



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.

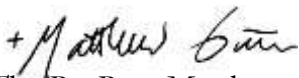
At the end of 2020, the Rt. Rev. Jay Lambert of the Diocese of Eau Claire and the Rt. Rev. Steven Miller of the Diocese of Milwaukee both retired, which resulted in two of the three dioceses of Wisconsin being without bishops. That presented what seems like an opportunity to explore the future of the 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.

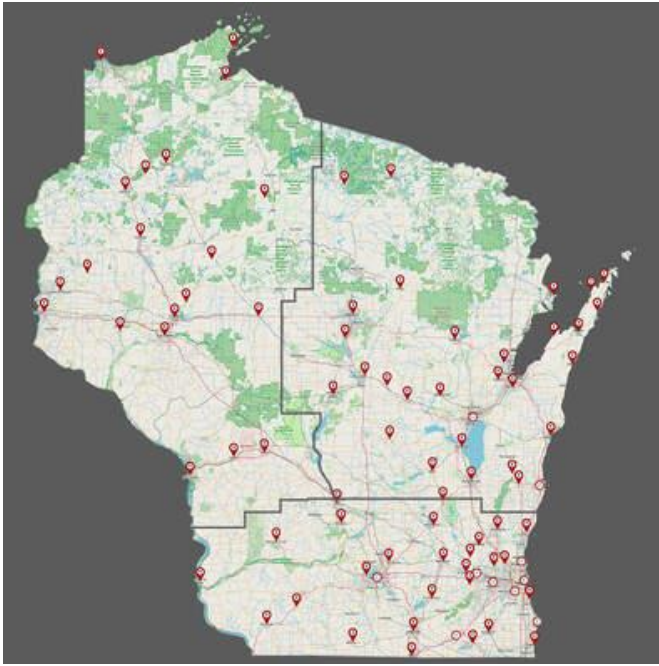
Faithfully in Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, 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 cursive script, appearing to read "Jeffery Lee".

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



# 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 dialogue 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 dialogue 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).

## **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.



## Wisconsin Trialogue

Diocese of Eau Claire | Diocese of Fond du Lac | Diocese of Milwaukee

- 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.
- The goal of the **Task Forces** is to bring in everyone so desiring to participate which would create buy in. They are to be the beginning, middle and end of the work.

## TRIALOGUE TASK FORCE GUIDELINES AND EXPECTATIONS

### Background

The Episcopal dioceses of Eau Claire, Fond du Lac, and Milwaukee are exploring how reunification as one diocese may better equip us to be the church God is calling us to be in these times. A Steering Committee formed task forces to examine elements as part of a reunification proposal. The task forces are to involve many voices to generate ideas under their area or focus that may be considered for inclusion in a reunion proposal.

### Area of Focus

Each task force has an area of focus which is a component of the trialogue. It is likely that one task force's area of focus may overlap with another task force, so each will have a Steering Committee liaison to communicate and help coordinate which task force may take the lead.

### Membership

Initial members are selected by the Steering Committee with representation from each diocese. They may invite others to become members to ensure diversity in representation as well as connect persons with experience or expertise in a focus area.

### Organization

Each task force is to develop procedures to function within its area of focus. Procedures which may work for one task force may not be the best for another. Each task force is expected to have at least one facilitator ("chair" or "co-chairs") who will make meeting arrangements and facilitate discussion and one clerk to document discussion for future reference by the task force and Steering Committee. This written record will be essential for communication to the Steering Committee and other task forces.

### Outcome

The work of each task force is to perform careful study in its area of focus in the context of three dioceses becoming one and report on its findings to the Steering Committee. The Steering Committee may, from time to time, ask a task force to perform specific action items. Findings are likely to be fluid and may be influenced by reports from other task forces. Reporting is both a one-time event and on-going as the work moves ahead. What is specifically reported will be a function of area of focus and how it is reported may vary. The Steering Committee may request a report which provides options and/or recommendations about the area of focus as it prepares a proposal to consider.

### Timeline

Each task force's work is to be regularly moving forward. Some work may be immediate activity (e.g. Prayer and Discernment) while others may see more activity in the future (e.g. Constitution and Canons). Each task force is to meet at least monthly, even if for a short, check-in gathering. The Steering Committee expects to receive a report at least quarterly. It is important to note the work of task forces will likely not end with a finalized reunion proposal but may change when such a proposal is acted on. The goal is for conventions to consider a proposal in October 2023, though more time will be allowed if a proposal is not ready to be presented.





## Wisconsin Trialogue

Diocese of Eau Claire | Diocese of Fond du Lac | Diocese of Milwaukee

### Trialogue Task Force Charges

Task Force	Area of Focus	Steering Committee Liaison
Prayer and Discernment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify and organize those who commit to praying regularly for the trialogue.</li> <li>• Prepare prayers / litanies / liturgies which may be used by individuals or congregations in praying for discernment about reunification.</li> </ul>	Kathy Charles
Parish and Regional Engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organize conversation in and between congregations and in and between dioceses around the work of the trialogue task forces.</li> <li>• Engage various methods for conversation and connection such as virtual meetings and in-person gatherings.</li> </ul>	Tim Donahue
Culture and Mission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assess the culture of who we have been and who we are as congregations, dioceses, Episcopalians, and Wisconsinites.</li> <li>• Assess the landscape of who we could/should be as congregations, as one diocese, as representatives of the Body of Christ.</li> <li>• Review and evaluate the missions of each diocese in terms of what is doable, what is stagnant or outdated.</li> <li>• Considering the cultural and mission assessment, assess the missions and what could/should be done in a one diocese in the 21st century in terms of needs and abilities.</li> </ul>	Scott Leannah
Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consider meta questions related to how one diocese may organize or structure itself:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ What are congregations for? Dioceses? How do they connect or relate?</li> <li>○ What structures might be needed for the 21st century?</li> <li>○ What are bishops for? How do we best organize to support their ministry?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Examine ways to maximize the arrangement (structure, personnel, office, Cathedral) of one diocese for the sake of the mission of the church and assuring each congregation received attention and support.</li> </ul>	John Vogel
Finances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Examine the fiscal assets and liabilities for doing mission work if there were one Wisconsin diocese.</li> <li>• Investigate models for diocesan revenue, expenses, and investments which are good stewardship.</li> <li>• Consider how combined assets and liabilities may be used to support congregations on being vital.</li> </ul>	Jana Troutman Miller
Constitution and Canons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop understanding of the basic governance documents of each diocese by reading and absorbing copies of the printed document.</li> <li>• Determine where governance documents are congruent and divergent.</li> <li>• Develop the essentials for a governance document for one Wisconsin diocese.</li> <li>• Build governance documents for one Wisconsin diocese based on the work of task forces and allowing for future innovation.</li> </ul>	Wilson Roane
Communication	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and implement systems to foster sharing of information and conversation.</li> <li>• Determine a method of communication each diocese uses to communicate to all members of each diocese.</li> <li>• Work to assure information is readily accessible from one source and reaches those who may not have access to digital communication.</li> </ul>	Pat Pfeifer

## Triologue Reunion Goals and Opportunities

Greetings from the Triologue Communications Task Force. The Triologue is composed of the three Episcopal dioceses of Wisconsin that are exploring how reunification to one diocese may better equip us to be the church God is calling us to be.

The job of **our** taskforce is to regularly update the clergy and parishioners about the Triologue process. Our goal is to keep you informed about how the reunion conversation is progressing and the steps taken along the way. There will be many opportunities for your input and questions as we proceed. This is a work in progress and we value all participation and input.

Bishop Matt Gunter representing the Dioceses of Fond du Lac and Eau Claire (with Milwaukee Provisional Bishop Jeff Lee) presented the Triologue steering committee, and seven task forces, the reasons below that support reunion during the initial Triologue meeting.

Pursuing reunion as one diocese provides us an opportunity to engage a changing world and become the church God is calling us to be. The outcome of this process is uncertain as we discern our strengths, challenges and seek to improve the way we embrace a hurting world, raise up disciples and share the Good News of God's grace and transformation. Our goal is to encourage and challenge all people to be transformed by the Holy Spirit

It is an opportunity to

- reconfigure ourselves into a strengthened diocese organized to engage our changed and changing world
- combine our financial, human and spiritual resources, into a diocese organized for mission, evangelism, and public witness
- organize ourselves to better support each of our existing congregations
- encourage, cultivate, and nurture new communities of worship and discipleship; some may look like conventional congregations, others may not

- form disciples equipped to live faithfully in these times
- find ways to faithfully and responsibly use various communication methods to better reach all ages
- encourage and train lay leadership
- draw on our heritage and organize ourselves to be a missionary diocese for the 21st and 22nd centuries.

The world is changing and changing significantly. Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow. We need to adapt, not for mere existence, rather as a dynamic reflection of the Good News and love we know in Jesus Christ. It is the Good News the world desperately needs. We can become a church that confidently lives and bears witness to the Good News, with due humility, as we listen to and learn from our neighbors. Together, we can become a missionary diocese organized to embrace growth, challenges, and opportunities before us.

We will have more information for you soon. We conclude today with this prayer from the Prayer and Discernment Task Force.

Almighty God, we come before you asking grace and wisdom for all 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

Entity	Parishes	Average Sunday Attendance	Baptized Members	Communicants in Good Standing	Others Active	Congregations (not including diocesan)			
						Plate and Pledge	Total Operating Revenue	Pledging Units	Pledge / Unit
Diocese of Eau Claire	19	357	1,096	998	147	\$ 1,083,556	\$ 1,284,977	284	\$ 3,815
Diocese of Fond du Lac	33	1,287	3,794	2,987	267	\$ 3,247,270	\$ 4,265,776	917	\$ 3,541
Diocese of Milwaukee	49	2,583	7,561	6,326	263	\$ 7,584,539	\$ 9,471,704	2,156	\$ 3,518
Wisconsin	101	4,227	12,451	10,311	677	\$ 11,915,365	\$ 15,022,457	3,357	\$ 3,549
State of Wisconsin									
Entity	Population	Area Sq. Miles	% pop.	% area	pop./sq. mile				
Diocese of Eau Claire	958,629	22,919	16.3%	42.3%	42				
Diocese of Fond du Lac	1,700,494	19,397	28.9%	35.8%	88				
Diocese of Milwaukee	3,234,595	11,842	54.9%	21.9%	273				
Wisconsin	5,893,718	54,158	100.0%	100.0%	109				
<i>Sources</i>									
<i>Episcopal Church Annual for 2020</i>									
<i>United States Census Bureau. 2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. <a href="http://www.census.gov/">http://www.census.gov/</a>.</i>									