



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

Affirmation and Invitation

What is an ***Affirmation***? Webster's tells us it's a positive assertion or declaration. I think of it as "breathing life" into an intention. And for me, ***Invitation*** means someone wants me to attend an event, be a team member or join in something that holds the promise of a joyful outcome, (like coming to the Lord's table!) However, it may also involve a lot of work! That's okay, the Invitation is what's important. It feels good to be valued.

ECCT is into a two-year Season of Racial Healing, Justice, & Reconciliation. We are an inviting church; we post signs that say "All are Welcome." Why do we need to Affirm and Invite? It is God's church after all. Yet, we are learning new things this Season: the Episcopal Church has a history to overcome. Here's a story: When I talk about my faith to some People of Color, I get this question: "Isn't the Episcopal church a White church?" Or, when I meet White people, I am asked, "Are you Baptist?" This has happened quite a few times and my answers are always "no" and "no." I then explain my faith journey.

So to me, in these divided times in America and around the world, where the cloud of separation hangs over God's creation, making affirmative efforts is a powerful thing to do. I believe in Affirming God's people, all colors, languages and cultures are welcome in the Episcopal Church and can help to overcome parts of our history and break down the stereotype of what is a White church or a Black church.

Another story: Years ago, I worked in a racial justice ministry in New Jersey, where I then lived. Our small, diverse group held church-sponsored anti-racism training. Soon, we figured out that it was wonderful to do this work, but at the end of the day, we returned to our segregated lives. We decided to break that pattern, take an affirming action and enjoy each other at a deeper level, and we did.

How does one move from affirming to taking action - growing our intentions? For me it was normalizing more diverse people, places and experiences I welcomed

into my life. Thought was given to saying “yes” rather than “no” and actually seeking out difference; then, I accepted God’s invitation and followed the path God laid for me. Like the time I took a belly-dancing class and ended up going to the instructor’s Bahá’í wedding reception!

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The Episcopal Church in Connecticut (ECCT) entered a "Season of Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation" for a minimum of two years by vote of its Annual Convention in October 2018. [Visit episcopalct.org/season-of-racial-healing-justice-and-reconciliation/](http://episcopalct.org/season-of-racial-healing-justice-and-reconciliation/) to read the enabling resolution and for resources, events, and more. ECCT's Racial Healing, Justice, and Reconciliation Ministry Network is helping to facilitate much of the resolution's implementation. Contact the Rev. Rowena Kemp or Suzy Burke, co-conveners of the Ministry Network, at rowjkemp@gmail.com or suzy@alegriaimports.net