if we tried out congregation swaps, or even shared worship services with each other and with other congregations in our community that are from other denominations? This group wants to pursue what is possible if we learn together, love together, and confront racism together.

First Meeting

November 14, 2020 @ 10:00 am

Contact Dylan Mello; dmello@episcopalct.org

#3 Practical Action Steps

We need to have conversation and education, and we also need to take concrete steps to counter anti-blackness and white supremacy in our society. This group wants to explore the practical actions we can take individually and as church communities, such as supporting black-owned businesses, redistributing wealth in our church endowments, and pursuing anti-racist training.

First Meeting

December 9, 2020 @6:30pm

Contact The Rev. Don Hamer revdon2016@gmail.com;

The Rev. Heidi Thorsen; hthorsen@trinitynewhaven.org

#4 Owing Our Sin

Who better to talk about sin than the church? Where better to confront, own, and address our own sin in regards to racism, both individually and corporately, than in the context of our faith? This group seeks to lead us in examining our hearts, owning our sin, and seeking reconciliation with God and with one another.

First Meeting

To be determined by Doodle poll. Contact Rev. Montgomery for details.

Contact The Rev. Ian Montgomery; ibmontgomery@gmail.com

The Full List of Try-ons

What will you be inspired to try yourself?

- Trying new way to facilitate conversations among diverse people.
- Leveraging regional gatherings to foster relationships and network parishes and people across racial difference. Encourage the clergy and lay leadership of ECCT to network more widely with political and religious leadership across their regions and across lines of racial(, religious, and denominational) difference—not limiting our networks and collaborations to our towns, which, because of the racially homogenous character of so many communities in Connecticut, impedes our participation in God’s mission.
- Doing something at the regional level: Regional partnerships with community groups / organizations beyond our parochial walls that bring all people into contact with each other.
- Direct political action using the church as a voice.
- Model vulnerability in sharing my own experiences, recognizing my privilege, my own implicit bias. Show that sharing is okay, important, and life-giving.
- Pool all the endowment funds from parishes, send to Meriden to be redistributed by need.
- Living as/with another church in a different environment and setting for 24 hours, dinner, and stay overnight (3 church Indaba).
- Go places where non-white voices are primary.
- Pulpit swap... could involve a large part of congregations (choirs)... delegations of congregations as part of swap... could do it on zoom!
- Have sustained events together with other churches.
- Speed Dating Style Conversations between individuals of different races with guided questions to explore life experiences, barriers, benefits, and just our deep human connections.
- Create a calendar of holy images that do not depict white people.
- Reparations.

- Telling Stories of Racial Injustice and Healing, then collecting those videos and voice recordings in the ECCT archives to allow us to document our stories without having to retell and reteach.
- ECCT to reach out to other religious communities for food sharing (not religious services) and identify a mix of laity and clergy leaders to work together.
- Create a “speakers bureau” of people engaged in the work, to provide discussions in the parishes.
- Pulpit swaps – priest swap between churches and/or bring churches together. Tell our stories amongst the people in the church, share backgrounds.
- Hiring contractors, patronizing businesses owned by people of color – this would be by parishioners, parishes, and the Diocese – as a statement, example, and a step against systematic racism.
- Every parish offers on a given Saturday with Every priest offering to hear confessions for 2 hours on racism and anti black bias.
- Create space for congregants to speak to each other about their experiences/meditations to encourage people to share and have conversations, and less focus on preachers talking to their congregations from their POV.
- Visiting other parishes during this time of virtual worship.
- We must commit on a personal level, which seems to begin with sharing stories, praying together, asking God what God would want us to do together, discern how our diversity makes a strong Body of Christ.
- Worship online with churches that have really different contexts, especially now.
- Take risks as individuals to learn about and find ways to have the hard conversations that need to be had to promote the needed change.
- Get the word out to Parishes about the resources available on the ECCT Website.
- Using more prayers, hymns, etc. written by people of color and women and making our liturgy and music more mindful and respectful of racial and gender diversity.
- Franchise Heads Up, Hartford.