



EPISCOPAL CHURCH IN CONNECTICUT
PARTICIPATING IN GOD'S MISSION

"The icon Fred Rogers not only was showing my brown skin in the tub with his white skin as two friends, but as I was getting out of that tub, he was helping me dry my feet... It was like telling me I'm okay as a human being. It was one of the most meaningful experiences I've ever had."

- Francois Clemmons "Won't You Be My Neighbor"

As far back as I can remember, I loved to sing, and by the time I was 8 or 9 I was performing with local theatre companies. When I was 12 I was cast in a production of *The Me Nobody Knows*, a musical about kids growing up in the ghetto- a show about kids and a place I knew nothing about. At our first rehearsal I remember noticing that I looked different than the other kids and was less confident than ever before. At the end of rehearsal one of the kids said to me- "You sing pretty good but you sure do dance like a white boy." Everybody laughed, and I had no idea what he meant, but I knew it wasn't good. Then he said, "don't worry, I'll help you dance *almost* as good as this black boy." I realized, for the first time, how it felt to be different. Billy and I became friends at that moment.

Billy would stay at my house on weekends and I remember him telling me how lucky I was to have a nice house, and my own bedroom. I had never considered that I had more than anyone else. One time my Dad and I drove Billy home- I had never seen a neighborhood like his- and I remember Billy asking if he could come home with me again soon.

Fred Rogers followed his heart and invited Francois Clemmons into that wading pool, and as the camera panned out on the two of them- their feet together in the wading pool, Mr. Rogers said "sometimes a minute like this will really make a difference."



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At Camp Washington I witness our young people coming together in the “pool” and I am aware of how sacred that space is. At Camp, we invite each other into the pool, and through the healing nature of the water, God provides new life, hope, joy, forgiveness. At Camp, we are mindful to create brave space that invites us to look in the mirror at who we are, own our differences, and find ways to recognize transformation and grace.

In November, we will gather once again at Camp Washington with teenagers from around the ECCT for a weekend retreat focused on Creating Brave Space- Dismantling Racism. Our hope is that our youth will explore a tough topic with safe conversation, prayer, and activities, in a supportive, loving, judgement free environment that is both holy and healing.

Bart Geissinger
Executive Director
Camp Washington- ECCT’s Camp and Retreat Center

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/](https://www.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.



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