

# MY REFLECTION ON THE FIRST YEAR OF ECS-NJ

By: Catherine Ambos, ECS-NJ Advisory Council Member



## COMPASSION AND JUSTICE

**Together let's ignite an epidemic of compassion**

Compassion and Justice are two watchwords for ECS-NJ. We strive to help congregations see Jesus in the faces in our communities and around the Diocese. ECS-NJ then helps congregations walk beside people with compassion, empowering them to find justice.

## JOURNEYING THROUGH ADVENT

The hustle and bustle of holiday preparations is in full swing with Thanksgiving this Thursday and Christmas shopping well underway—at least for some people. I refuse to get crazy about Christmas now. I am gearing up for Advent, which starts next Sunday. Anybody seen the purple candles I thought I bought at the end of the season last year? The Advent Wreath? The creche? Next Sunday, a four-week journey begins around my living room, with Joseph and his very pregnant wife Mary journeying via donkey to Bethlehem, across a treacherous landscape. I think about how hard this journey must have been, as I think about the people across the world today who are making similar journeys because of powers beyond their control.

By Second Advent, Joseph, Mary, and the rest of their caravan have arrived at the very narrow ledge on the China cabinet, having traversed the marimba last week, with the piano and finally the sofa to complete before arriving in “Bethlehem,” aka the game table. As I move the figures through this path, I think, “Who are Mary and Joseph today? And how can I help them?”



*Yes, there is a fancy horse leading and a penguin bringing up the rear*

## WHAT IS ECS-NJ?

Episcopal Community Services of the Diocese of New Jersey (ECS-NJ) is a new initiative that focuses on proactively addressing human needs and relentlessly working against both social and racial injustice.

*We raise funds across the diocese. We network and make connections.  
We give grants where most needed. We advocate for change.*

## WE ARE STRONGER TOGETHER

On December 5, we invite congregations and individuals to take part in ECS Sunday: Justice & Compassion. ECS Sunday is a diocesan-wide initiative to raise awareness, funds and inspiration for ECS-NJ.

*Imagine the strength of commitment across the Diocese of NJ as every Episcopal church joins in celebrating this vital initiative. The excitement is growing, and we are all part of it!*

## CONTACT US

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*Together, let's elevate our efforts to pray for justice and get involved in addressing issues of racial inequality and systemic poverty.*



[dioceseofnj.org/ecs](http://dioceseofnj.org/ecs)

# A YEAR IN REVIEW

## WHERE WE'VE BEEN

ECS-NJ has presented three biannual summits and seven monthly issues briefings since December 2020 on the third Saturday of each month at 10 am on Zoom. Recordings of many of the events are available on YouTube.

The first summit introduced ECS-NJ and its mission while the next two focused on the two main priorities, food insecurity and housing issues:

- 12/12/20 [“Building and Equipping the Beloved Community”](#)
- 4/17/21 [“Food Insecurity in the Garden State”](#)
- 10/16/21 [“Our Faith, Our Advocacy: Homeless Rights and Housing Justice”](#) and the announcement of the [fall round of grants](#)

*What topics would you like to hear at a briefing? Do you know someone with expertise in food issues, housing, prison ministry, or immigration? Let us know. We want to hear from you!*

The seven monthly issues briefings have covered a wide range of topics ranging from NJ State legislative action, reparations, anti-racism, the eviction crisis, giving people in the Diocese of New Jersey up to the minute information about advocacy issues along with steps that can be taken in regards to the problem.

- 3/20/21 “The Potentially Catastrophic Effects of the Looming Eviction Crisis”
- 5/14/21 [“Upcoming Legislation Requiring Your Action”](#)
- 6/19/21 [“Juneteenth, Reparations Task Force & the Anti-Racism Commission”](#)
- 7/17/21 “Anti-Racism Commission”
- 8/21/21 “Urban Revitalization Task Force”
- 9/18/21 [“The Coming Eviction Crisis Update”](#)
- 11/20/21 “Juvenile Justice”

## WHERE WE'RE HEADED

In the fall grant cycle, the Grant Making Team funded ten grant proposals: five involving food security and five addressing a range of issues from immigration to worship and fellowship accommodations for worshipers with autism. We congratulate these parishes and pray for the work they will accomplish with these funds. Find out more [here](#).



**We hope this review of ECS-NJ's work so far will help you decide how to help “make straight the highway” and prepare a manger for the Christ child in today's world, whether that be by starting or expanding a ministry or by [financial support of ECS-NJ](#).**