



CONNECTICUT
CONNECTION

In Connecticut, After God,
We Put People First

BIMONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE CONNECTICUT DISTRICT

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Welcome to Our District!

The Connecticut District hopes not only to inform you but also to empower you to be thriving, kingdom-advancing, impact-making disciples of Jesus Christ. Although we are at different locations, this newsletter intends to help you stay connected to your neighboring pastors, laity, and churches. Let us know via email or phone how the newsletter can be more helpful and resourceful to you and your ministries.

These are certainly uncertain times, but it is in times of uncertainty that we realize how important our relationships with one another truly are. We hope to give you faith-filled responses that will help you channel God's grace and peace onto one another and onto your church.



The Heart of the D.S.

This section known as "From the Heart of The D.S." is a blog where we come to learn what is it that's in the D.S.'s heart and mind.



CONQUERING OUR "FEARS"

BY REV. DR. ALPHER SYLVESTER

District Superintendent, Connecticut



Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,

This morning after post-England trip quarantine, my wife left home for work. Her journey is across three states (CT, NY, and NJ) lines. My son journeys daily to work, via Uber. They are both considered **essential service workers** based on their profession. This is the minimum level of sacrifice that they must make as we battle through the onslaught of this COVID19 virus. I am left with an empty, somewhat helpless feeling asking myself what can I do that matches their commitment to duty and resilience in the face of this uncertain time. I know that my story is not unique since, daily in all of our households, we are confronted and living through similar scenarios.

The information derived from our news media about this dire situation, the reality that the current data points are trending upward, the proximity of New York City (as the epicenter of this pandemic) now leaves us with a deep feeling of uncertainty that elicits responses of anxiety.

I was moved to tears, as I saw, via television, the diary of a health care worker as she struggled to make decisions about the use of **limited resources** among patients and making **life and death choice about** them while juggling to find

"I am wrestling with deep conviction about what can I do to help. This is real, personal and painful, isn't it?"

equilibrium with the demands of **her job and her family**. My God! I was taken back, in my mind eyes, to my prior profession as a senior health care administrator amidst the SARS virus. So much emotion surfaced within

me as I remembered taking care of the providers as they took care of the patients. I am ever cognizant that the demands of this moment far exceed that period. I am not on the frontline. I am working from home. It's relatively safe;

yet, I am wrestling with deep conviction about what can I do to help. This is real, personal and painful, isn't it?

I am an emotional person, I cry easily. Maybe my tears today is for: my family, the Esposito family, pastors under my care, the Connecticut community, restaurant workers, small business owners, barbers, day workers, people who live alone and those on the fringes who do not know where their next meal is coming from. Maybe my tears are tears of joy because our elected leaders are finally abandoning partisan politics so that PPE supplies and ventilators are delivered, the medical ship (USNS COMFORT) has arrived in N.Y., kids still have access to free meals that parents could pick up. Or, maybe my tears are an extension of my prayers because as helpless as I feel, I am still "**feeling something!**" it's just not about our good and welfare, our comfort, our feeling. As a

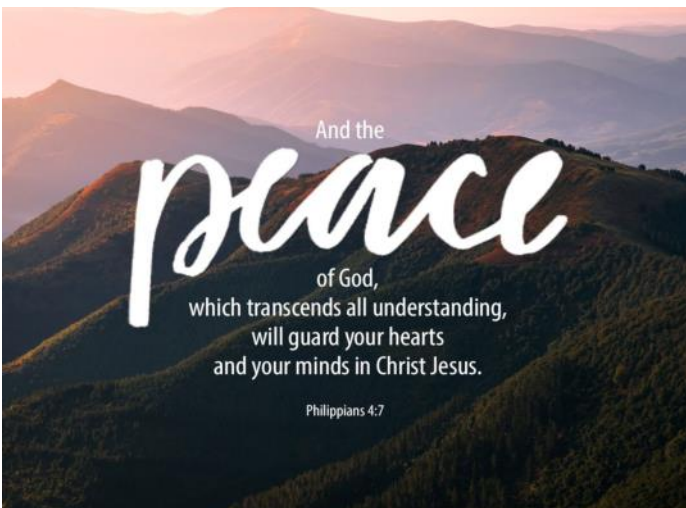
maybe my tears are an extension of my prayers because as helpless as I feel, I am still "feeling something!"



spiritual leader, maybe you too are discovering what I am discovering that we **genuinely care**.

Maybe this testimonial resonates with you and like me; you are asking what can I do as we wage this war. So this is what I am doing maybe you want to join-in:

1. **On my knees and crying out to God** as an extension of my **faith** and an expression of my **call**. I am praying for my family, leaders (spiritual & political), pastors, their families, and congregation especially those that **live alone**.
2. **Reaching out and supporting individuals** within my circle of influence - CT pastors. And, meeting via social media with all our parishes and every day with a cross-section of pastors (rotated) to assure they feel cared for. This is not "work," **its ministry!**
3. **Assuring pliability and responsiveness** to our episcopal leader and the cabinet. My ability to be supportive at this local level minimizes undue concerns on his part so that he could focus on caring for the conference and supporting the state officials in CT & NY.
4. **Assuring compliance with the mandates** of the elected official by **working from home, practicing "physical distancing," practicing handwashing and mental care**.



5. **Cross-pollinating best practices** across the district so that we could build on other great ideas in service to our people.
6. **Praying for our health care and essential service workers** as they sacrifice themselves and their families for the good of the nation, our welfare, and comfort.

These thoughts are from my heart. It's not written to offend or create anxiety. I believe that transparency and authenticity are good medicine at this moment. This missive might even be inarticulate but it is the sum total of my heart to you in this uncertain times.

I leave you with these scriptures:

1 Corinthians 10:13 The Message (MSG)

13 No test or temptation that comes your way is beyond the course of what others have had to face. All you need to remember is that God will never let you down; he'll never let you be pushed past your limit; he'll always be there to help you come through it.



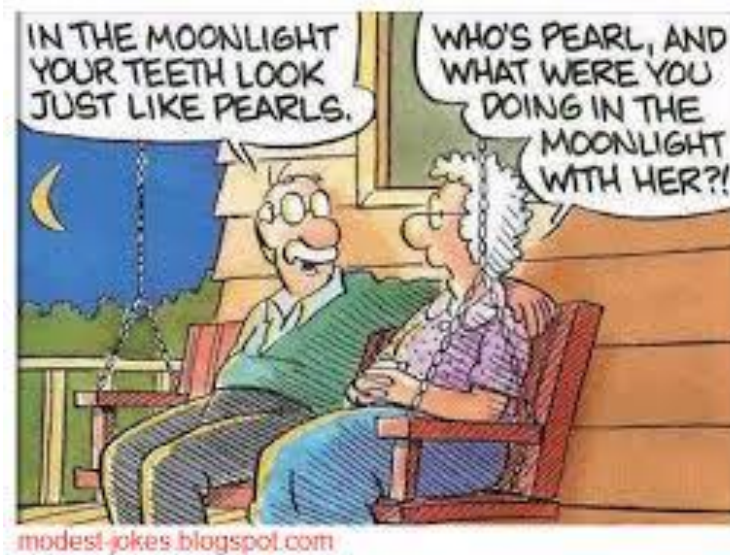
Romans 8:28 The Message (MSG)

26-28 Meanwhile, the moment we get tired in the waiting, God's Spirit is right alongside helping us along. If we don't know how or what to pray, it doesn't matter. He does our praying in and for us, making prayer out of our wordless sighs, our aching groans. He knows us far better than we know ourselves, knows our pregnant condition, and keeps us present before God. That's why we can be so sure that every detail in our lives of love for God is worked into something good.



“Funny Things Are Everywhere!”

As the saying goes, "Laughter is the best medicine." We are dedicating this section in our hopes to put a smile on your face and brighten your day. And some jokes contain a grain of truth. Let us be the people who can use our sense of humor to find some joy in our ministries and gain secret insights into our lives.



When my son, William, was young, we belonged to a small country church. On Communion day, deacons would pass around the “bread and juice.” One Sunday, we attended a church out of town that was more formal. What our church called bread and juice, this one referred to as elements, a word William didn’t understand. As Communion began, the pastor said, “If the deacons will come forward, the elements will pass among us.” William was suddenly excited and I didn’t know why. Then he leaned toward me, whispering something that caused me to burst out laughing. With all eyes on us, I took him by the hand and we made a hasty exit. All the way to the car, he protested. “Mom, we’re going to miss the circus. The pastor said the elephants were going to pass among us!”



When my husband, James Rowles, was in the seminary, he was invited to preach at a small rural church. However, the man who was to introduce him to the congregation had trouble pronouncing his name. So James offered this verbal clue: “Remember rolls, like hot buttered rolls.” It worked. When it came time for the introduction, the man announced, “We are pleased to have with us the Reverend James Biscuits.”
Ruth Rowles, Halifax, Virginia

Best Practices in Ministry

Each pastor has a passion for something they do that is unique, cutting edge, and successful in bringing people to Christ. This is the section of the newsletter where we share resources, experiences, stories, practices and ways of addressing recurring issues and problems. There is always something new to learn and bring into our pastoral ministry that is effective, life-changing and draws in new disciples.

It is in times of difficulty and uncertainty that the Church has the amazing opportunity to be the Church. It all begins with worshiping together and being in communion with God and with each other. We wish to share with you resources that our colleagues within our district found useful and helpful in increasing their capacity for pastoral care to their members. May these resources help you minister to your congregants.



An outreach effort called Text-In-Church

This is a paid app on a smart phone. Members are being encouraged to sign up to receive text messages or emails to get updates from the church as required. Text messages are quick and efficient way to communicate with church members.



Online Fellowship Gathering

where members come to socialize; it's a time for sharing and catching up rather than a small group or study. Apart from a general check in on how everyone is faring, there is no agenda or expectations. Lasts one hour in duration, folks may sign in sign off as desired with no stated expectation of attendance or participation.



Podcast Anchor App

This provides the ability for the pastor or lay speaker to offer short reflections, often done in a series. The app, Anchor, is free and enables amateur podcaster to create and deliver professional podcasts. This can be emailed to church members or uploaded to church website and/or Facebook page.



Children's Worship Online

allows the Children's Church/Sunday School to continue through the time of coronavirus distancing. As the adult worship is either livestreamed or recorded, this video can be delivered in the same manner. There are many children's sermon object lessons on the internet, and they can be adapted for video presentation quite easily

Best Practices in Ministry



Create a care team of church

members willing to reach out to most vulnerable members by phone and keep pastor informed of any need that might arise. Care team functions at a distance as they can run simple errands such as the pharmacy, grocery store etc., and leave items on church member's doorstep. Also, part of the care team is a prayer group that meets either online together, or agreed upon time to pray for church and the members they are serving.



Phone Chain

Members calling fellow members who are elderly, alone, without family support



Prayer Team

Members gather online, on phone at appointed times to prayer for at-risk members and whole church family



[How to Keep Uninvited Guests Out of Your Zoom Event](#)

Zoom has released guidelines in recent days about **how to prevent unwanted guests** from crashing video meetings and a spokesman told the Guardian it had also been working to educate its users on protections through blogposts and webinars.



CT Pastors Speak

Pastors need to be pastored and inspired. The spiritual health of a pastor really ought to be a priority for his or her congregation. We want to share inspiring and insightful “thoughts” from pastors, primarily within our district, with the aims to minister and empower one another. It is our prayer that we keep each other accountable as we are building God's kingdom together in the Connecticut District.

In 1527, Martin Luther wrote a letter to a friend during an **outbreak of Bubonic Plague** in his hometown of Wittenberg, Germany. His words are remarkably on target for our time. Here is an excerpt:

Therefore I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine, and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance infect and pollute others, and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me, and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me, however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely. This is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God.

This is words of wisdom that emanates from the lips of our pastors:

Managing change is caring for “loss.”

The level of **stress** that is being felt in this “New Normal” is being equated to a post war, bad news experience. It translates into significant psychological stress. It is incumbent on you to deal with the **issue of “loss.”** People could deal with changes even if it is hurtful; but’ it is difficult to deal with the “loss” of all that we cherish. Focus on and deal with the loss people feel of their community, worship etc.

Laura

“This is quite an **uncertain time** for us in that we find it difficult to embrace. Please be mindful to be **forgiving** of each other since we’re all just learning to live in this ‘New Normal!’”

Heather

Be ever cognizant of the question - How do you minister to the same group of people, everyday, using the same technology that they utilize in working remotely form home? This places a heavy dependence on the Holy Spirit to accelerate our creativity. We must be so **CREATIVE!**

David

The “New Normal” experience is new to us but our **worship community has grown** exponentially without a major investment of resources and with minimal financial cost. Thank God that in the midst of this calamity, I am increasing my technological skill; more people are involved in so many levels of our community’s worship life.

Barbara

Conversations via social network platforms are longer and sometimes difficult. I find that **my pastoral care skills are being undergirded by the Holy Spirit.** Even as I struggle with this New Normal, I find my skills serving to minister to people that are **“breaking down emotionally.”** The Holy Spirit is equipping me to minister to those that are overwhelmed and concerned.

CT Pastors Speak

Inkoo

"I feel like I am working harder and dealing with much more complex concerns.

There is a deep sense of inner satisfaction as I feel that this is my "reasonable service."

Joon

I find that I am a "clearing house" for "needs." I am collecting the needs of people within my community via telephone and other social media platform. **I am connecting these needs to available resources within my charge.** My people are helping to provide food to the least of these within my community. It is becoming known and other people are contributing.

Mike

We are utilizing the sophistication of technology to assure that virtual service seems **more real** to our worshipping community. We are utilizing "banners" to enable us to service prayer request in real time even when the service is in progress.

Ric

I am dropping of gifts for our kids at their homes. We are following the protocol to assure safe distancing and quarantining to these gifts. I am also writing an affirmation like "**YOU ARE SPECIAL,**" in chalk, on the driveway of parishioners.

They are blessed and excited to receive this little pastoral token of affirmation.

Sungmu

Our church is now ministering to each other through seven (7) classes. The leaders report back to me and, I am able daily to respond to any immediate needs. I personally am reaching out, via telephone, once per week to our parishioners.

People are giving into the **pastoral discretionary fund** so that I may direct it to the needs of our community. This enables our church to reach out beyond its doors directly to those that has dire needs among us.

Vickie

We have strategically consolidated pass words of all the church's accounts. We have augmented our check signing responsibility so that if anyone gets sick, the church could continue to be functional. We have **built a phone** tree and shared within our community so that we could mitigate any issues as we readily care for each other within our community.

Martha

We pause within **our virtual service to bless our offering.** People are using an icon to show that they are depositing their offerings. Our community is so appreciative of this gesture and they are supporting their church even while we are meeting virtually. We have not had to furlough or terminate staff. God bless our community

Prayer Requests

We pray because we believe in the power of prayer. Prayer keeps us connected with God and with one another. You can submit prayer requests to the link below, and the district will keep you in prayers.



Flash Praying!

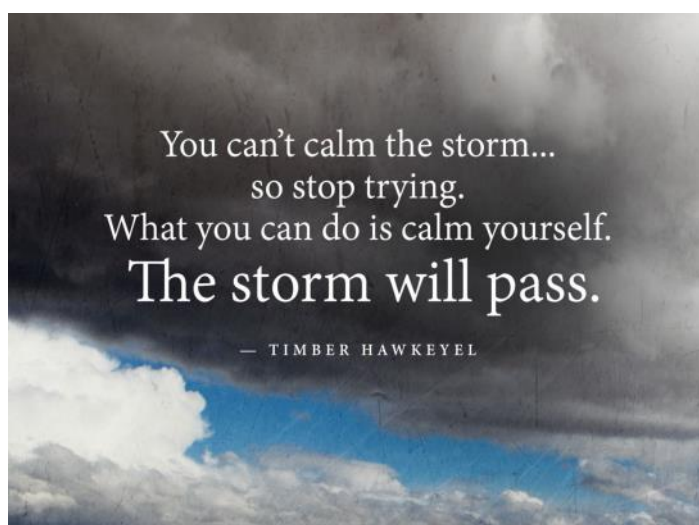
REV. CHRIS YOUNT

Pastor at New Life United Methodist Church

in New Fairfield, CT

I find myself thinking of and sharing this scripture with others in this time of challenge. God is with us at all times, but I think **when tribulation arrives the Holy Spirit is even more easily accessible**. Let us press in closer to Jesus, trusting in His incredible grace. I believe God will take what the enemy means for evil and bring good out of it. Let us pray for a mighty movement of God!

Chris Yount



You can't calm the storm...
so stop trying.
What you can do is calm yourself.
The storm will pass.

— TIMBER HAWKEYEL



Let us pray for you and with you

Please take the time out to let us know what prayer request you have for us. Let us share what's in your heart and mind with your brothers and sisters in Christ. When we pray for one another, miracles being to take place.

[You can click here to submit your prayer requests](#)

A Need for Healing and Prayer



John and Tammy Esposito

Grace, mercy, and peace be unto you
from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ.

Our comrade Rev. John Esposito continues to be treated for COVID19 infection. The last report received yesterday was, "Johnny **NOT** Good today" (as of April 3). His condition is critical.

We did **request a "twenty-four (24) hour"** district **prayer vigil** on Friday April 2nd. His Parish leader, Rev. Lori Miller had organized a mid day ZOOM prayer for John. Other pastors within the boundary of their Western Parish are intentionally leading their communities with fervent prayers for his recovery.

We are now asking that you pray incessantly for Rev. John Esposito, his wife Tammy and their two sons. Please let our prayers be every day, at the beginning of every hour, wherever you are and **until he is fully recovered and back in the loving arms of his family**. Bishop Bickerton and the NYAC Cabinet are joining us on this prayer vigil.

THIS IS WHAT WE BELIEVE:

James 5:14 - 18 (NIV):

- 14 Is anyone among you **sick**? Let them call the elders of the church to pray over them and anoint them with oil in the name of the Lord.
- 15 And the prayer offered in faith will make the sick person well; the Lord will raise them up. If they have sinned, they will be forgiven.
- 16 Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.
- 17 Elijah was a human being, even as we are. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.
- 18 Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops.

We are in this together; let us **PRAY** earnestly and intentionally for the healing of Rev. John Esposito.

Blessings and thanks,

Rev. Dr. Alpher Sylvester, D.S.
Connecticut District, NYAC, UMC
646-533-4377

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Know What's Happening in the Connection

We have gathered some useful information provided by our conference, Connecticut government, Center for Disease Control and Prevention, and more to help you minister to your parish. Your continued ministry will allow us as one church to be a beacon of hope to our communities and beyond though this season in our world.



[An Essential Update from Bishop \(March 29, 2020\)](#)

These days are difficult and the constant rise of the COVID-19 virus in our midst is what gives rise to this latest update. When it was initially released, Bishop Bickerton encouraged all readers to find a comfortable place to sit and read this update with the upmost care and attention. If you've not yet done so, please follow this initial advisement and take a close look at this very important communication.

[Bishop Bickerton 20 Questions Interview](#)

20 Questions with Bishop Bickerton is a regular series of candid conversations with Bishop Bickerton covering the issues of the day as well as matters of deep concern to the New York Annual Conference, our clergy and the denomination on as a whole. These revealing conversations are intended to educate and inform members of the New York Annual Conference to ensure that all are better able to understand and articulate the conference's position on issues of the day.



URGENT REMINDER! Free Money! SBA Payroll Protection Program

[Paycheck Protection Program issued by the Small Business Administration](#)

Information is beginning to become available on loans and grants for the "Paycheck Protection Program" issued by the Small Business Administration. If done correctly, this Act can result in a grant equal to 2.5 months of payroll that does not need to be repaid!

[Grants and Other Resources for Churches](#)

The Conference wants to come alongside our churches as you seek new ways to communicate with, care for and empower your communities. One way that we are doing that is through small grants that help our churches get online for virtual worship, Bible studies and meetings. We are offering to reimburse you for two months of Zoom Pro (and any additional months as needed) to get you started. Simply sign-up for an account and send me the invoice.



[Chuck Knows Church: Things We Can Do](#)

Watch as Chuck shows us how your congregation can turn isolation into engagement with our community and still provide community in Christ and fellowship in the spirit.

Know What's Happening in the Connection

[Frequently Asked Questions on CT's Actions Related to COVID-19](#)

Here is responses from the Connecticut government to our frequently asked questions.



[COVID-19: Reliable Information for NYAC Insiders](#)

The New York Annual Conference has created this go-to section on the [nyac.com](#) site as a reliable and vetted source of information on COVID-19 and related matters. The page is updated regularly and populated based on inquiries received from NYAC clergy and lay leaders. Can't find what you need? Email shareyourstory@nyac.com

[How to Tend to the Needs of People Are at Higher Risk for Severe Illness with COVID-19](#)

Based on currently available information and clinical expertise, older adults and people of any age who have serious underlying medical conditions might be at higher risk for severe illness from COVID-19.



A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Child Abuse or Neglect in the Time of the Coronavirus Pandemic



Connecticut Domestic Violence Hotline

You can be immediately connected with services in your area by calling the DOMESTIC VIOLENCE HOTLINE: 1-888-774-2900 English or 1-844-831-9200 Spanish

Connecticut Sexual Assault Hotline

You can be immediately connected with services in your area by calling the SEXUAL ASSAULT HOTLINE: 1-888-999-5545 English or 1-888-568-8332 Spanish



Responding Child Abuse And/Or Neglect

The CT Department of Children and Families (DCF) has a single point of contact statewide for the reporting of suspected child abuse and neglect. The Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline operates 24 hours a day and seven days a week.

Anyone who suspects that a child has been abused or neglected or is in danger of abuse or neglect is strongly encouraged to call the Hotline. The toll-free number is 1-800-842-2288

Know What's Happening in the Connection



How Are You Channeling God's Grace and Love in This Difficult Time?

Please share what you are doing to live through this pandemic by clicking the image or [here](#). Let's help uplift one another and allow our words to come from a place of compassion and love.

COVID-19 SYMPTOMS vs. Flu, Cold & Allergies

	COVID-19	FLU	COLD	ALLERGIES
COUGH	●	●	●	●
FEVER	●	●	●	●
BREATHLESSNESS	●	○	○	●
BODY ACHES	●	●	●	○
HEADACHE	●	●	●	●
FATIGUE	●	●	●	●
SORE THROAT	●	●	●	○
DIARRHEA	●	●	○	○
RUNNY NOSE	●	●	●	●
SNEEZING	●	○	●	●
WATERY EYES	○	○	○	●

● Frequently ● Sometimes ● Little ● Rarely ○ None

Sources: WHO, CDC

www.co.carver.mn.us/covid-19



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