

A Message from the Standing Committee about the Bishop Search Process

Dear Friends in Christ,

Over the past several weeks, the Standing Committee has been in careful, candid conversation with members of the Search Committee, the Transition Committee, our consultants, and diocesan leadership about the current state of our bishop search process. These conversations have been thoughtful, honest, and rooted in a shared desire to move forward faithfully.

As many of you are aware—and as we have been discussing internally for some time—the search process has not been as smooth or as well-coordinated as we would have hoped. There are real reasons for this. The structure required by our diocesan canons creates a level of complexity that can be difficult to navigate and the timeline we initially set was somewhat aggressive. At the same time, we are living into a diocesan reality still shaped by the attempted partnership with Northwestern Pennsylvania and its dissolution. In many ways, we are undertaking this search while also rebuilding the systems, relationships, and shared identity that would normally support it.

That context helps explain where we are—and it also clarifies what is now needed.

Recently, members of the Standing Committee met with Bishop Lane, Search Consultant Devon Anderson and Search Team leadership to reflect on the present state of the search. Their conversation affirmed several areas of concern that have become increasingly clear:

- We need stronger communication capacity and expertise to help us share information clearly, consistently, and in ways that build trust.
- The diocesan profile currently under development is reflecting a deeper truth—that we do not yet have a fully integrated or clearly articulated diocesan identity.
- The structure and leadership of the search process itself would benefit from clearer roles, expectations, and coordination.

At the same time, we must also be honest about what many are feeling. There is a growing perception in parts of the Diocese that the process has lacked transparency, with concerns about decisions being made out of view. Whether or not that perception fully reflects reality, it is real in its impact. Trust is essential to any election process, and we must tend to it with care.

We also recognize that we are behind our original timeline. Other dioceses, including Lexington and Kansas, have recently had to reopen their searches after their initial applicant pools were exhausted—reminding us that moving too quickly, or without sufficient clarity, can ultimately hinder the process rather than help it.

It is within this context that we share the following: ***We are entering a season of reset in our bishop search process.***

This decision has not been made lightly. It comes from a growing recognition that, while much good work has already been achieved, the process itself needs strengthening—particularly in clarity, communication, shared expectations, and broad diocesan engagement. We believe this reset will allow us not simply to continue the work, but to do it well.

At its heart, this is not about delay but rather faithfulness: faithfulness to one another and to our mission to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

We have heard clearly that our Diocese longs for a process that is transparent, collaborative, and grounded in who we truly are. We have also recognized that the profile we were developing did not yet fully reflect our shared identity, our challenges, our strengths or our hopes. Rather than move forward prematurely, we believe it is wiser to take the time needed to listen more deeply, speak more honestly, and discern more clearly.

In the months ahead, this reset will include a renewed season of listening across the Diocese, creating space for clergy and lay leaders to reflect on who we are and who God is calling us to become.

- 1) We will share more of the data from the Holy Cow Survey and our Listening Sessions and invite a collaborative and iterative approach to the diocesan profile, ensuring it reflects both our reality and our hope.
- 2) We will clarify expectations and strengthen the structure supporting the Search Committee, so that their important work is well-resourced and well-coordinated.
- 3) And we will invest in stronger, more consistent communication, so that all may remain informed and engaged throughout the process. This will include hiring a communication consultant to assist us.

Of course, this also means an adjustment to our timeline. While details are still being finalized, the overall process will extend beyond our previous expectations. We understand that this may be difficult news, but we are confident that taking this time now will serve the Diocese well in the long run.

We want to be clear: the work is continuing. This reset will build a stronger and more faithful foundation for what comes next.

Throughout this process, we remain deeply grateful for the faithful work already offered by the Search Committee, the Transition Committee, and so many across the Diocese. Your commitment, patience, and care for the Church are evident, and they matter.

We are also grateful for the steady leadership of Bishop Lane, who continues to walk closely with us in this season and remains fully engaged in supporting the Diocese through this transition. He is committed to remaining with us until the new Diocesan Bishop is ordained.

Friends, moments like this invite us to take a breath—not out of anxiety, but out of trust. We believe God is at work among us. We have the gifts, the wisdom, and the time to do this well. And so we move forward—not rushed, not reactive—but grounded, attentive, and hopeful.

Please continue to hold this Diocese, and this process, in your prayers.

Faithfully,
The Standing Committee
Episcopal Diocese of Western New York