

REUNIFICATION DISCERNMENT

Town Hall Forums: July 2024



*The Episcopal
Diocese of Bethlehem*



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *in*
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

October 2022

A resolution adopted at both of our diocesan conventions called for “a period of intentional exploration” regarding the “future reunification as one diocese.” The Reunification Discernment Committee was appointed and began our work in January 2023.

DISCERNMENT COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Diocese of Central PA

- The Rt. Rev. Audrey C. Scanlan, Bishop
- Ms. Drew Dorgan, SC Liaison
- The Rev. John Harwood, Council of Trustees
- The Rev. Jim Jenkins, At Large Member
- Mr. George Park, At Large Member
- Mr. Michael McAuliffe, Esq. - Chancellor
- The Ven. Jane Miron, Chaplain

Diocese of Bethlehem

- The Rt. Rev. Kevin Nichols, Bishop
- The Rev. Douglas Moyer, SC President
- The Rev. Sidnie Crawford, Diocesan Council
- The Rev. Rodney Conn, At-Large Member, SC
- Ms. Ginnie Schoonov, At-Large Member
- Mr. Ty Welles, Esq, Asst. Chancellor
- The Rev. Chris Sutton, Chaplain

October 2023

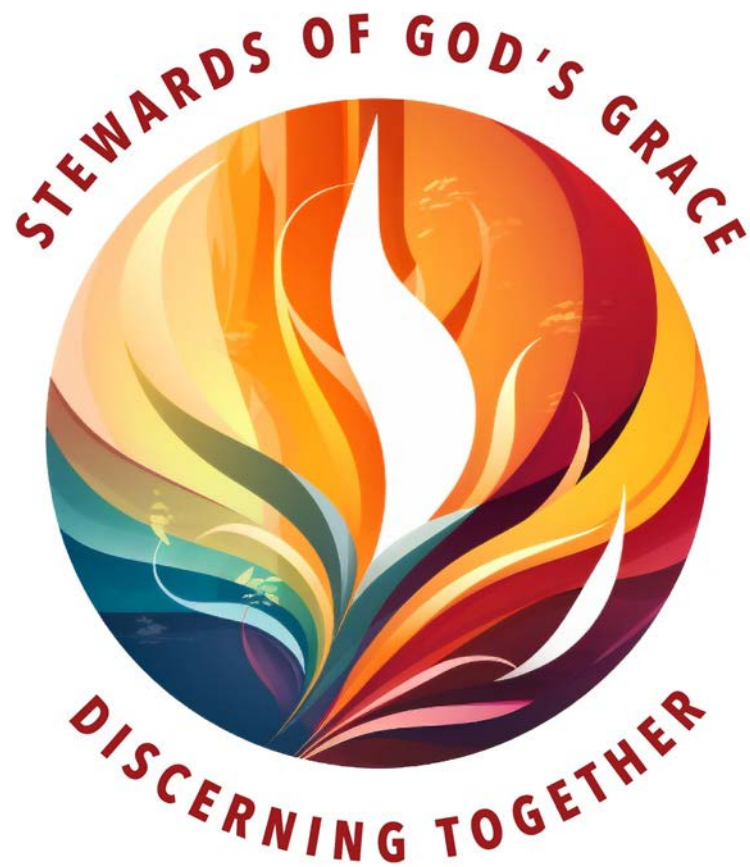
Both diocesan conventions passed a second resolution in support of this process, extending this discernment around reunification and charging the Reunification Discernment Committee with *preparation of recommendations regarding reunification to be presented to the Conventions in Fall 2024.*



Our Process:

EXPLORE, LISTEN, INFORM, DISCERN

- Phase I (2023) Exploration (Gather Data & Input)
- Phase II (2023-24): Collate and Analyze Data/Listening Sessions
- Phase III (2024): Consider Models for Reunification
- **Phase IV (2024): Propose Reunification Models & Timeline**
- Phase V (2024): Present Resolutions for a Joint Convention



Over the past 18 months our Committee has reported on:

- The history of our dioceses and the regions we cover
- Parochial data from our congregations
- Other Episcopal dioceses in similar processes
- Financial Summaries of both dioceses
- Ministry of the Episcopate in our dioceses
- Vibrant ministries throughout both dioceses

In October 2024

We will vote on reunification.

PROPOSED TIMELINE for REUNIFICATION



Oct 2024

Joint
Convention
will vote on
Reunification



2025

A Transition
Year
(still separate dioceses)



Jan 2026

Become One
reunified
Diocese

WHY REUNIFICATION?

- **The Data** (financial, attendance, clergy). It's painful to acknowledge but we need to name that as church, one of the things we are experiencing is various forms of decline. Any community or system with these numbers would need to adapt.
- **Better Stewardship:** To carry on as is or to simply collaborate as two dioceses will continue to deplete our resources, human and financial.
- **The Questions are the Same:** We have to face the big challenges whether we stay separate or reunify. The question is whether we can face them better together, as one. And we believe we can.

WHY REUNIFY NOW?

- **So the Episcopal Church will be here tomorrow:**

Reunification is work to do now, but it is for the sake of ensuring the Episcopal Church's presence here BEYOND our lifespan, for future generations.

The movement of reunification is grounded in love for our church, gratitude for all who are our church and those who have served and given for generations. Collectively, we can keep the heart of our traditions alive and better serve a world hungry for the good news Episcopalians have to share. We must adapt in order to thrive - into the future.

- **We aren't in crisis...yet.** We can still be creative about how we do this. There are still resources, strengths, potentials to help us adapt well. Our coming together can be filled with gratitude and inspire hope.



“People in our region are resilient, but we spent years resisting the change that was forced on us, wishing things would go back to being the way they had been....It is not always easy, but I believe that the kind of collaboration and experimentation we are up to can help us ensure the strong and effective witness to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to bring the Episcopal Church into the future to which God is calling us.”

– Presiding Bishop Elect Sean Rowe following his election at the 81st General Convention of TEC

REGIONAL STRUCTURE



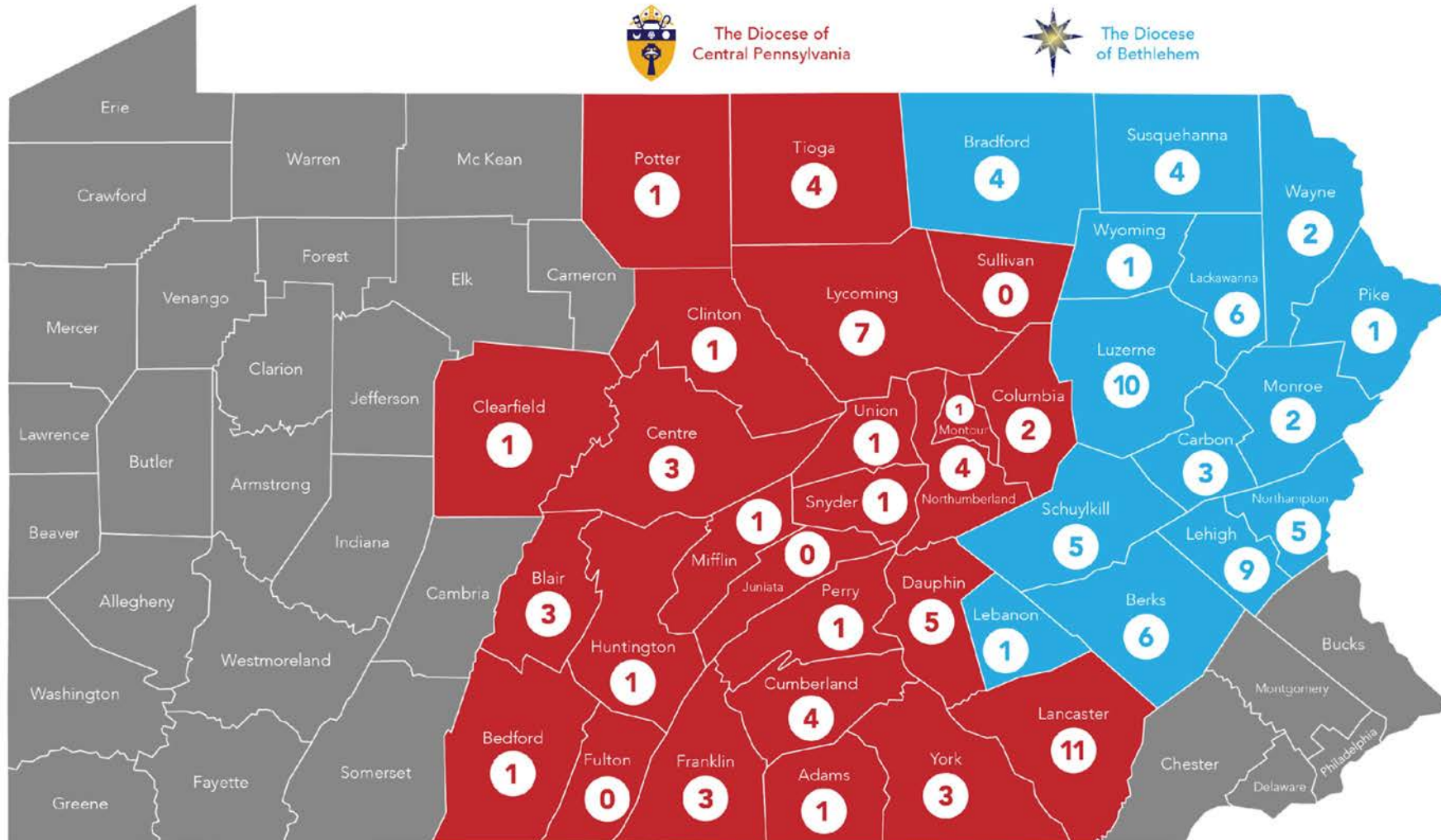
Parishes By County for Each Diocese



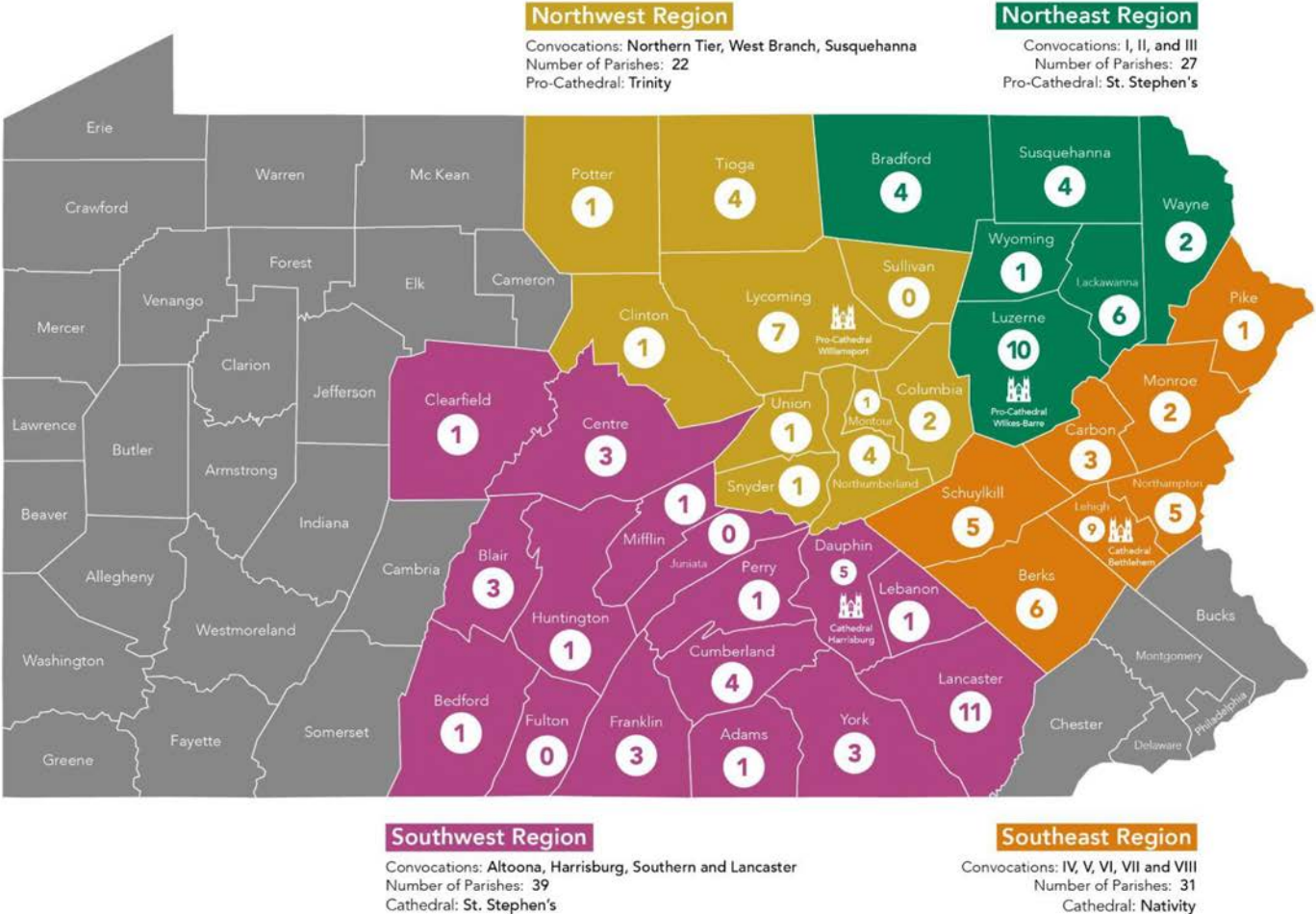
The Diocese of
Central Pennsylvania



The Diocese of
Bethlehem



Possible Regions of Reunified Diocese



Northwest Region

Convocations: Northern Tier, West Branch, Susquehanna

Number of Parishes: 22

Pro-Cathedral: Trinity

Northeast Region

Convocations: I, II, and III

Number of Parishes: 27

Pro-Cathedral: St. Stephen's

Southwest Region

Convocations: Altoona, Harrisburg, Southern and Lancaster

Number of Parishes: 39

Cathedral: St. Stephen's

Southeast Region

Convocations: IV, V, VI, VII and VIII

Number of Parishes: 31

Cathedral: Nativity

CONSTITUTION & CANONS

The background features a gradient from dark purple to blue, overlaid with a field of small white stars. Several faint, light-blue technical diagrams are scattered across the scene, including circular gauges with numerical scales (e.g., 100, 110, 120, 130, 140, 150, 160, 170, 180, 190, 200, 210) and various circular and dashed lines.

- Most of the Constitution & Canons of our two dioceses - 28 articles- are similar which is enabling a draft C&C for a reunified diocese to be written without great changes.
- 8 articles will need mutual attention during the transition year, such as deciding on the exact composition of various leadership bodies, etc. All of these are manageable and none a stretch for either diocese.
- The details for transitioning into one diocese will need to be refined but the canons themselves provide similar structure and process.



The background is a dark blue gradient with faint, semi-transparent white and light blue circular and linear patterns, resembling financial charts, gauges, and data visualizations. The text is centered in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

STEWARDSHIP of FINANCIAL RESOURCES

BUDGETING AND APPORTIONMENT FOR A REUNIFIED DIOCESE

- Reunification models indicate we can set an apportionment goal within 1% of current practices.
- For 2026, figuring annual inflation and no staffing changes, we would have a \$3.5 million total budget for a reunified diocese.
- If we remained separate, using the same process of modeling, our budgets would total at least \$4.1 million.
- With *no* changes, we would see an annual savings of \$600,000 or 14%.

FINANCES and the TIMELINE

- **2025 - The Transition Year**
 - Separate dioceses with separate budgets
 - Form a Joint Finance Committee for planning, structuring as one
- **2026 - A Reunified Diocese**
 - Apportionment goal of within 1% of current practices
 - Savings by reducing duplication of systems, processes, software, office expenses...
 - Staffing as a hybrid of centralized and disbursed

AS WE'VE SHARED BEFORE...

- Our dioceses have similar financial resources.
- Neither diocese holds any significant indebtedness other than funds held on behalf of parishes.
- The dioceses are very similar in terms of membership, number of parishes, staffing and financial resources.

Ministry of the Episcopate



If we reunify, one of our current bishops would become **Bishop Diocesan** in **January 2026**, the other would be appointed as **Assistant Bishop**, dependent on continuing discernment.

The **Reunified Diocese** would host its first search and election process on a timeline to be determined by its Bishop Diocesan and Standing Committee.

This model aligns with both Bishop Scanlan's and Bishop Nichols' hopes for this potential reunification process, Bishop Scanlan's retirement timeline, and the sense they each have of their own ministry and calling.

We have considered...

- Visitations
- Staffing
- Diocesan Cultures

There will be some letting go.

- Deputies to General Convention will decrease.
- Some of our familiar ways of operating will change.
- We'll have a new name.
- We will let go of these particular bishops (which will eventually happen anyway at some point either way.)

Why Reunify?

In the ordinal says that a bishop is called to “guard the faith, unity, and discipline” of the church. We see collaboratively supporting a movement toward reunification as a dimension of that call.

As bishops we see that our current model of diocese is time limited, closing one to two churches per year and watching diocesan income and resources decline. We want the faith to live! Reunification offers opportunity to unite and renew for the sake of the faith and the presence of the Episcopal Church in our region now and for the future.



WE'RE ALREADY COLLABORATING

The Stevenson School for Ministry, anti-gun violence initiatives, PRIDE events, COM, VELI...we're learning that our impact is greater and our future is brighter together.



CHANGING LIVES
Medical debt relief
and parishes
reaching “over the
lines” to work
together.

HOPE EPISCOPAL CHURCH
THE DIOCESE OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA



ST. LUKE'S EPISCOPAL CHURCH
THE DIOCESE OF BETHLEHEM

BEING ONE JOINT CLERGY CONFERENCE



Clergy gathered for learning, prayer, and connection in Danville in May 2024. Bishop Craig Loya of Minnesota was with us as keynote speaker.

“I want to leave you with the words of Thomas Merton, whose vision at the corner of 4th and Walnut (now Muhammad Ali) has become a touchstone for us at this convention:

‘In a time of drastic change one can be too preoccupied with what is ending or too obsessed with what seems to be beginning. In either case one loses touch with the present and with its obscure but dynamic possibilities. What really matters is openness, readiness, attention, courage to face risk. You do not need to know precisely what is happening, or exactly where it is all going. What you need is to recognize the possibilities and challenges offered by the present moment, and to embrace them with courage, faith, and hope. In such an event, courage is the authentic form taken by love.’

So let us be courageous, brothers, sisters, siblings, and let us follow Jesus into an unknown future filled with hope. I look forward to our ministry together.”

– Presiding Bishop Elect Sean Rowe following his election at the 81st General Convention of TEC



Breakout Rooms

QUESTIONS

POSSIBILITIES

CONCERNS



reunificationdiobethdiocpa.org

Thank you for your
presence and for
your prayers!



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Diocese of Bethlehem*



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