

Reunification Discernment

BACKGROUND

At the 2022 Annual Convention, the Diocese of Bethlehem voted to embark on an intentional exploration of a reunification with the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. (As recently as 1900, we were actually one diocese.) According to the Reunifications Committee's website, the catalyst for this process came with the acknowledgement of "the hard realities and effects of declining membership" across The Episcopal Church; and certainly in our two dioceses. The number of struggling parishes is continuing to grow and so many churches are depending solely on dwindling Endowment Funds for their survival.

The exploration began with questions about how a reunification might help create a more sustainable and life-giving way forward for The Episcopal Church here in Pennsylvania. Would we more faithfully manage our resources, and more effectively equip our congregations if we were one diocese instead of two? Could we make disciples of Jesus if we were to combine the gifts, talents, and treasures of the fifty-seven parishes of the Diocese of Bethlehem with the sixty-two parishes of the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania?

The Diocesans' Standing Committees appointed ten members to a Reunification Discernment Committee to work under the leadership of Bishops Audrey Scanlon and Bishop Kevin Nichols; their work began in earnest in January of 2023.

From the beginning, clergy, lay members, and staff from both dioceses were invited to be active participants in the discernment process. The committee hosted a series of Zoom listening sessions and close to 200 members of both dioceses were given the opportunity to ask questions, share concerns, and join together in prayer about how best to move forward. In addition, there were ten convocation meetings in the Diocese of Bethlehem, centered on the topic of reunification, along with two online town hall meetings held in July of 2024. In addition, the committee developed a website dedicated to sharing news about their work: <https://reunificationdiobethdiocpa.org/>

The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH in
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA



The Episcopal
Diocese of Bethlehem

Q&A

Following the town hall meetings and listening sessions, the Discernment Committee compiled a list of the most frequently asked questions about a possible reunification. Here are those most often asked questions:

- Will a reunification create a diocese that is too big? Will the bishop have time in their schedule to visit each parish with regularity? What about Bishops Scanlan and Nichols? We can only have one bishop, right?
- Would diocesan staff lose their jobs or would they be relocated?
- What happens to the two cathedrals and two pro-cathedrals in the two dioceses?
- How does a reunification affect my parish?
- How would a consolidation affect the finances and parish-giving across both dioceses?
- What would we call the new Diocese if we reunify?

In its brochure entitled, "Frequently Asked Questions and Concerns Around the Possible Reunification" the discernment committee offers answers to each of these questions. Please visit <https://reunificationdiobethdiocpa.org/faq/> to see the answers to these questions.

ADVANTAGES OF REUNIFICATION

The Reunification Discernment committee has identified the advantages a consolidation would bring; not the least of which would be an "increased collaboration in ministry and participation in God's mission with greater strength". Together, we would see a more secure future for the next generations of churchgoers as we work to strengthen Beloved Community initiatives. There are financial advantages to be considered; including increased savings in that there would be one convention, one clergy conference; and so, cost of operations will decrease. As one diocese, there would be shared financial support for the Stevenson School and for Kajo Keji New Hope Initiative. Learn more about the benefits of a reunification at <https://reunificationdiobethdiocpa.org/>

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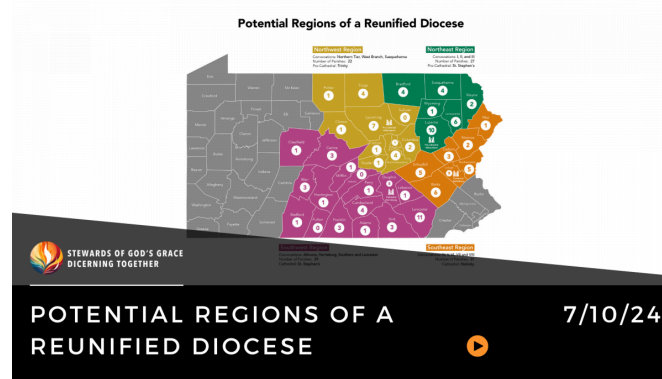
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ADJUSTMENTS

The reunification discernment committee noted some adjustments that would be required if the two dioceses were to consolidate.

- There would be a need for intensive efforts to bring together staff, already established systems, and new leadership.
- Leadership models would need to meld together.
- There would be a significant change to the bishop's visitation schedule which would extend to a 3-year rotation calendar rather than the current 2 year schedule;
- There would be only one representative to the triennial General Convention; instead of the two who represent us now.
- The Diocese would need a new name.
- There would be longer travel time to meetings that require in-person participation. (A reunified Diocese would be approximately 21,000 miles, roughly the size of West Virginia.)



The reunification of the Diocese of Bethlehem and The Diocese of Central Pennsylvania aligns with the vision of Presiding Bishop-Elect, Sean Rowe. In a recent interview Rowe said of reunifications, “It’s not easy, but I believe that this kind of collaboration, this kind of experimentation is what we’re being called to, to be the strong effective witnesses to the Gospel of Jesus Christ and to bring this Episcopal Church into the future in which God is calling us.”

WHAT’S NEXT?

The Diocesan Convention of the Diocese of Bethlehem will be held in State College on October 18th and 19th as a joint convention with the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania. There, the Reunification Committee will present a resolution to be voted upon by the full body of delegates of both dioceses. That voting body will include St. Luke’s elected delegates, Mickey Baccoli, Senior Warden and Sharon Sollami. Donna Durland and David Wegner would serve as alternative delegates if necessary.

In an August interview with *The Episcopal News Service*, Bishop Kevin said,

An affirmative vote in October would set up 2025 as a “transition year,” during which Bethlehem and Central Pennsylvania, which is based in the capital Harrisburg, would remain separate dioceses while developing plans to combine their administration, finances and governance.

“In the Diocese of Bethlehem, we have a familiar mantra that we have been speaking for almost six years now: The only way forward is together in partnership,” Bethlehem Bishop Kevin Nichols said in a written statement. The two dioceses’ emerging partnership “is rooted in a future viability for the next generation of Pennsylvania Episcopalians. ... Excitement and momentum are building as we gather and talk about building the Beloved Community anew.

LEARN MORE

In the weeks leading up to the convention Bishop Kevin will be meeting with elected delegates to Convention to answer any remaining questions in order that those casting a vote will have all the information they need to make an informed decision before voting affirmatively, or opposing, the reunification.

St. Luke’s parishioners are encouraged to visit the Reunification Committee’s website to learn more and to speak with their delegates, Mickey Baccoli and Sharon Sollami. Information is also posted on the bulletin board in Israel Lounge.

This article is a compilation of information found at <https://reunificationdiobethdiocpa.org/> and shared with the permission of the Diocese of Bethlehem

*“Now to him who by the power at work within us is able to accomplish infinitely more than we can ask or imagine, to God be Glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations, for ever and ever.”
(Romans 3:20-21)*

New Book Study - Signs and Wonders

St. Luke's is offering a six-week lay lead book study, similar to the well established Lenten Loaves and Lessons program. We'll be reading and discussing Amy-Jill Levine's book entitled *Signs and Wonders: A Beginner's Guide to the Miracles of Jesus*.

In it, Levine "explores selected miracles of Jesus in historical and theological context. For each miracle, she discusses not only how past witnesses would have understood the events, but also how today's readers can draw meaning from Jesus's words and actions."

Six parish lay members will facilitate each session, taking a closer look at Jesus' miracles in healing the paralyzed man (Amanda Wrazien), the stilling of the storm (Rebecca Beal), the feeding of the five thousand (Sharon Sollami), the woman hemorrhaging (Linda Fanelli), restoring sight to a blind man (Diane Kraus), and the raising of Lazarus (Denise Janssen).

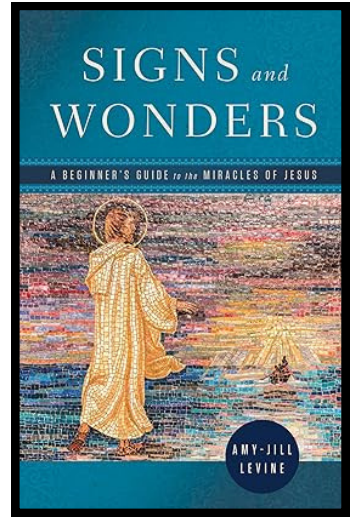
We will meet on Friday evenings at 5:30PM for ninety minutes. Everyone is encouraged to read the assigned chapter in advance. This is a hybrid offering via Zoom, here's the link:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88967420817?pwd=zq2nufSi92qYRvohKV59Ce4ROL2naP.1#success>

Each session is a stand alone, so feel free to join the group for one or all sessions. Consider bringing your own brown bag supper/snack to enjoy!

The start date is Friday, September 6th! There is a sign up sheet in Israel Lounge. Levine's book *Signs and Wonders: A Beginner's Guide to the Miracles of Jesus* is available from several online sources and participants are asked to order their own copy.

Please see any Vestry member for more information.



Stewardship Committee Members Needed

The Wardens and Vestry of St. Luke's are currently looking for individuals to serve on the parish Stewardship Committee. The goal is to develop a team of approximately six persons who, under the supervision of the Vestry, would work together to help parishioners to grow in their stewardship awareness and understanding. The committee would work to foster and promote an understanding of stewardship as a way of life, where sharing the gifts that God has given to us is central to our baptismal covenant. The committee would follow the well outlined guidelines of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship's current pledge campaign entitled, *Walk in Love*.



The work of stewardship is ongoing, but there is a special focus now as we move toward Christ the King Sunday on November 24, 2024, when parishioners historically submit their pledges to the parish.

Stewardship committee members would likely meet regularly to plan a timeline for the campaign, recruit parishioners to offer testimonials, and manage correspondence/communication.

If you would like to learn more as you consider participating in this ministry, please see Mickey Baccoli, Senior Warden for more information. The vestry hopes to have a full committee in place by mid-September.



PLEASE NOTE:

There will be no 5:00PM Eucharist on Saturday, October 19, 2024 as that is the last day of Diocesan Convention.



Why We Teach

Rick Ammenhauser, Jr Warden and children's Sunday School teacher has announced Sunday, September 8, 2024 as the first day of school. Classes will be held on Sundays at 9:30AM.

Godly Play has long been the relied upon curriculum for St. Luke's Sunday School program and "Mr. Rick" has been spearheading our Sunday School since 2010. When asked why he continues to teach year after year, Rick said, "I'm honored once again to be playing a small role in the spiritual development of the children of Saint Luke's. The firm spiritual foundation provided to me as a student in Saint Luke's Sunday school was critical for my development into adulthood. I pray that I have helped my students develop their own spiritual foundations to build on in the same manner I was."

Ken Wrazien is entering his fifth year as a St. Luke's Sunday School teacher. Ken explained his reason for teaching Sunday school this way, "the reason I teach is that I love the values that Saint Luke's supports in accepting everyone no matter what their beliefs are. From day one everyone at Saint Luke's has welcomed and supported my family. That is why I do what I do for my church community."

If you would like more information about the curriculum, how you might help in this key ministry of our parish, or if you would like to enroll your child or grandchild, please see Rick or Ken.



Safety Net

The last day to donate food to Safety Net, located at Covenant Presbyterian Church, is Sunday, September 8th. Thanks to everyone who donated to the pantry and to those families who co-ordinated the ministry, even delivering the food to Safety Net.



WORKDAY at the PARISH

SATURDAY, SEPTEMBER 7, 2024

10:00 - noon

MANY HANDS MAKE LIGHT WORK!

Please join us to help in sprucing up the church on this first of monthly workdays planned by the Vestry.

Worship Leader's Training



The Diocese of Bethlehem held a Lay Worship Leader training session in early August at which more than a dozen people from Convocation III were in attendance and were licensed by the diocese to serve as Worship Leaders. The training session was led by Canon Missioner Melinda Artman and Fr. Jack McGinty. Worship leaders are licensed by the diocese to lead a non-Eucharistic worship in their parish in the absence of a priest or deacon. Most often Worship Leader lead Morning Prayer, but that can be extended to include Noon Day and Evening Prayer, and Compline, among other services. St. Luke's parishioners Diane Kraus, Sharon Sollami, and Mickey Baccoli participated in the training and received their licenses to serve in the role of Worship Leaders.

Report on Triennial

submitted by Rebecca Beal

The 2024 49th Triennial Retreat of the Order of the Daughters of the King took place in Louisville, Kentucky, June 26-30. Dr. Rebecca Beal received a grant from the Episcopal Church Women to help her attend—and she expresses her special gratitude to them. Here’s her report to the parish:

Our Triennial Theme, “A New Day Dawns,” was based on Psalm 65:8 (NIV): “The whole earth is filled with awe at your wonders; where morning dawns, where evening fades, You call forth songs of joy.”

The verse reminds us that our wonder at God’s work elicits praise. Triennial reminded me how good it is to sing together: how inspiring to hear over a thousand women sing “Lift High the Cross” to accompany the opening Eucharistic processional and closing Eucharistic recessional, while a host of banners from chapters all over the U.S. and beyond marched by. That experience alone was worth the whole Triennial to me, to see in concrete form how we are so diverse yet all joined as one joyful Order “for His sake.”

The latest issue of our order’s newsletter, Cross + Links (https://cdn.ymaws.com/www.doknational.org/resource/resmgr/dok_resources/crosslinks/July_2024.pdf), has lots of information about Triennial, the bylaws passed at the business meetings, summaries of various messages, and links to live-streamed keynote speeches and eucharists, as well as selected panel discussions. I won’t try to replicate all of those here, but I’ll urge you to look at the newsletter for a more in depth look at the whole event. If you have time for watching only one keynote speaker, make it The Rev. Michelle A. Dawson, a non-traditional priest who spoke about how (and led us) to “tune up” our practice of prayer.

As Daughters, we take vows to pray daily. Naturally, then, prayer was everywhere a part of Triennial, which had its own prayer chapel. I’d thought that this would primarily be a traditional space with chairs and quiet—and it did have that. But it was much, much more. There were tables around the room enabling different kinds of prayer: one with a string of “flags” where we could write items or people for which we are grateful; one with small smooth stones to be used to help us cast our burdens on the Lord. I was reminded that we can think creatively about how we might open prayer to those around us. We should think and pray, too, about connecting with a partnering chapter from the International Daughters. Before Triennial, our chapter president, Carole Guzzi, suggested I look into this, so when I saw a sign-up sheet, I did, especially after hearing the stories of sisters from international chapters. (You can read some of these in Cross+Links.) I ask you to pray for these sisters.

Many, many inspiring presentations were grounded in scripture, and we were reminded that our order began with a Bible study. We were challenged to study the Bible, together, and to open our studies to our parishes—one important form of evangelism.

A final note. When I arrived for registration, women from the hosting province met us and gave us very full goody bags. I wondered what in the world I would do with all these gifts, and the answer was clear: bring them home to our chapter! Those gifts were distributed at our July meeting, to everyone’s delight.

DOK PICNIC

Submitted by Carol Winn

The Order of the Daughters of the King held their annual picnic at Gouldsboro State Park on July 6, 2024. Carole Guzzi, Rebecca Beal, Diane Kraus, and Carol Winn attended the event receiving a warm welcome from President Jodi Porterfield and others. The Milford chapter brought donuts, coffee, and tea as well as grilled hotdogs and hamburgers for a tasty treat. Covered dishes and desserts including a Texas Sheet Cake added to the meal. At 11:00 am The Reverend Maryann Philbrook Sturges, the curate at Nativity Cathedral in Bethlehem, celebrated the Eucharist. A good time was had by all.



Warren Memorial Garden Committee to Meet

Members of the Warren Memorial Garden Committee will meet on September 14, 2024 from 10 am to noon. The garden cleanup for the fall will be the major focus.



Boscov’s Friends Helping Friends

St. Luke’s has registered to participate in Boscov’s annual *Friends Helping Friends*, an event that raises money for nonprofit organizations.

The \$5.00 passes are available for purchase in the parish office or from Vestry members. The pass is good for the one-day event to be held on October 22, 2024 giving pass holders a 25% discount on all their shopping. Remember that St. Luke’s will receive 100% of the pass donation proceeds.



Holy Hikes Resuming

Holy Hikes of Northeast PA is resuming in September under the leadership of David Wegner. This month’s hike will be held on Saturday, September 21, 2024 @ 10:00AM.

We’ll be taking the McDade Park Loop. It’s an easy 1.4 mile loop with a 167 feet elevation gain. We’ll begin from parking area on the southwest side of the park which can be accessed via Bald Mountain Road.

We hope to see you there!

Hello and Goodbye



Shown above is Operations Manager Brian Goble as he begins his new role at Cypress House at St. Luke's and Robin O'Hearn as she takes one last look at the St. Luke's kitchen before the extensive renovations begins.

As the Operations Manager, Brian will assist in overseeing renovations to the bakery kitchen, and when the bakery is up and running, he will work closely with the apprentices in ascertaining educational and social needs. Brian will work as part of an interdisciplinary team as he supervises the Bakery Instructor and will oversee the purchase of supplies, educational materials, uniforms, equipment, and other essential resources. Brian will also help to develop a strategic plan to market the baked goods.

Renovations by Scartelli Construction are in their initial phase.

Welcome Brian! St. Luke's is excited to have you onboard and we look forward to seeing all that this inaugural program of Cypress House has to offer to those previously incarcerated as *"we hope to live more deeply into God's call to seek and serve Christ in all persons and to respect the dignity of every human being"*.

COMING SOON

Blessing of the Animals

Mark your calendars for the annual Blessing of the Animals set for Friday, October 4, 2024. Doors open at 6:00PM and the Pet Blessing service begins at 6:30PM and will be celebrated by Fr. Nick Lorenzetti. Briar Ledge Craftwomen and St. Cats and Dogs will be joining us once again, as will other animal advocates groups. There will be an animal themed craft for kids. Watch for more updates on the parish Facebook page and in the service leaflets.

Installation Service for Presiding Bishop Elect Sean Rowe

The investiture service will take place on Nov. 2 at the Chapel of Christ the Lord in The Episcopal Church Center in New York City with a prelude beginning at 10 a.m. ET and the service starting at 11 a.m. ET. There will be an extensive livestream production to support churchwide access and participation.

Convocation III is considering hosting a watch party!

Beyond Our Doors and around the church

The Diocesan Cycle of Prayer

Each week we are invited to pray for specific parishes throughout The Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem along with our companion diocese of Kajo Keji in South Sudan. Here is a listing of those parishes that we will be praying for in September. You are invited to add these to your prayers as outlined in the weekly schedule below:

Week of September 1

Diocese of Bethlehem *St. Brigid's, Nazareth*
Kajo Keji *Ajira Parish and Gaderu-Victoria Leach Primary School*

Week of September 8

Diocese of Bethlehem *St. Peter's Tunkhannock*
Kajo Keji *Emmanuel Parish Lubule*

Week of September 15

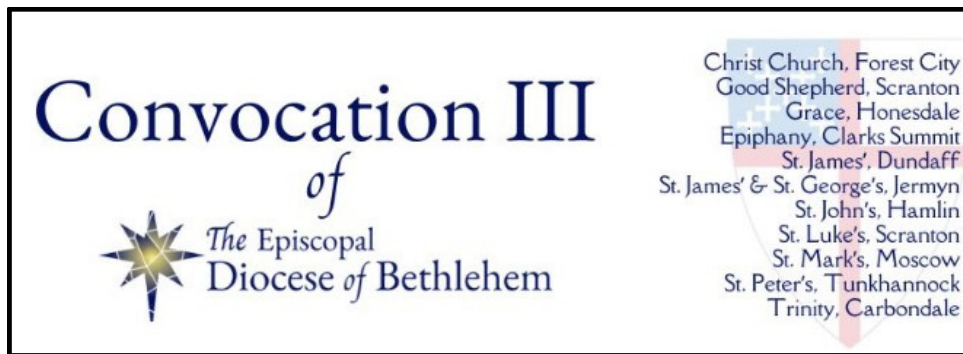
Diocese of Bethlehem *St. John's, Palmerton; and the Constitution & Canons Committee*
Kajo Keji *St. Paul Bori Parish*

Week of September 22

Diocese of Bethlehem *St. Joseph's, Pen Argyl; St. Mary's, Wind Gap*
Kajo Keji *St. Mark Merguga Parish*

Week of September 29

Diocese of Bethlehem *Trinity, Pottsville*
Kajo Keji *Lorudung Parish and Liwolo-Helen Wagner Primary School*



Convocation III Notes

Delegates from the eleven parishes of Convocation III continue to meet monthly to share ideas and resources in support of each others ministries and missions.

The most recent meeting was held on Saturday, August 10, 2024 at Christ Church in Forest City and was lead by Convener Ray Poggensee and Canon Missioner Melinda Artman. Ray inspired a conversation focused on the how delegates assess the successes and needs of the convocation. Many noted that our convocation seems to be successful in its efforts to communicate with each other and in offering ways to collaborate in ministry with each other. It was noted that some member parishes might need assistance in having more of a presence on social media. And so, a plan was set in motion to take some "break away" time at the next meeting to offer some help to those specific parishes. Others, including St. Luke's representatives, sought to gain some insight from others about ways to improve their streaming services. As a result, St. Luke's has been able to arrange a consultation with people who not only assisted in upgrading the sound and streaming systems in another parish, but also assisted in writing a Mission Resources Grant application resulting in financial assistance from the diocese to cover the cost of those improvements.

Convocation III representatives also shared about Christian Formation programs at their parishes and talked about ways to share that information with each others parishes via Facebook groups, websites, flyers, etc.

The next meeting of the Convocation is Saturday, September 7, 2024 at Church of the Epiphany in Glenburn!



Apse Mosaic, C. 549 Sant' Apollinare in Classe. Ravenna

Almighty God, whose Son our Savior Jesus Christ was lifted high upon the cross that he might draw the whole world to himself: Mercifully grant that we, who glory in the mystery of our redemption, may have grace to take up our cross and follow him; who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, in glory everlasting. Amen.

	SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
SEPTEMBER 2024	1 10:00AM Eucharist	2	3	4	5 5:30PM Centering Prayer	6 Book Study 5:30PM	7 Workday 10:00AM 5:00PM Eucharist
	8 10:00AM Eucharist	9	10 6:00PM Finance Mtg.	11 6:00PM Vestry Mtg.	12 5:30PM Centering Prayer 5:30PM Peer to Peer	13 Book Study 5:30PM	14 Warren Garden Committee 10:00AM 5:00PM Eucharist
	15 10:00AM Eucharist	16	17 1:00PM FOTP Food Pantry	18 9:00AM STRIVE	19 5:30PM Centering Prayer	20 Book Study 5:30PM	21 10:00AM Holy Hikes 5:00PM Eucharist
	22 10:00AM Eucharist	23	24 7:00PM DOK Meeting	25	26 5:30PM Centering Prayer 5:30PM Peer to Peer	27 Book Study 5:30PM	28 5:00PM Eucharist
	29 10:00AM Eucharist	30	31				