

RESOLUTION SEEKING CONTINUED STUDY OF A POTENTIAL REUNIFICATION OF THE DIOCESE OF CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA AND THE DIOCESE OF BETHLEHEM

WHEREAS, until 1904, the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania and the Diocese of Bethlehem were historically united as one diocese under the name "The Diocese of Central Pennsylvania" prior to the founding of the Dioceses of Harrisburg and Bethlehem; and,

WHEREAS, with the approval of each Convention and the Ecclesiastical Authorities, the Constitution (Article V) of The Episcopal Church and Canon 1.10.6-7 allow for the reunification of dioceses; and

WHEREAS, we are one family in Christ and the resilience and health of the Church as well as its mission is strengthened through greater comity, collaboration and shared resources; and

WHEREAS: the Diocese of Central Pennsylvania concurs and has entered into a period of intentional exploration with the Diocese of Bethlehem of their future reunification as one diocese; and

WHEREAS: this exploration has, to date, been conducted by both bishops, supported by a previously appointed discernment committee of 10 people (comprised of two chancellors, two members of the standing committees, two members of the diocesan council or board of trustees and two at large members from each diocese selected by each diocese's standing committee) with equal representation from each diocese; and

WHEREAS: the bishops have engaged an outside consultant to assist the discernment committee with this process; and

WHEREAS: the discernment committee has been charged with seeking potential opportunities in the areas of general operations, formation, finance, pastoral care, stewardship, social justice ministries, staffing, and children and youth ministry as well as the gifts, strengths and priorities of each diocese; and

WHEREAS: the discernment committee has been charged to consider a plan for full reunification as well as any interim sharing of resources and to provide a draft timetable for those efforts; and

WHEREAS: the discernment committee has met in person and by zoom and has conducted five listening sessions on zoom as well as paper surveys to gain the initial response and ideas of parishioners regarding reunification; and

WHEREAS: some potential possibilities for a greater communion and mutual support between the dioceses have already presented themselves including, but not limited to, a joint diocesan service for confirmation; planned gathering for deacons; our shared clergy formation (VELI) for newly ordained clergy; the joining of our Commissions on Ministry; the potential joining of our Disciplinary Boards; the potential sharing of part-time supply clergy; partnering parishes with

another in an opposite diocese for prayer and a greater shared community of faith; and the sharing of social justice ministries across each diocese; and

WHEREAS: having committed time towards gathering sufficient data to make a reasoned discernment, the discernment committee and both Bishops have jointly concluded that an extended timeline of an additional seven months would be beneficial to complete the analysis of the data and create options for the dioceses to consider for their future; therefore, be it

RESOLVED THAT: the engagement of the outside consultant shall be extended as the discernment committee continues its work; and, be it further

RESOLVED THAT: this discernment committee shall report its progress at the 2023 Convention of each of the two dioceses and will actively seek additional input. It shall present its final set of recommendations at a joint Convention of the two dioceses to be held in the Fall of 2024; and, be it further

RESOLVED THAT: each diocese will contribute an equal amount, but no diocese shall contribute more than \$25,000, in the time frame between approval of this resolution and the Diocese's next Diocesan Convention, to accomplish this work.

Sponsor: Ms. Drew Dorgan, Chair, Standing Committee (Diocese of Central Pennsylvania)