

June 7, 2026

## Renewed bishop search begins with listening: Diocese of Western New York launches diocesan-wide campaign June 7

*This summer, the Episcopal Diocese of Western New York is taking the bishop search on the road — to all 52 congregations, to meet its people where they worship.*

Beginning June 7, teams of trained listeners will fan out across all 52 congregations in the diocese — from Buffalo to Jamestown, from Niagara Falls to the rural communities along the Allegany River — to hear directly from the people in the pews. What gives you hope? What do you long for in your church community? What do you want your next bishop to know about who you are?

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These are not rhetorical questions. The answers will shape the search for Western New York's next bishop.

*"This search belongs to all of us," the Standing Committee wrote in its May announcement to the diocese.*

### Why listening anew comes first

Earlier this spring, the Standing Committee announced a pause in the bishop search process — a decision that was, by all accounts, difficult but right. Leadership acknowledged openly that the process needed strengthening: in structure, in communication, and in the deeper work of understanding who the Diocese of Western New York truly is.

The Summer Listening Campaign is the answer to that acknowledgment. Before Western New York publishes a new diocesan profile, before it recruits candidates, before it asks anyone to consider leading this diocese — we will listen more deeply, discern areas of common ground and shared interest, as well as area where we can get to know each other better and help each other in shared ministry.

The campaign builds directly on data already gathered through the Holy Cow Survey and previous listening sessions. Congregants will hear back what was learned in those earlier conversations and then be invited to go deeper. The goal, as the Search Committee describes it, is to ensure that every person in this diocese — not only those in visible leadership roles — feels genuinely heard and included in the discernment process.

### Every congregation. Every voice

The scope of the campaign is deliberate. A trained listener and a note-taker will facilitate each visit, asking the same questions at every stop to ensure consistency and integrity in what is gathered. All 52

congregations will gather to speak to their hopes for the diocese over the summer, with visits being completed August 16. Trained listeners — drawn from the Search Committee, the Standing Committee, and clergy from across the diocese — paired with a note-taker at each visit, asking the same consistent questions at every stop.

Particular care is being taken to ensure that every congregation is included — the small and the large, the urban and the rural, the prominent and those harder to reach geographically but no less essential to our identity as a diocese.

The Standing Committee has been clear: this listening campaign is not a formality. It is the foundation on which the search will be built. Stories gathered during the campaign will be shared across the diocese — on the website, in the newsletter, and through social media — as a living record of who Western New York is and what its people carry into this moment of discernment.

### **The team leading the work**

The Search Committee reconvenes with strengthened leadership for this renewed phase. The Rev. Nick Evancho serves as chair, bringing steady commitment to a search the Standing Committee has described as one of the most significant acts of discernment in the diocese's nearly 200-year history. Search consultant, the Rev. Devon Anderson, continues her work supporting the committee's process.

### **What comes after**

The Summer Listening Campaign is the first of several phases in a carefully sequenced road ahead. A revised diocesan profile — one that reflects who Western New York truly is, in its own words — will be published in Advent 2026. Active recruitment of candidates will follow, leading to a Special Electing Convention on May 1, 2027, and consecration of the bishop-elect anticipated in fall 2027.

The diocese is in good hands in the meantime: Bishop Provisional, The Rt. Rev. Stephen T. Lane, continues to provide pastoral leadership throughout the search process.

*“We are not rushed, and we are not reactive. We are grounded, attentive, and hopeful.” — The Rev. Luke Fodor, President, Standing Committee*

Regular updates on the search, including stories and reflections from the listening campaign, will be shared throughout the summer. Watch this space, the diocesan newsletter, and our social media channels for more.