

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES

TRANSITION REFLECTION SURVEY

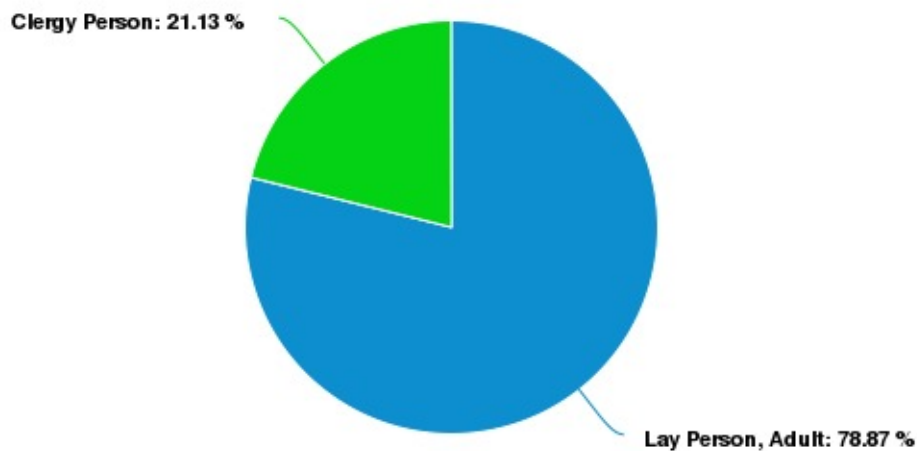
September 14, 2018

A number of the questions raised here are answered or explored in the Frequently Asked Questions document. Please review both documents together.

* Denotes a repeated responses

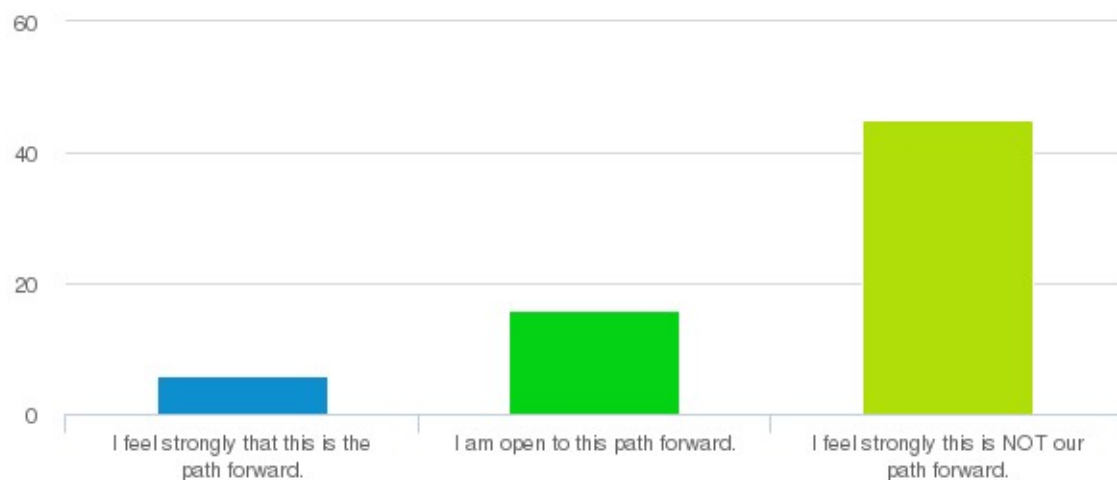
Clergy / Lay Breakdown of Responses:

I am a:



Scenario #1 - Keep on our 'Separate' Ways, Elect a Bishop Diocesan

Select one:



What might we gain by staying separate and electing a full-time Bishop Diocesan?

*****Very little/nothing.

*****Independence/Autonomy.

*****Original intended identity.

*Uniting to be stronger as the church loses numbers.

A Bishop with the time to assist all congregations as needed.

A chance to be really creative in ministry and explore some things specific to our area (if we get a bishop that will do this with us).

Assuming our financial issues can be addressed, this would be best. Affiliation with a "big brother" caused our separation from Diocese of Michigan. Similar joining with West Michigan (another "big brother") may well lead to a return to that undesirable polity.

Attention for our smaller, northern congregations.

Avoid the conflicts that are likely to arise due to the different cultures of East Michigan and West Michigan.

By staying separate and electing a full time Bishop Diocesan, we would be able to maintain our own identity with our unique characteristics. We left the Diocese of Michigan in search of "a grass roots" movement that we might better meet the needs of our many small parishes. We have met with some successes as well as some failures since our inception. I believe this is not the crossroads but rather a time to re-group and re-focus as we look to the future.

Churches become more independent.

Control over the budgeting of the diocese.

Debt.

Each congregation would have the attention and dedication of a full-time bishop.

Exploring a merger would mean that both dioceses would need to be equal partners, moving the new diocesan offices and cathedral to a central location.

Good in theory but too much to lose.

I can't think of anything we would gain. We need to figure out a way to present the financial situation in a way that people can understand. And guys, we've proven that the "Winnebago Model" doesn't work!

I don't see much that we would gain, to be honest, in the long run. At-best, I can see us being forced by austerity to come together as a diocese and make a big push for growth, but it would take an incredibly dynamic and effective Bishop alongside a similarly dynamic and effective grassroots effort to pull that off, along with major cultural change that I don't know we'd be able to implement as quickly as we would need to in order to grow at the rate we would need to in order to remain solvent long term.

Increased tithe.

It might cause us to consider more deeply what is our call to identity, mission and ministry. "Where your heart is, there your treasure will also be," is as true today as it was when Jesus taught it. By electing our own bishop, this person, and the people of the diocese, would need to be committed to a discernment path. We all would need to have skin in the game and a commitment to servant ministry.

It would be business as usual and costly. But communications among churches *might* be easier.

Camp can probably support itself.

Keeping local formation for priests.

Maintain the Diocesan headquarters within reasonable travel distance of most congregations.

More agency in addressing needs that are local to Eastern Michigan.

Not much - the congregations, with a few exceptions, are ageing rapidly and losing committed membership with each death among the laity. A Bishop for a diminishing diocese can do one of two things - try to replace losses and hold on or go bold to give the church some sort of relevance to the present day. Given the age of congregants overall, they're unlikely to want a leader with bold ideas that actually wants to bury Eisenhower and the "Golden Age" of the Episcopal Church. It's a Catch-22 and has been for years that the Church wants to relive a past glory continuously that ceased to have any real basis about 25 years ago. Society evolved, culture evolved, politics evolved, the economic basis for daily living evolved while the Church remained stagnant. Electing an openly gay Bishop in New Hampshire and supporting gay marriage fail to address the larger problem of a Church mired in past relevance. We used to joke about the two unofficial canons of Episcopal Church: 1] We've never done it that way and 2] we've always done it that way. Those two precepts matter more than all of the official canons put together. So long as they do, and the leadership caters to them, the Church will continue its decline.

Nothing.

Our own destiny.

Satisfy the people who were excited about the formation of a "grass roots" diocese.

Sclerosis.

The attention of a full-time bishop.

The benefit of being right sized; that is, able to be managed by a small staff and afford that staff without putting an increased burden on the congregations' budgets. Increasing sized increases the need for staff and the consequent expense.

The freedom and responsibility to search, interview, and elect/choose its next Bishop.

The gain of saying we have our own Bishop and our own Diocese might equate to success in some peoples' minds however the reality of sustainability is ignored in my opinion.

We have the opportunity to do something different, something that works for our diocese. I believe that we need to trust in the Spirit and, while being thoughtful on financial concerns, step out in faith -

perhaps instead of 5% draw down 10% in order to keep ministries, especially Camp Chick, as we have to keep outreach to the youth.

We left the Diocese of MI to get more attention to the needs of NE Michigan parishes. This attention and care would continue. We would not be lost and forgotten in a larger diocese.

We left the Diocese of Michigan because it was so big and we didn't have the pastoral oversight and access to the diocesan office. It was too big. Going with Western MI would do the same thing.

We separated from the Diocese of Michigan because the needs were different. Merging feels like we'd again become the burden of another group.

We would also gain some time for reflection and reorganizing our common life.

We would be forced to look in detail where we spend our resources and if they are used effectively (this is a good thing).

We would continue to have a voice in the House of Bishops and hopefully, our Diocese would be drawn even closer together as we remember the work of those who went before us to start this Diocese and as we work to strengthen our financial picture.

We'd maintain a smaller geographic area, thus less travel involved for the Bishop Diocesan. The smaller geographic area may also lend to a stronger sense of solidarity.

Withering on the vine, slow decline, eventual death.

What might we lose by staying separate and electing a full-time Bishop Diocesan?

*****Vital ministries.

**Camp Chickagami.

**Staff.

*Endowment funds.

*Sense of/opportunities for collaboration.

Additional resources.

Closing ministries would likely occur much faster than the required additional income generating possible sources, in my opinion. Capital campaigns have been discussed by our Diocesan leadership for at least 10 years, but none have ever been planned, implemented, nor any funds received, to my knowledge.

Cost savings.

Diocesan support will have to be reduced.

Electing a diocesan bishop does not mean that we necessarily "stay separate". Programs, staff and activities may still be shared.

Endowment funding.

Harder for the full-time bishop to do his/her job.

I would hope that we would not lose anything. I approve of the shared programs such as communications and the Academy.

If cost cutting is so important that we lose such things as Camp Chick and the Academy, then being separate is no longer worth the cost.

If we drop our program ministries, we put ourselves into full out maintenance mode which will just hasten the death of our church (not that this is inevitable). I like the idea of consolidating our resources with another diocese to help us be more cost efficient.

Increasing the Diocesan Tithe will put a strain on parish budgets; reducing the draw from investments will likely result in the reduction of funding for vital ministries such as Camp Chick and Coppage Gordon.

It seems to me that without our staff, we lose the connectedness of our various ministries; and without diocesan-level ministries, we lose the next generation of young people and the next generation of clergy. This makes us less a branch of the Jesus Movement and more an inward-focused self-care club.

Listening to the Holy Spirit.

Lose a lot of money when we're already overextending our ability to fully function. People seem not to understand the true picture of how tiny we are and how unsustainable this system is.

Loss of much that we've achieved: Camp Chickagami, outstanding accredited camping program, Coppage-Gordon programs developing lay and ordained ministry, congregational/ ecumenical ministry programs. We can't go back.

Many of the things that make us spiritually healthy.

More Episcopalians. Since the diocese began, we have been on a continual decline in ASA and number of congregations. We will continue to lose money.

New ideas.

Not be able to achieve our goals.

Not much/nothing.

Nothing. As long as we are careful to not over spend. How do you think we managed for the first 24 years?

Services at the diocesan level will possibly be cut. It would be business as usual but perhaps cut would be made.

Strength going forward – we will be smaller and, I do believe, weaker as an organization.

Synergy that MIGHT be created by affiliation. However, our past experience with Diocese of Michigan did not have such a result.

The ability to serve the greater diocese and communities with programs such as camp, critical programs.

The capacity to remain nimble and grow.

The financial resources available in the region have been a concern from the inception of the Diocese and with the continuing closure of churches and loss of members the situation has not improved. It is time to consider a new path.

The message in the video on the budget isn't any different than what was presented at the 2016 convention, so what do we actually lose?

The opportunity to develop a new identity through a shared partnership. There are local issues, to be sure, that we need to attend to: supporting small congregations, running viable and vital programs, race and justice. But there are other issues ranging from water and global warming to immigration and inclusion that we might better work on regionally. If we only stay focused on our own local issues, we lose the ability to address the real issues of our times.

Time and money that could be used in moving to a different option. It is a setback in forming relationships with potential for the long-range life of the Episcopal Church in this area.

To me, Scenario #1 is a "circle the wagons" option that is fear-based. I feel that, as currently structured, we do not have the resources to be a viable, vital diocese under a full-time bishop diocesan.

Ultimately, we would lose the Diocese of Eastern Michigan because we would sacrifice ministries on the ground to support how we "look" to the rest of the Episcopal Church.

We are shrinking. The thought that eliminating the ministry of Camp Chick is one of the root problems of the church; things get tough? Become less relevant to the youth. If the Camp Chickagami ministry were ended, I would leave the Episcopal church. Brand new nondenominational churches pull in large numbers of youth because they focus ministry towards them. I've worked in youth ministry for 30 years and this has been the continual problem. It seems to only get worse.

We can see the writing on the wall...financially, this is not a prudent move. And, to think of the loss of Katie or McKenzie and the ability to educate new clergy...NOT a smart move on the part of our Diocese. Katie and McKenzie, and the resources they bring to the table in 2018, are invaluable. And, we need to continue to train clergy in the more non-conventional manner so as to have candidates to help serve/lead in the future. Not everyone can go to a divinity school associated with a college or university, based on their stage in life.

We lose the opportunity to do something new and adventurous. We may just fritter away our endowment, staying the same (and not closing camp, laying off staff, etc.) until it is too late to do a brave new thing.

We may not be able to afford all of the current Diocesan services.

We might lose opportunities to have joint ministries with another Diocese.

We would be dependent on the loud voices coming out of Grand Rapids, Traverse City which tend to be more conservative than our voices.

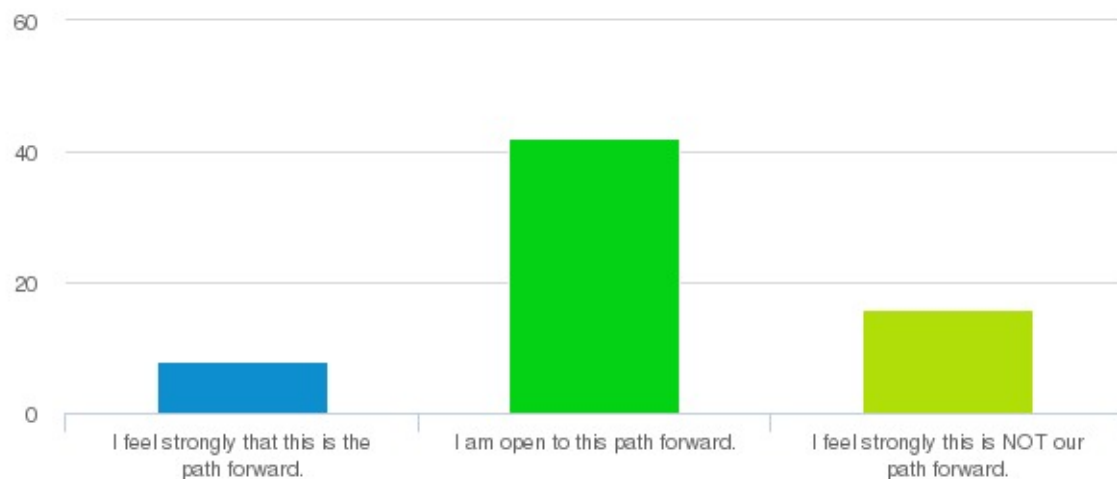
We would be taking the easy way out.

We would not have to bond together to work to save ourselves.

While I believe in doing all that we can to care for our resources - both financial and physical - we also need to have faith that solutions are possible even if we can't see them at the moment.

Scenario #2 - Long-term, Full-time Bishop Provisional

Select one:



What might we gain by electing a long-term, full-time bishop provisional and undergoing a long-term discernment process?

*****Time to think/discern.

***Time to get buy-in of congregations/individuals.

*It puts off the inevitable.

*Nothing/not much.

A chance to "test the waters" of different options. Finding the individual Bishop noted with the skills, experience in this area, while a benefit, is a significant challenge.

A long-term bishop very fast.

A lot of time to ruminate and dither.

A new bishop provisional might bring in a different perspective that could help us move forward; helping us navigate between the hard identity/financial choices and catch a new vision for the future.

A prolonged period of discernment will enable us to listen to what the Spirit is saying to us and to welcome the ministry of the Bishop Provisional as an opportunity for creativity and adaption. If we were to move toward a juncture with the Diocese of Western Michigan, our time spent with a Bishop Provisional might also provide the space to attend to people's anxiety related to the idea of juncture. This option allows for the exploration of relationship with Western Michigan but also allows for other options to present themselves.

An experienced Bishop.

Angst.

Another disruption in five years.

Buy more time... but, then again, why? We will just continue to deplete our resources (\$\$).

I consider this to be a survival mode plan. Hunker down and wait out the storm type of mentality.

I see benefits of a long-term study. If anything, church history has shown understanding and patience valuable in creating a church environment of duration.

I see no advantages only problems.

I think this may be a good idea with the RIGHT bishop. And that's the thing isn't it? We'd need a bishop with a proven record of growth in a Diocese AND they'd need to be able to facilitate the exploration of "juncture", too.

I'm not sure what we gain through this process. Five years seems like a long time to be kind of on hiatus.

In some respects, this would be fine, but it seems to delay the inevitable: the need for Eastern Michigan to collaborate more deeply with another diocese (in our case, Western Michigan).

It would buy time as we see how congregations grow or diminish in the coming years.

It's not clear if we would ease our financial problems as the data we need to understand this was not made available. It is unacceptable to propose options without providing one or more financial models for each option. This omission has undermined the credibility of the Standing Committee and financial management of the Diocese.

More commitment to see how we can work together with Western Michigan.

More fully entering into discernment of who we are and what we desire and HOPEFULLY realizing what God wants of and for us.

Opportunity to see if we can expand the conversation for all of the lower peninsula. To really be sustainable, this would be the creative and entrepreneurial way to approach ministry in Michigan. How can we streamline and get everyone all together?

Sadly, this is applying a Band-Aid to a fatal hemorrhage. Eastern Michigan, on its own, lacks the vision and resources to remain an independent diocese long term. A larger dialogue that waters down the reactionary stasis of the few wealthier congregations in this diocese can only help in finding a relevance to the present world and that to come. Ultimately, however, it is a stop-gap measure to final juncture with Western Michigan.

Stability for that period of time. We would still be an independent diocese that could manage its own affairs for that time.

Status quo while thinking things through.

There will be status quo, but only for a short time. Then the indecision will start all over again.

This will give us time to determine if the financial problems can be solved. In short, more assurance that the financial crisis is real and that it cannot be averted (e.g., aggressive application of planned giving; portfolio growth.)

Time to help people face reality about the status of the diocese.

Time to make vital ministries more sustainable.

We would gain time to explore other ways of doing things. However it would be time wasted.

We would gain time for reflection/discernment and to imagine a new kind of Episcopal Presence in Michigan, with intentional episcopal leadership helping us to hear the whisper of the Spirit over the noise of financial anxiety.

We would have more time to consider all our options - hopefully with a prayerful, supportive bishop (maybe +Cate) to lead us.

We would have the opportunity to retain and even develop new ministries by leveraging our resources.

What might we lose by electing a long-term, full-time bishop provisional and undergoing a long-term discernment process?

***Just delays a decision.

***Time and money.

**How can we be sure the bishop has the skills and experiences that are a good fit for Eastern Michigan?

*Nothing/Not much.

A few congregations are currently on the edge in terms of financial sustainability and increased commitment could result in their closing.

A lot of money. This money could be used to expand ministries and provide funding for developing creative ways to better connections to our communities.

At first, I felt that this was an obvious path forward -- our "own" bishop to help us decide our path. But on reflection, I asked, what could that path be? Either stay as a separate, tiny, struggling (financially and in other ways) diocese, or merge with Western Mich. Unless we consider juncture with Diocese of Michigan or, say, an ELCA synod, the only two options are independence or West Mich. We won't find a new one.

Energy, money and people. This will unnecessarily draw out the process of joining with Western Michigan. Increasing income is not feasible and will not be successful.

Growth.

I don't see a lot of downside except living in the "in between time" and people are sometimes anxious in these types of situations. I've listened to several people who were present when the diocese was formed, and I'd like to examine if we can recapture some of that original hope.

I feel that in some ways scenario #2 is "kicking the can down the road" as compared to scenario #3. It runs the risk of not getting us any farther on the journey we are called to take.

I say I am open to this but also add barely. Personally, I am not confident in finding the Bishop required. A Bishop to serve yes, but one with the tremendous people skills necessary to accomplish the exploration necessary given current climate where some see unity as failure of the Eastern Diocese grass root idea. Searches take time and are costly. This spoken as a result of experience in the past and at times leave division in the wake. There is no need for further division. Given there is the retirement age we currently have for clergy, we stand the possibility over a five-year period of having a change in leadership and this often results in set-backs in explorations.

I wonder if a five year may feel too long, as though we're spinning our wheels and putting off having to make a decision.

I'm concerned that any bishop provisional who isn't already familiar with the leadership formation occurring at the Academy for Vocational Leadership may not be as supportive of the strategic role it can play in the future of the diocese.

I'm really concerned that slowing down the process of integrating with Western Michigan (which I consider somewhat inevitable given the economic and demographic shifts happening in our state) will leave both of us in a weaker position.

If we hire someone near retirement, will they have the "vision of today" AND the energy to help us move forward?

In the church, time is already measured in geological rather than human terms. In 5 years of reflection, what will happen? From 2013-2017 our ASA fell by close to 25%. After 5 more years of reflection rather than bold action, we will definitely be unsustainable. (By contrast, West Mich's ASA fell by around 10%.) For both dioceses to exist over the medium term, juncture seems the only prudent course. So why wait to begin exploration? But I remain open to discussion.

Money.

People who want faster answers.

Provisional election process only presents one bishop to choose from.

The downside is minimal, other than locking into a five-year process.

The opportunity to elect a bishop from within our own diocese. This means that the bishop provisional will lack the experienced insights of our local leaders.

Then they would be gone and we'd be left with finding a bishop who would walk with us beyond that five year window. Here, too, it would be challenging to find the right person. In some ways, it feels like a parish search where the Vestry hopes to find a retired or senior priest in order to save money. This work will require commitment and energy along with wisdom and experience. Then, too, there is the learning curve to discover who we are. I would think this person would need to hit the ground running. I was one who raised my hand when this option was announced. On further consideration, I question the wisdom of this path without knowing who the bishop provisional would be.

There is a potential that we focus 3 - 5 years of our effort on discernment at the cost of losing focus on our ultimate responsibility of caring for congregations and building our relationship with God and our communities.

This seems a little like the Children of Israel wandering in the Wilderness for 5 years. We need focus and the attention of a caring bishop. If this scenario is adopted, I would rather use those five years to do some real visioning such as we did when we founded the diocese in 1994. As written, it is designed to just give us more time to come to "love the inevitable". All the while we wander without purpose as a unique diocese. As happens in many parishes when left too long without clerical leadership, everything slows down, even stops.

Time to move ahead and take action.

We are looking for an aging bishop to invest a massive amount of energy into our Diocese. What could go wrong? Besides wasting 5 years and letting the problem grow larger?

We might lose the opportunity of joining with W. Michigan right away and wrestling with the adaptation of two systems

We should not limit ourselves to the Diocese of Western Michigan. There must be other Dioceses that have Ministries that we can get involved with.

We would lose our focus of ministry while daydreaming about "palace intrigue". While interims can be beneficial, my sense of what this diocese needs to do for its future is clear. We cannot go it alone. If we do, we do. If we delay, we avoid reality and open the door for rapid decline.

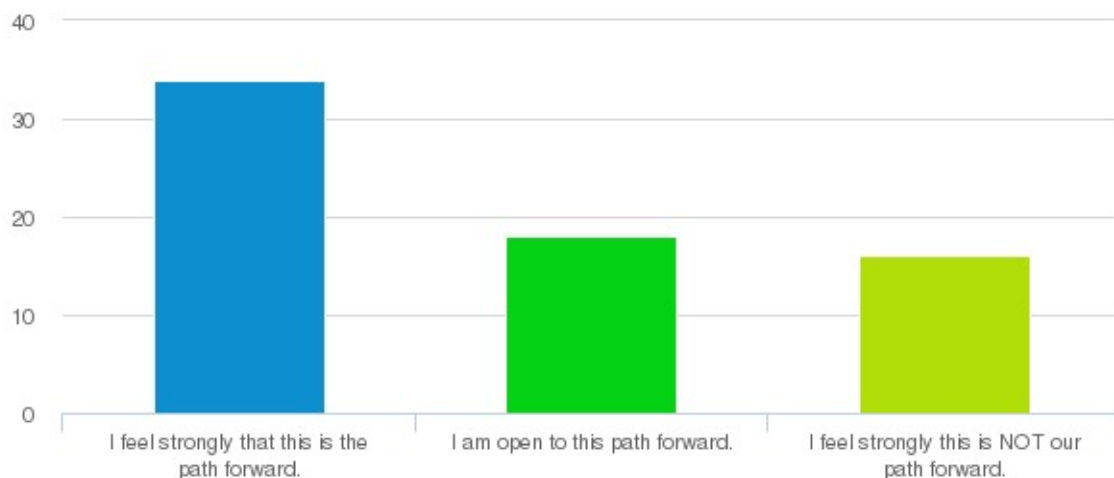
We would spend a lot of energy working with Western Michigan that is better spent on activities in East Michigan.

What is the purpose in having a full-time provisional bishop. How would that be different from a half-time provisional bishop? We have discerned this enough already. Make a decision and move on.

You will be right back to square one at the end of the 5 years. What will you have gained? Maybe nothing, maybe some insight as to how to go forward.

Scenario #3 – “Great Lakes Episcopal”, Discernment Process with Western Michigan, Elect Bishop Hougland

Select one:



What might we gain by electing Bishop Hougland and undergoing a long-term discernment process with Western Michigan?

A clear path to the future and time to grow together into one diocese. We will have the time to learn from each other and hopefully choose the best of both sides.

A smoother transition of what appears to be a clear option for our diocese. It is certain that if we remain independent we will lose many of the things that make us spiritually healthy.

Better financial status.

Bishop Hougland could provide additional insight about the Diocese of Western Michigan.

Bishop Hougland is already familiar with our Diocese and the process, won't lose time in bringing another person up to speed.

By electing Bishop Hougland, we gain a bishop provisional who is already familiar with the particular culture of the state and challenges being faced in our communities (I believe that, while the structure of Western and Eastern Michigan may be different, we have far more in common community-to-community than was necessarily suggested during our meeting in June) and is already familiar with our existing shared ministries. I've personally seen the many blessings that our existing collaboration have brought us, and I believe that integrating sooner will allow us to form a juncture from a place of relative strength.

Careful joint study of a good option.

Easier "juncturing"

Everything.

Excellent leadership from a fine bishop. Renewed energy and ideas from the other diocese.

Get the "inevitable" over with without totally losing our resources.

Getting ahead of some of the curve of "we must do something or we completely die". I feel like this conversation is too late, but I think that this is a good option to looking forward.

Greater certainty about the path forward. We would still have a long period of discernment.

Greater stability for the diocese.

Growth, grace, learning new ways to be church. Further growth into the Jesus Movement!

I believe the model we have been using since the beginning has unfortunately been a failed experiment. There is great value in considering a new model and potentially sharing resources with Western Michigan.

I feel that working hard now to have a planned giving program, increasing our endowments, raising our parish shares slightly and some creative budget cutting would put us on a stronger financial footing. It would be work and would require a serious commitment from our congregants. Are we willing to do this hard work, or are we just going to give up? That is the question.

I feel this is the eventual outcome and perhaps, we should just get on with it (rip the Band-Aid off, so to speak).

I have yet to hear what would be gained by a juncture. I anticipate ongoing deficits, not unlike churches with building too big for their needs. There is no real economy of size in churches and dioceses. We are right sized now, but if Western Michigan wanted to give us few on the border we should consider it. ;-)

I think it is the only way to know if the two areas can achieve a good working relationship strong enough that they need and want to be connected. At the end of the period selected, we would still be in a position to go our own way. In that situation we would do so with a full understanding of what we would be doing.

I think it's important to note that election Bishop Hougland as Bishop Provisional doesn't mean that the juncture is a done deal. Rather the three to five years provides us with the opportunity to intentionally explore relationship and imagine what the church may look like as a new diocese. Some people at the Next Steps Gathering expressed a sense of grief over the loss of the grassroots vision for the diocese. But, pursuing this third option doesn't eliminate the possibility of returning to more of a grassroots vision because we'll be creating something new and different under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

I think that forming a juncture with Western Michigan will help us to raise more youthful leadership throughout the newly formed diocese than Eastern Michigan is necessarily capable of in its current jurisdiction.

I think this may be our win-win option.

I think we'd gain a Bishop that is already invested in helping the Episcopal Church in Michigan to thrive.

Increased likelihood of financial stability.

It is, in my opinion, fiscally responsible. It would seem we have an interesting model (rust belt Episcopal) to provide a path to explore that is leading the way in such adventures.

It makes no sense to look toward Western Michigan without establishing real, albeit unofficial ties with Western Michigan. This option forces a relationship as the two dioceses share their leader and learn what it would be like.

It might or might not solve our financial problems. Where is the data we need to understand this option? Making a sound decision without seeing the financial models for each option is impossible and very unwise. If these data are not provided I am left with the conclusion that the committee doesn't understand the importance of being open and complete with financial information or has a hidden agenda that it is unwilling to share.

It would still be a temporary solution and some good ideas might be side-lined "until a decision is made" and those good ideas could be lost in the shuffle.

More shared resources.

Moving forward into a new (and unknown) territory with help and resources of the national church knowing that we are not alone in this endeavor and we are part of something much larger

My first concern is Bishop Hougland's refusal to ordain Academy students as priests. I think we need to be open to the Spirit's moving and I believe that the Spirit's moving in this direction. I lived on the westside of the state for over 12 years, and I know that it is different from Eastern Michigan in several ways. I believe that we are moving too fast.

My opinion is this path may set an irrevocable path to joining with West Michigan. Very probably the Kalamazoo/Grand Rapids/Traverse City axis will dominate attention (just as Metro Detroit did).

One Bishop heading the exploration has the possibility of organized exploration and a chance to build relationships moving forward. The exploration working toward "junction" headed by one individual seems to me to have more potential to accomplish in 3 years what is a possible vision for survival. The results of this option would seem to me to result in everyone benefitting and getting something while at the same time no one would get everything. That is a win-win for all involved.

Our two dioceses have many similarities, including geography, population, demographics, rural/city dynamics, size, ministries, budgets, etc. only to be enhanced through asset mapping process.

Saved money by paying only half the cost of a Bishop.

Stability, as well as the call to focus on ministry and mission instead of palace intrigue.

The benefit of working with the diocese of Western Michigan and furthering our relationship already established.

The Eastern Diocese will have more stability and know our path forward.

The opportunity to let go and really listen and hopefully trust the Holy Spirit.

This is the only way forward that makes any real sense.

This would create a huge geographical diocese. I would like more understanding (meat-on-the-bones) of how this would be managed/organized. For example, how often would the bishop or his/her representative be visiting an individual parish? Another thought would be the reorganization of the entire lower peninsula into two dioceses?

Time to breathe.

Undesirable at this time.

We buy time. We have got an experienced and respected bishop. It gives us five years to work things out and plan without rushing for the future.

We can get a real feeling whether junction would work. I feel that there would be real motivation to dig in and figure out how to do it - to move forward in creating a diocese that is truly called to be a living, flourishing branch of the Jesus movement.

We could see what he's like as a bishop.

We gain the shared leadership of a capable and experienced bishop.

We get to pick our bishop now.

We lose "time" to move forward. We would be kicking the can down the road.

We might gain insight into why the Westies' ASA fell less than ours. We might have money to continue having a staff and ministries like Camp Chick and Coppage-Gordon (if Bishop Hougland approves of home-grown clergy-making). We will have a broader group of people from whom to draw ideas and with whom to share activities, and we won't be duplicating each other's efforts.

We won't lose anything good. We probably won't gain anything bad. I understand that, in our history, we've opened and closed, merged and split, several dioceses. Be not afraid.

We would gain a bishop who has given prayer and thought to this possibility. He has his eyes open, hopefully. There would still be challenges to navigate and the end game would still be up to the Spirit. But, he is someone known to us, at least in terms of what he has accomplished in the West.

We would gain an outstanding, knowledgeable, experienced, and very talented, creative, charismatic, personable, positive, fun-loving, professional and prime-of-his-career Episcopal Bishop who has already been serving in Michigan for five years with a track record of restructuring a sister diocese.

We would know who our bishop provisional is going to be and we would have a six-year period of growing together. Presumably that would allow time for us to adjust to a higher diocesan assessment (to match that of W. Mich) We would be living into juncture NOW.

We, in the Eastern Diocese, need to understand that we are not being swallowed up by another diocese. I want more dialogue between the two groups, learning each other's ways of doing God's work. We can come out a very strong diocese.

Western Michigan has a similar set of strengths and challenges as Eastern Michigan. It seems to me that we could be a good fit together.

Would gain a bishop fast – in 2019.

What might we lose by electing Bishop Hougland and undergoing a long-term discernment process with Western Michigan?

*Autonomy and independence.

A combined diocese may not have the same priorities as we do.

An outstanding Bishop Provisional that apparently is anticipating retirement in about 5 years – which will/would be a loss for us.

Bishop Hougland might be exceptionally busy.

Bishop Hougland would be put in the position of representing two different Diocese at the same time which could prove to be unworkable. This would not be worth the risk. Congregations in both dioceses would find their time with the Bishop cut in half.

Camp Chick is very important to us. A must.

Distance between Grand Rapids and Eastern Michigan will make joint work hard.

Do they support local formation? If no, I would not choose this path.

Geography presents a challenge as traveling to meetings and gatherings. Though, with today's technology, maybe we could do a mix of electronic gatherings and physical gatherings.

Given the way the proposal is written, I don't see anything that we would lose. In the end, the results go through General Convention and I am assuming reports of progresses and input from congregations would be ongoing.

I am concerned about the financial stability of the Diocese of Western Michigan.

I feel that we run the risk of locking ourselves into a solution (juncture) that may not be where God is calling us, but I do think this can be managed.

I think that this conversation would be harder if we jump right to +Whayne.

I would be interested to know if the people of Western Michigan are sincerely interested in this option and if so, how ready are they to compromise and consolidate and share.

I would fear that we end up as we did in the Diocese of Michigan where no one trusted the other. We need to trust and have faith if this is going to work.

I would like to see a bit shorter time line at the same time acknowledging it is not a reality.

If the premise for this arrangement is maintained, that this is a time of discernment, then I don't know that we will lose anything. Programs, staff, even regional affiliations and financial apportionments are all up for review. Of the three options, this may be the more practical in terms of leadership and finances. My sense now would be to move with this option. I would also suggest a person know to our community and able to work constructively and in concert with Bishop Hougland, be assigned the task of working directly with the congregations of our diocese as we go about our discernment work. I envision this person being more chaplain than facilitator, though both skills would be necessary. There will be grief work to be done if we hope to move into a new spirit lead reality.

Ineffective staff and leadership (this is a good thing).

It is a concern to me that W. Michigan is in the middle of a huge structural transition and we would be expecting them to add on this additional transition -- and that we would feel like neglected stepchildren, trying to fit into their family, rather than working on our own development.

Just puts off the decision for 3-5 years.

Loss of opportunity to elect our bishop. A vote on Hougland is a yes or no on a Bishop that Western Michigan elected before.

Nothing.

Nothing at all except an autonomy that couldn't outlive the people who demanded it.

Our identity. If we go this route, we are as good as "juncturing" with Western Michigan. Let's not kid ourselves. If we have Bishop Hougland as a provisional Bishop, we are then dividing him between the two Diocese but it's natural to streamline and merge things. I easily see things merging together for the sake of cost savings. If, In 3-5 years, if we don't like it, separation will be extremely difficult and potentially expensive.

Our more change-averse congregants are likely to feel that this is too much change, too quickly, and may not buy-into the effort to join together with Western Michigan, potentially even stymying the effort. Of course, any move towards juncture means giving up our unique identity, but since I was too young when Eastern Michigan was formed (in fact, I hadn't even been baptized and neither of my parents were Episcopalian) so I'm not as committed to our distinctive "identity."

Our smaller, northern congregations will lose their connection with diocesan leadership (which is the very reason the diocese was founded in the first place). We also lose the ability to control the spending decisions that will, as in option #1, still be required.

Probably insignificant loss.

Sense of independence that we have been proud of since leaving the Diocese of Michigan.

Sense of our own identity – whatever that is??

Small congregations in the north will still be overlooked.

Small, northeastern churches will probably be forgotten and never see the Bishop due to his extensive area of responsibility.

Some autonomy and the old way of doing business.

Some of us worked hard to help create the Eastern Diocese, but times are different. We will lose some of our members because change is hard, harder for some than others.

Staff can be reviewed and extraneous staff let go.

The long-term discernment is a good idea, but this plan almost assumes that the conjuncture would happen at the end and might leave people in both dioceses hurt if the final vote was negative. I'd rather see Option 2 include a long-term discernment because there are fewer commitments to undo.

The only downside that I see would be if Bishop Hougland turned out to be a bad choice, but I've heard nothing to indicate this.

The opportunity to see if we can expand the conversation for all of the lower peninsula. To really be sustainable, this would be the creative and entrepreneurial way to approach ministry in Michigan. How can we streamline and get everyone all together? On the other hand - I don't think that people are actually open to trying to bring the lower peninsula back together.

We have no idea whether this approach solves our financial issues or just solves Western Michigan's problems with our money.

We keep Camp Chickagami, Coppage-Gordon.

We lose having a Bishop with the time available for the needs of all the congregations.

We might lose the false notion that Eastern Michigan can survive on its own.

We might lose the opportunity to discern another option.

We would likely have a much longer drive to reach meetings.

Comments not specific to a scenario:

I believe all of our parishes have lost out to a more performance base non-denominal base churches. We are finding our way with a constant change. We are seeing God in a new light. We need leadership to work through the process. The decisions made will affect our church as we know it today.

I would like to see a line item comparison of the last ten years with expenses and income to see when we started to carry a deficit.

Way too much politics !! Especially, the church inputting into national politics ! I have expressed to our pastor. I feel EXTREMELY STRONGLY that we are continuing to drive individuals from our churches. We need to be more welcoming of diversity of thought and welcoming/accepting of that diversity, and refrain from being judgmental. Recent communications are VERY concerning. I am a rookie. But I do know this is the wrong direction.