

## **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.

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