

## MISSION STATEMENT

Called by Christ to proclaim and embody God's boundless love for all creation, we grow:

- Collaborative communities of faith, walking the journey together;
- Innovative ministries, stretching beyond our walls;
- Courageous disciples, striving to transform systems of injustice.

We nurture relentless hope for a world longing for mercy, restoration, and peace.

## VISION STATEMENT

A world transformed, in which all God's children are unconditionally welcomed, cared for, and loved.

## OUR "SEASON OF PRACTICE"

Over the past few years our dioceses have weathered storms and grown in our collaborative ministries, shared leadership and staff, congregational development opportunities, clergy formation offerings, social justice efforts and much more. The Standing Committees have met jointly since 2020, guided us well, and are recommending with Building Bridges that we take these next steps toward becoming one, new diocese.

Scan the QR code to check out our 2023 *Report to Convention* for many more details about our process and what we've learned about ourselves, about the current and future church, and about the church at large.

Even more is available by visiting [eastmich.org/building-bridges](http://eastmich.org/building-bridges) or [edwm.org/building-bridges](http://edwm.org/building-bridges).



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESES OF  
EASTERN & WESTERN MICHIGAN



# BETTER TOGETHER

A BRIEF OVERVIEW OF THE  
BUILDING BRIDGES PROCESS  
AND OUR UPCOMING VOTE  
ON "JUNCTURE"

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# THE JOURNEY

Future-thinking conversation about structure and presence of The Episcopal Church in Michigan are longstanding. As early as 2014, the Michigan bishops began specific conversation around collaboration and potential structural needs, leading to the multi-year process and decision before us.

In 2018, the convention of Eastern Michigan voted to formally invite a process of engaging leadership bodies in this process and in April 2019, the Standing Committee and Diocesan Council of Western Michigan voted unanimously to accept Eastern Michigan's invitation to join in a conversation around "deepened relationship between our dioceses" and to share a bishop.

By 2020, the Joint Standing Committees appointed the "Building Bridges Steering Committee," tasking them with coordinating a discernment process for "opportunities for collaboration and proposed canonical changes." Since then, our dioceses have collaborated deeply in a variety of ways, from governance to programming, staffing to formation and just about everything in between.

To deepen our discernment, we first held listening sessions by affinity groups, then broadened them to bi-diocesan sessions in 2022 and 2023. Throughout this time, we were also gaining crucial experience through our collaborations and governance groups. Using what we gleaned from the conversations with the people of our dioceses and our direct experience of life together, we developed mission and vision statements to guide us moving forward. At our 2023 convention, based on this process, the Building Bridges team made their official recommendation that our dioceses should "juncture" or become one, new diocese.

## WHY JUNCTURE?

Based on our discernment and experiences of working together, the Building Bridges Steering Committee and Standing Committees of the dioceses are recommending "juncture" or merger of our two dioceses. The phrase, "We are better together," summarizes our "why."

### **Together, we are BETTER STEWARDS OF OUR RESOURCES.**

- Channeling more funds for mission-based ministries.
- Reducing duplication of roles and processes, particularly around administrative tasks.
- Fostering innovation through technology and new models of community.

### **Together, we are BETTER AT FORMING DISCIPLES OF JESUS.**

- Equipping us to be Christ's presence in our communities.
- Offering an expansive approach to calling and forming leaders.
- Engaging efforts at all levels to transform systems of injustice.

### **Together, we are BETTER EQUIPPED TO GUIDE THE CHURCH FORWARD.**

- Offering more diverse expertise and broader peer groups.
- Gathering a broader range of gifts and skills.
- Committing to break through inhibitive patterns and practices.
- Navigating through storms and speaking prophetically to the church and the world.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

The conventions of the dioceses will gather again in joint convention on Saturday, March 16th at St. Christopher's Episcopal Church in Grand Blanc, Michigan. This special convention will have one item of business: the vote on our proposed juncture of the two dioceses. The vote must receive a "yes" in both the clergy and lay orders in both dioceses to be approved.

Should the conventions vote "no," our dioceses will once again be in a discernment process about how to move ahead, including addressing separate or other forms of bishop searches and considering our various integrated ministries and staffing. This process would be driven by the Standing Committees as the ecclesiastical authority and would likely include additional extended conversation in the dioceses.

Should the conventions vote "yes," there are clearly articulated canonical steps to follow. Our decision would move to the General Convention of The Episcopal Church, who would be asked to affirm our vote to create a new diocese. We would then gather for our first convention of the new diocese next October in Mount Pleasant to formally adopt our new constitution and canons and pass a budget, moving from our "Season of Practice," to a new "Season of Being." We would also begin the search process to elect the first bishop diocesan of our new body.