



The Episcopal Dioceses of Northern Indiana & Indianapolis Reunification Discernment - Jan 2025

The Journey

Conversations about possible reunification began when Bishops Baskerville-Burrows and Sparks came together to reflect on ministry in the context of challenging realities in our church today. Like many of us, they were aware of parochial data and the ongoing struggle to come to terms with declining numbers and a changing world.

And yet there was also the ongoing, faithful presence of Episcopalians throughout Indiana who gather for common prayer, care for one another and their greater communities, seek and work for justice, and proclaim the good news of God's love in ways that this world so desperately needs.

And so our Bishops began to wonder with other diocesan leaders and staff: How can we make the most of what God has given us, while also doing our best to strengthen the Episcopal Church for generations to come? How can we further communicate our witness of reconciliation in God's world, serving as beacons of Christ in even more powerful ways? What might God be calling us to as we collaboratively engage God's mission as Episcopalians in the state of Indiana now?

A 2020 Joint Clergy Conference was planned along these themes as an initial effort to grow in relationship and dive into these questions together. When the pandemic hit, our priorities and our means of addressing them shifted for a while, but the questions remained.

In 2021, our Bishops talked to their diocesan Standing Committees and Councils about initiating a formal discernment process on reunification. In 2022, they met together with missionaries and staff and with the support of an outside facilitator, discussed the possibility of reunification.

In early 2023, a Reunification Discernment Committee was appointed and charged with leading this "period of intentional exploration of possible reunification" and considering "a plan for full reunification as well as any interim sharing of resources and, if feasible, seek to provide a draft timetable for those efforts."

Following two years of prayerful study, discussion, analysis of data, and listening with our dioceses and other dioceses too, the committee has begun to share models for consideration and feedback. We are currently seeking input from every parish in our dioceses so we see not only data, but hear from you regarding the impact you make and the challenges you face as a congregation. In terms of a draft timeline, the Committee is recommending a decision on reunification be made by diocesan conventions in Fall of 2025.

WHY Potential Reunification?

One of the most common questions asked as we work through this process is "Why pursue the possibility of reunification?" As we fulfill the charge given us, the Discernment Committee is discovering several reasons to be encouraged by the potential of becoming one diocese. Here are a few of them....

for the sake of Shared Mission

The mission priorities and values of our two dioceses are very similar. Expressed in formal mission statements and diocesan ministries and witnessed in the lives and ministries of our congregations, as The Episcopal Church in Indiana we strive to:

Proclaim the Good News as beacons of Christ.

Stand With the vulnerable and marginalized to transform unjust systems of society.

Teach, Baptize, and Nurture new believers.

Develop clergy and laity to lead the church of today and tomorrow.

to grow through Collaboration

Our dioceses are already collaborating in significant ways. We're also beginning to bump up against the challenges of working across two systems rather than learning to function as one.

The Dioceses of Northern Indiana and Indianapolis:

- Are exploring sharing Diaconal formation
- Share one Disciplinary Board
- Join together on state advocacy efforts

- Have bi-weekly joint meetings of our Executive Teams
- Benefit from our Communications Staff members collaborating on several efforts
- Will host a Joint Clergy Conference in March
- Will experience a few visitations with Bishops Baskerville-Burrows in parishes in Northern Indiana and Bishop Sparks in parishes in Indianapolis during this season of discernment

because of Our Differences

As dioceses we bring different strengths to this moment in the life of our Church, strengths which could be tapped more broadly if we reunified. We can actually benefit from the differences in our diocesan cultures as well as the many cultures that exist within each of our dioceses.

As a diocese, Northern Indiana relies on connection, embodies resilience, and is actively engaging the realities of being a diocese consisting primarily of smaller communities of faith.

As a diocese, Indianapolis leans into a larger structure through which resources are shared, staffing is more easily sustainable, and a wide range of communities are served.

Together, our dioceses can leverage these and other diverse strengths in service to us all, making them more accessible across current diocesan lines and in areas and congregations in which those gifts are missing and needed.

Vital ministry networks would be simpler to establish, strengthen, and maintain if we were functioning as one diocese rather than across two which means **more support for our congregations**.

Reunification would increase connection points for our many diversities and the challenges we face within particular ministries and communities including campus ministries, small congregations, larger congregations, programs of formation, racial justice work, LGBTQ+ efforts, LatinX ministries, Creation Care, and more.

because The Data is telling us something

While painful to acknowledge, our dioceses (along with many in the Episcopal Church and other denominations too) are experiencing various forms of decline. We need to adapt in order to help shift this trajectory.

While the data is hard, neither diocese is currently in crisis. There are many signs of life and vibrant ministries among us. We have the resources, strengths, and creative potential now to help us adapt and grow into living as one.

to be Better Stewards

Reunification would reduce duplication of systems, efforts, and processes, which would free up people, time, and financial resources that could be more directly channeled into mission and ministry on the ground throughout our state.

“Cutting budgets” would not be a primary reason for us to reunify. But becoming one diocese would allow us to better allocate our resources and redistribute what we have for the sake of **diocesan and congregational mission**. And that would be good stewardship.

for the Episcopal Church Tomorrow

Reunification is hard work now, but we would do it for the sake of ensuring the Episcopal Church’s presence BEYOND our lifespan, for future generations. The presence of the Episcopal Church throughout our state matters to many who hunger for welcome, worship, community, and grace.

The movement of reunification is grounded in love for our Church, with gratitude for those who came before us and as an expression of hope for those who come after. Collectively, we can keep the heart of our tradition alive for those who will follow us while impactfully serving those who are hungry for the Good News of Christ now.

The Journey Continues

As we continue through this discernment, we need YOU to engage the process too. Please read information the Committee has shared along the way including the Convention reports from 2023 and 2024, the recently updated FAQ, several videos from our Bishops, and more all of which can be found on the discernment website.

Be sure to participate in the Parish Engagement Kit included there too. We need you to offer your input, remain informed, participate in feedback opportunities, and help to build relationships within and between our dioceses. And most of all, we need you to pray for this process, for the Spirit to guide us all as we go.

The Reunification Discernment Committee will host opportunities for feedback on models for a reunified diocese this Spring. Watch for other opportunities too and remember that anyone can submit thoughts at any time through the reunification discernment website.

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