

Without saying where you live, what you have, who you know, or what you do... *Who Are You?*

That question stumped you, didn't it? Don't worry; I'm pretty sure that's a boat we can all collectively float in. When I first came across that question, it snatched away each and every safety blanket, leaving me exposed to fend for my identity in a way that required me to place my core under a spiritual microscope. It's ironic, but the truth is, it's easy to introduce ourselves through external things: job titles, favorite hobbies, who our close friends are, what town we live in, ect. But when those aspects are off the table, defining yourself, truly and internally, isn't as easy. In order for other people to know who you are, you must do an internal inventory of the secret ingredients that make you, you and I can tell you, tracking down something as elusive as your core essence is courageous. To clarify: I'm not saying that the external things you connect with shouldn't be important to you; anything that's within your personal solar system holds value and is a great indicator of your orientation. I'm just painting a bigger picture, like René Magritte in *La Clairvoyance*, 1936.

The benefit of knowing the answer to the question above isn't for yourself; it's for the greater collective. When you know who you are at your core, you can establish the essence of your ministry and emit the very energy that represents your heart. That energy is what you want to contribute to the world as a means to aid all beings and free them from suffering. There's beauty in knowing yourself because it is the very thing that helps build community beyond the surface, which is a journey one of our ministry networks has bravely embarked on.

With that said, let me re-introduce you to ECCT's [Hispanic Ministry Network](#):

An Open Letter:

Our challenges are many, but we try to do God's work with what we have. Our gifts are of love for one another, and our goal is to share that love with the larger community. Many of our parishioners speak monolingual Spanish. There are members who are monolingual in Spanish, some who are bilingual in Spanish and English, and some who are predominately English speakers. Some of the parishes are involved with a food pantry to assist those in need in the community. Many of our parishioners are working-class people who try to make ends meet to have food and shelter. Some work long hours to try to achieve this. The language barrier is overcome whenever diocesan events have translators from English to Spanish and when communications in social and electronic media are provided in Spanish. It opens the doors for the community and allows them to participate.

There are many cities and towns in Connecticut where there can be an Episcopal presence within the Latino community, which is a major opportunity for growth. The church has always been the number one source of social enjoyment for most families. It is usually the foundation that we get as children from our first educational lessons, beginning with learning our prayers. It's where we are taught to have hope for medical and psychological healing and refuge. Religion encompasses every facet of our lives, as found in art and philosophy. The church plays a vital role in every community.

As the needs of the community transition, our hope is that the church can meet these new challenges. We are seeking potential leaders in our community to come and work with us and tap those who may want to discern in lay leadership and Holy orders, especially in the diaconate. There is currently one Latino deacon, one Latina transitional deacon, and five Latino priests: one Haitian Spanish speaking priest and two White Spanish speaking priests serving in the eight parishes, ministering to the Latino community.

Amidst the challenges before us, we do try to find time for celebration for all God has given us through our various cultures in music, dances, costumes, singing, and, of course, food. Our music is rhythmic through our Spanish, Indigenous, and African influences. Our food speaks of an open invitation to the table, with all its cultural variety. Our costumes reflect our music: bright, colorful, and fun.

Ways to Engage with the Community: In order to engage the Community, we must engage in the resident's lives. We must invest in the Latino Community with tangible actions by implementing and offering...

- Food Drives in front of Local Grocery Stores
- Online Educational workshops via Zoom
- Engage in Community Issues: homelessness, domestic violence, health care, ect.
- Open Dialogue in safe spaces beyond Sunday for mass
- Sharing Resources
- Translation Services

We formally invite you to connect with your local communities and visit our community with questions, volunteers, and ministry. We are eager to connect with the wider ECCT collective and want to exchange ideas and resources. This letter is not only an opportunity for you to get to know us, but an invitation for us to connect on a deeper level as we continue to participate in God's mission!

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Let's Connect, Plan, and Brainstorm!

Cultural Identity

There is no one Latin America, or Latino or Latin American culture. We often hear the terms Hispanic and Latino used interchangeably; however, each term holds a distinct cultural nuance.

- **Hispanic:** refers to individuals who speak Spanish as their first language. Typically, are from Spain or a country that has been colonized by the Spanish.
- **Latino/a/x:** refers to individuals with Latin American roots/heritage. This term can be applied to those who speak a Latin-based language such as Spanish. Typically, live in territories such as South America, Central America and the Caribbean.

The heritage of Latin America blends indigenous, European, African, and Asian peoples, languages, and cultural traditions. Therefore, it is possible for those within this community to be considered White, Creole, Black, or Indigenous based on their unique ancestral lineage in which terms like Afro-Latino stem from.

What About Connecticut?

- **The Latino/Hispanic community in Connecticut makes up about 18% of the population.**
 - A multi-cultural and multi-race community with origins primarily from Central America, South America and the Caribbean.
- **Racial Makeup:**
 - White (63%)
 - Black or African American (12%)
 - Indigenous, Alaska Native (1%)
 - Asian (3%)
 - Mixed also known as Creoles or Criollo (pronounced cree-oyo) between White, Black and Indigenous) (3%)
 - Hispanic/Latino (18%)
- **The largest concentration of Latinos (greater than 30%) are found in the following cities/towns of Connecticut:**
 - Willimantic (47%)
 - Hartford (46%)
 - New Britain (43%)
 - Bridgeport (42%)
 - Byram (39%)
 - Waterbury (37%)
 - East Hartford (37%)
 - Poquonock Bridge (36%)
 - Meriden (36%)
 - New London (34%)
 - New Haven (30%)

Find Parishes

- Christ Church Cathedral, Hartford
- Church of Good Shepherd, Hartford
- Trinity, Lime Rock
- All Saints, Meriden
- Saint John's, Waterbury
- Saint Luke & Saint Paul, Bridgeport
- Saint John's, Bridgeport
- Betania, Stamford