**January 16, 2024**

**Dear Friends in Christ,**

At the 2023 joint convention of The Episcopal Dioceses of Eastern and Western Michigan, the Building Bridges Steering Committee offered an extended report on their work over the last many years, since our partnership and discernment officially kicked off in 2019. We concluded our report with the official recommendation: our dioceses are *better together* and should seek “juncture” or the creation of one, new diocese. The Standing Committees have affirmed our recommendation, sending it to the convention for a decision later this Spring.

We’ve offered many opportunities over the last several years to join us in this work, mainly through public conversations focused on identifying values, mission, and ministry, hearing concerns, collecting, researching, and responding to questions, and more. **As we head toward a Special Convention on March 16th, its crucially important to add your voice to this process, whether you’ve joined us along the way or are contributing for the first time.**

As we offer additional public sessions this month – please visit our websites to register for Feedback Sessions on our draft canons and financial summaries – we encourage every congregation to engage the conversation locally. This engagement kit aims to give you tools to share the information broadly within your congregation and to facilitate a guided conversation, perhaps over coffee hour.

It’s imperative that all convention delegates and clergy in particular engage the background information in order to show up as informed and prepared as possible for our convention in March. Governance and leadership in The Episcopal Church is a group project, and we have some homework!

Enclosed in this kit, you’ll find:

* **A new tri-fold summary overview of the process,** the recommendation, and our next steps (perfect for those who don’t want to read nearly 30 pages of background!) We’re sending you a handful and giving you the link to download and print more, if desired.
* **A facilitation guide to host a conversation** with parishioners and share any feedback back to the Building Bridges Team.
* **A reference sheet for understanding and accessing congregational tools** and informational background documents on our website.

Please don’t hesitate to reach out with any questions or concerns. Please contact our consultant Katie Ong at katieongconsulting@gmail.com.

**Yours in Christ,**

**Janet Huff-Worvie**St. John-the-Baptist, Otter Lake
Eastern Michigan Co-Chair

**The Rev. Jen Adams**Grace, Holland
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