

# Resources for Monthly congregational chat on 12/4

*The Vestry invites all to stay after worship on Sunday 12/4 for our monthly congregational chats. All are welcome to participate. The topic will be the Trialogue process for the possible reunification of the 3 Episcopal Dioceses in Wisconsin. The Trialogue's Parish Engagement Task Force is asking congregations to share their thoughts, hopes, concerns, and fears about the possible reunification. We'll gather your feedback during our chat to share with the task force. We plan these chats to typically last 20-30 minutes, but they could run longer, if needed. If you are unable to attend in person, please send your thoughts to [info@mysjec.com](mailto:info@mysjec.com) or share them with Clerk Tony Karl.*

This packet includes: 1) letter from Mthr Julia of the Trialogue Parish Engagement Task Force (*below*); 2) Letter from Bishops Gunter and Lee; 3) Trialogue Plans for Participation; 4) FAQs Regarding the Trialogue, from the Trialogue website; and 5) Parish Conversations slides. **The main focus of our chat on 12/4 will be the questions on the second to last page of this packet.**

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## Greetings

You are being invited to participate in a conversation about the possibility of the three Wisconsin Episcopal dioceses reuniting. I am a member of the Trialogue's Parish and Regional Engagement Task Force. We are charged with organizing conversation in and between congregations and dioceses around the work of the task forces. A leader from your parish will be leading this conversation and providing your responses back to me. We hope you will decide to participate.

What is the trialogue? The trialogue is considering the reunion of the three Episcopal dioceses in Wisconsin into one diocese. A Steering Committee is coordinating the various Task Forces to examine what is needed for building such a proposal. No specific proposal has been developed yet. Attached are three short documents that introduce the possibility of the three dioceses coming together again and provide a bit of background to this process. I hope you can make time to read these, as well as reflect and pray about this. There is additional information at the Wisconsin Episcopal Trialogue Hub website at <https://www.episcopalwisconsin.info/>. This site provides information about each diocese, explanation of the process as well as the various task forces working to discern God's will for Episcopalians in Wisconsin.

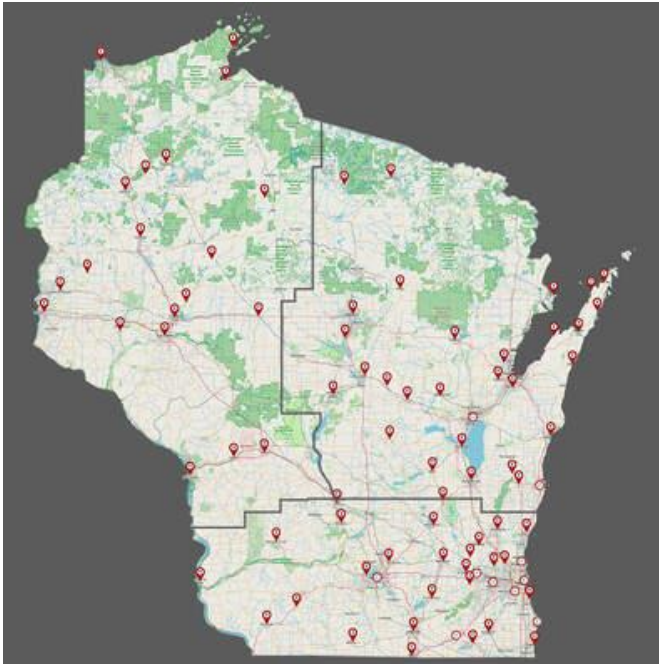
The time will be one for gathering thoughts, hopes, concerns and fears. The information gathered will be provided to the Parish Engagement Task Force and then the Steering Committee for them to determine how to address and assign questions to a task force. Some of you may be thinking, "why go through this, it is a done deal." The bishops are clear, it is not a done deal. The decision whether to join together in some form is a complex one. There is much we need to learn, reflect, and pray on, before any decision can be reached. Be assured that this will not be done quickly or lightly, but prayerfully and with openness and thoughtfulness. This is a time for listening to one another and to God's Holy Spirit.

Please remember we are early in the process so there are few answers. We don't even know all the questions we need to address and that is where your help is needed. You may have many thoughts or few; regardless we want to hear them. All are important at this point in the process.

Faithfully,

Mthr. Julia Hendrix

Trialogue Parish Engagement Task Force



# TRIALOGUE PLANS FOR PARTICIPATION

POSTED 12/17/2021

When the Diocese of Wisconsin was formed in 1847, Bishop Jackson Kemper lived out the missionary spirit of the Church. He did so while working in a field rife with possibility and being God's witness "in the wilderness."

There is a type of wilderness today, and not one of geography. The world has changed, but will the church in this place? Can we form ourselves to be relevant? Can we use the resources God has provided to support the work of the Episcopal Church through local congregations?

The three Episcopal dioceses determined to pursue reunion as one diocese in Wisconsin to come together with a blank slate to create a new culture. Leaders from the Milwaukee, Fond du Lac and Eau Claire met in December to continue talks about reunification – to dream about what God wants us to do and take the steps to do it. This second meeting looked at ways to best involve people in the trialogue so we can begin to crystallize a direction and some action.

Delegates from each diocesan convention had provided thoughts, comments, and responses to the idea of reunion. There were a lot of questions about things we don't yet know. Many comments reflected a general desire to move towards a combined diocese. The responses noted the potential of one diocese to equip churches to better share the Gospel. But there is a lack of clarity evident as to what that means. The trialogue has just started, so this was to be expected. The need for information is great to generate specific ideas or proposals as well as to have more informed questions and discussion.

Reflecting on many responses, the leaders at this second meeting recognized the pursuit will not be easy and is to be undergirded by prayer. Seeking to come together and do things in a different way will be a challenge in a variety of ways.

The purpose of the trialogue is to enable members of the three Episcopal dioceses in Wisconsin to explore how reunification into one diocese can better equip us to be the church God is calling us to be in these times. Work is beginning to shape how we can get to know each other better. There will be opportunities to learn more about each diocese and its people. These will help in building relationships and informing the discussion. As with any change, there will be more questions than answers to start.

The leaders, who were selected by each diocesan governing body, serve as the trialogue Steering Committee going forward. Its purpose is to take collaborative action to build connections and relationships exploring reunification.

The Steering Committee will establish task forces to examine various components of trialogue. These are: Prayer; Parish and Regional Engagement; Culture; Location, Place, and Staffing; Finances; Constitution and Canons; and Communication. Members of each diocese with experience, knowledge, or passion in each area are being called to participate. These task forces will establish ways to involve more voices as ideas and proposals are developed. This may involve in-person connections as well as technological ones.

Communication will be essential. To involve over 10,000 persons is an immense task. An interactive website as centralized source of information is being designed. There will be ways to interact with others, provide answers to frequently asked questions, and share your thoughts and ideas with the task forces. Stay tuned to diocesan communication channels to learn ways to be a part to better equip us to be the church God is calling us to be in these times.

The trialogue Steering Committee members are the Rev. Canon Kathleen Charles, Tim Donahue, the Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter, the Rev. Canon Aaron Zook (Diocese of Eau Claire), the Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter, Matthew Payne, Pat Pfeifer, the Rev. Canon Wilson Roane (Diocese of Fond du Lac), The Rev. Canon Scott Leannah, the Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Lee, the Rev. Jana Troutman-Miller, John Vogel (Diocese of Milwaukee).



Diocese of Milwaukee 1847



Diocese of Fond du Lac 1875



Diocese of Eau Claire 1928

February 16, 2022

To the Members of the Dioceses of Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, and Milwaukee

Dear Friends,

Grace and peace to you in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ. We hope most of you have heard by now that the three Episcopal dioceses of Wisconsin have entered conversation about the possibility of returning to our roots and reuniting back into one diocese. In the 21st century, the church faces a changing landscape; our society is becoming increasingly secular and commitment to the church is no longer a given.

One way or another, the church must adapt to better engage the world with the resurrection hope we have in Jesus Christ. What worked in one generation will not automatically work as well in this one and generations to come. Jesus is the same from generation to generation, but how we are organized to faithfully bear witness to the kingdom of God he proclaimed and how we worship the triune God might well change.

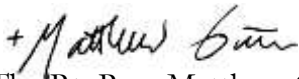
At the end of 2020, the Rt. Rev. Jay Lambert of the Diocese of Eau Claire and the Rt. Rev. Steven Miller of the Diocese of Milwaukee both retired, which resulted in two of the three dioceses of Wisconsin being without bishops. That presented what seems like an opportunity to explore the future of the Episcopal Church in Wisconsin. Indeed, we believe the opportunity is providential. Might the Holy Spirit be inviting us to look afresh at being the church in our time? How might our combined assets – financial and human resources – be used to support each of our existing congregations and encourage the beginning of new congregations or communities that might look more or less like church as we know it? Or perhaps even communities of faith that look quite different from the church as we know it today? How might we be better public witnesses and agents of hope in Wisconsin? The time is right to look at these and other questions.

A steering committee has been formed as well as several task forces have been appointed to explore different aspects of a possible reunion. The task forces will be addressing many of the practical aspects of reunion, such as addressing the constitutions and canons, working through all the financial details, and the culture and mission of the Episcopal Church in Wisconsin. Each of those task forces will be soliciting input and participation from members of each diocese.

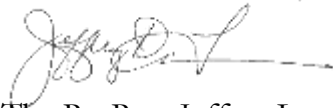
We will continue to update members of the diocese with information about the process and opportunities for you to participate in this discernment. We are currently building a website hub for you to learn more about and engage in the process. We will share that with you soon.

We urge you to be engaged and participate in this process of discernment. Most especially, we encourage you to pray. Steeping our discernment in prayer will better enable us to hear what the Holy Spirit is calling us to be.

Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Gunter".

The Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter  
Bishop of the Diocese of Fond du Lac  
Bishop Provisional of the Diocese of Eau Claire

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeffery Lee".

The Rt. Rev. Jeffery Lee  
Bishop Provisional of the Diocese of Milwaukee

## **FAQs REGARDING THE TRIALOGUE**

*FROM THE TRIALOGUE WEBSITE:* <https://www.episcopalwisconsin.info/>

### **WHAT IS UNDER CONSIDERATION BY THE TRIALOGUE?**

In the 21st century, the church faces a changing landscape. Our society is becoming increasingly secular and commitment to the church is no longer a given. One way or another, the church must adapt to better engage the world with the resurrection hope we have in Jesus Christ.

The trialogue is considering reunion of the three Episcopal dioceses in Wisconsin into one diocese. A Steering Committee is coordinating the various Task Forces to examine what is needed for building such a proposal. No specific proposal has been developed yet.

At the end of 2020, the bishops of the Diocese of Eau Claire and the Diocese of Milwaukee both retired, which resulted in two of the three dioceses of Wisconsin being without bishops. That presented what seems like an opportunity to explore the future of the Episcopal Church in Wisconsin. The opportunity is providential. Might the Holy Spirit be inviting us to look afresh at being the church in our time? How might our combined assets – financial and human resources – be used to support each of our existing congregations and encourage the beginning of new congregations or communities that might look more or less like church as we know it? Or perhaps even communities of faith that look quite different from the church as we know it today? How might we be better public witnesses and agents of hope in Wisconsin? The time is right to look at these and other questions.

Updated 3/25/2022. May be revised.

### **WHAT IS THE TIMELINE TO MAKE A DECISION ABOUT REUNION?**

The Steering Committee recognizes moving forward towards a proposal for reunion is important, but does not wish to be hasty. It is crucial that the person in the pew have at least a general knowledge of what may happen with those in leadership being knowledgeable about the reasons and specifics of any proposal presented to the diocesan conventions. Balancing various factors, the goal is the October 21, 2023 diocesan conventions, meeting concurrently, will be presented a proposal to approve a joint agreement of union. What that proposal may or may not be is what the trialogue is discerning.

Updated 3/25/2022. May be revised.

### **WHAT ARE THE CANONICAL REQUIREMENTS FOR REUNION? ARE THERE ANY LEGAL ISSUES INVOLVED?**

There are Episcopal Church canons that are specific to reunion. There are also past processes of reunion in Minnesota, Nebraska and Illinois. The Constitution and Canons Task Force will be examining this question in detail. No specific legal barrier is anticipated. The normal legal processes regarding registration as a religious, not-for-profit organization will need to be done as well as any legal obligations in the State of Wisconsin.

Updated 3/25/2022. May be revised.

### **WHEN WAS EACH DIOCESE FORMED? HOW WAS EACH DIOCESE FORMED?**

1847 - Diocese of Wisconsin was formed

1875 - Diocese of Fond du Lac was formed out of the Diocese of Wisconsin.

1888 - Diocese of Wisconsin changed its name to the Diocese of Milwaukee.

1928 - Diocese of Eau Claire was formed from parts of the Diocese of Milwaukee and the Diocese of Fond du Lac.

This is a set response, unlikely to be revised.

### **HAVE THERE BEEN OTHER REUNIONS OF DIOCESES IN THE EPISCOPAL CHURCH?**

While reunion has not happened in Wisconsin, it has been discussed for many decades for a variety of reasons. In the late 1960's and early 1970's, there were steps taken towards reunion which did not materialize. In the 2000's and 2010's, the Diocese of Eau Claire and Fond du Lac considered becoming one diocese by "juncture" (a canonical term), but that did not happen. There three examples of reunion in the Episcopal Church:

1943, the two Minnesota dioceses (Minnesota and Duluth) had reunion. Interestingly, there was not reunion canon in place at the time, so one was introduced and enacted by the General Convention. Reunion was approved a few days later.

1946, the Diocese of Nebraska and the Missionary District of Western Nebraska had reunion.

2013, the Dioceses of Chicago and Quincy had reunion.

This is a set response, unlikely to be revised.

### **WHAT ABOUT THE DIOCESAN CATHEDRALS?**

With each diocese having a Cathedral, it is natural to wonder what happens if there is one Wisconsin diocese. A number of logical options may be discussed, but no specific decision has been made. What are some of options (again, no decisions have been made)?

One becomes the Cathedral, the other two become Pro-Cathedrals

One becomes the Cathedral, one a Pro-Cathedral and the other a parish.

One becomes the Cathedral, the other two become parishes.

All three become parishes and the diocese has no Cathedral.

Following are definitions on Cathedral/Pro-Cathedral from the Dictionary of the Episcopal Church

## Cathedral

A church that contains the diocesan bishop's seat, throne, or cathedra. The cathedral is the principal church of the diocese. As the symbol and center of diocesan ministry, the cathedral is an appropriate place for diocesan celebrations and episcopal services. The dean is the clergy person with pastoral charge of the cathedral. The dean may be assisted by other clergy, known as canons. Some cathedrals also have honorary canons who do not share in the daily pastoral responsibilities of the cathedral parish. The cathedral chapter consists of members who serve as the vestry in all matters concerning the corporate property of the cathedral and the relations of the cathedral parish to its clergy. Not all Episcopal dioceses have cathedrals, and most cathedrals are parish churches used for diocesan purposes. The Diocese of Minnesota has two cathedrals. The Cathedral of Our Merciful Saviour is the Episcopal Church in Faribault, MN. It was the original Cathedral of the Diocese of Minnesota and continues to be a Cathedral today and functions as a pro-cathedral. St. Mark's is the later cathedral in Minneapolis.

## Pro-Cathedral

A church named by a diocesan bishop to serve as a cathedral but which remains under the governance of the vestry and dean. It is used as a cathedral for diocesan purposes, but without the formation of a legal cathedral organization and without a cathedral chapter. It is not the official cathedral of the diocese. The church's status as pro-cathedral ends when the bishop no longer holds the diocesan jurisdiction, and the pro-cathedral's status may or may not be extended by the next bishop.

## **IS THERE A FINANCIAL ADVANTAGE TO ONE DIOCESE?**

The answer at this moment is - it depends. There are many factors which impact the finances of a diocese and its congregations. For example, would there be one bishop, or a bishop or suffragan? That answer has a financial impact. It is expected that there would be greater resource available that could be used more effectively in supporting the mission and ministry of the diocese and its congregations. Updated 3/25/2022. May be revised.

## **WOULD ONE DIOCESE BE TOO LARGE TO MANAGE?**

Based on others' experience, it would be manageable. There are many Episcopal dioceses which are geographically larger than Wisconsin who are able to function. Our neighbor to the west, Minnesota, is 86,000 square miles (vs. Wisconsin's 65,000) with 94 congregations (Wisconsin would have 99). Functioning over a larger geographical area would require adaptations from how each diocese functions now.

Updated 3/25/2022. May be revised.



# EPISCOPAL WISCONSIN TRIALOGUE

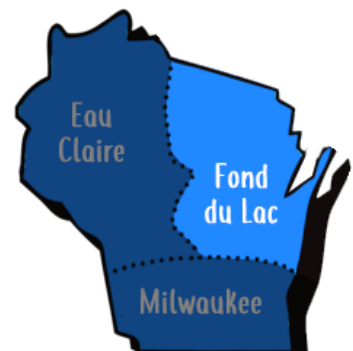
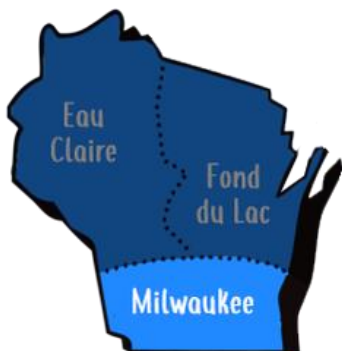


## Parish Conversations

The Parish and Regional Engagement  
Task Force

1

The Episcopal Church  
in Wisconsin



2

## By the Numbers

	Parishes	Average Sunday Attendance	Total Revenue
Diocese of Eau Claire	19	357	1,284,977
Diocese of Fond du Lac	33	1287	4,265,776
Diocese of Milwaukee	49	2583	9,471,704
Total	101	4227	15,022,457



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## Wisconsin by the Numbers

	Population	Area Sq. Miles	% pop.	% area
Diocese of Eau Claire	958,629	22,919	16.3%	42.3%
Diocese of Fond du Lac	1,700,494	19,397	28.9%	35.8%
Diocese of Milwaukee	3,234,595	11,842	54.9%	21.9%
Total	5,893,718	54,158	100.0%	100.0%



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## THE STEERING COMMITTEE

**From the Diocese of Eau Claire:** The Rev. Canon Kathleen Charles, Tim Donahue, The Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter, The Rev. Canon Aaron Zook

**From the Diocese of Fond du Lac:** The Rt. Rev. Matthew Gunter, Matthew Payne, Patricia Pfeifer, The Rev. Canon Wilson Roane

**From the Diocese of Milwaukee:** The Rev. Scott Leannah, The Rt. Rev. Jeffrey Lee, The Rev. Jana Troutman-Miller, John Vogel



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## PROPOSED TIMELINE

- Summer 2021: Conversation begins
- Summer 2022: Task Forces convened
- Spring 2023: Steering Committee vote to proceed
- October 2023: Goal: Proposal for reunion presented to conventions



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## THE TASK FORCES

- Structure
- Constitution and Canons
- Finance
- Parish and Regional Engagement
- Culture and Mission
- Communications
- Prayer and Discernment



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## STRUCTURE TASK FORCE

- What kind of structure do we need to cross the water?
- White paper this month; final report early next year



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## CONSTITUTION & CANONS TASK FORCE

- Examining examples of diocesan canons
- Will work with Structure Task Force



9

## Finance Task Force

- Building a model
- Making projections
- Interim report this month; final report in January



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## PARISH AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT TASK FORCE

- Connect with congregations
- Interim report in December; work ongoing



11

## CULTURE AND MISSION TASK FORCE

- Produce a profile of dioceses
- Interim report in December; final report in spring



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## COMMUNICATIONS TASK FORCE

- [episcopalwisconsin.info](http://episcopalwisconsin.info)
- Look for updates in diocesan communication



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## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

As we undertake these conversations about the future of the Episcopal Church in Wisconsin:

- What concerns you?
- What concerns you?
- What hopes do you have?
- What fears do you have?
- What questions do you have?
- Are there any last thoughts before we end?



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## PRAYER AND DISCERNMENT TASK FORCE

Almighty God, we come before you asking grace and wisdom for all of us who are called to discern your mission for the church in Wisconsin. May we listen to one another in humility and always seek your will. We pray in the name of Jesus, the head of the church. **Amen.**

