THE
EPISCOPAL
DIOCESE
OF WESTERN NEW YORK

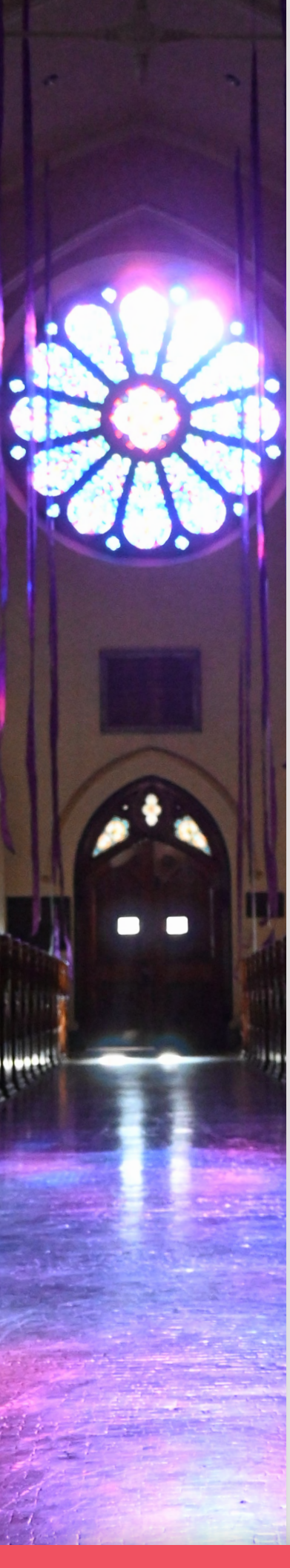
CALLED TOGETHER







SEARCH FOR THE 12TH BISHOP OF THE
EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN NEW YORK



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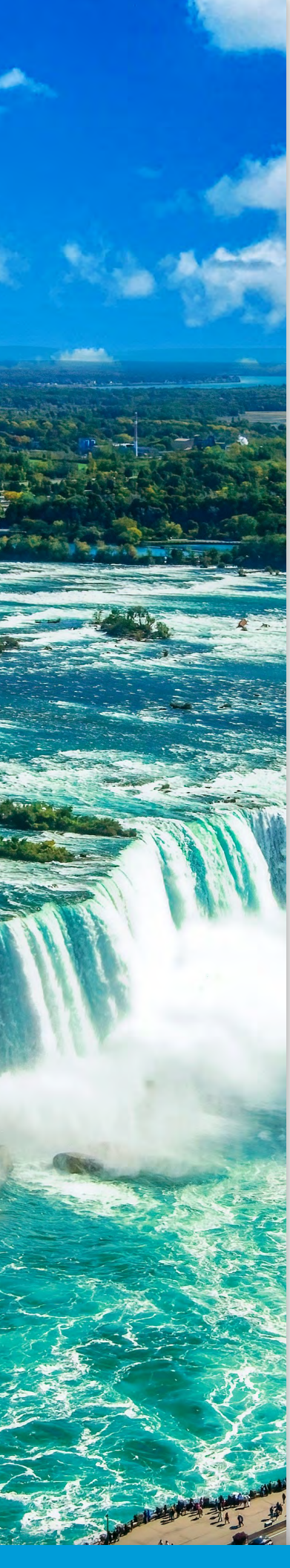
A PRAYER OF MUTUAL DISCERNMENT

God of our hearts, Source and Spirit of our lives, Holy One whose Name is Love: Open our hearts and minds as we together discern the spiritual leadership of the Diocese of Western New York.

Make us attentive listeners – speak with compassion, be receptive to your Spirit, and discern with clarity and courage. Guide our steps with your steady light, that we may walk faithfully toward the future you are preparing for us. Nourish us with your grace and mercy, and fill us with the wisdom of Jesus Christ, our Savior, in whose name we pray. ***Amen.***

Search Committee:

The Rev. Nick Evancho, chair
The Rev. Shawn Clerkin, chaplain
Ms. Cheryl Emerson
Mr. Mark Henger
Ms. Abrielle Monaghan
Mr. Benjamin Phillips
Ms. Sue Sims
The Rev. Tom Tripp
Ms. Lisa Yaggie
The Very Rev. Rebecca Barnes
The Rev. Diane Cox
The Rev. Marc Gutierrez
The Rev. Karen Lawler
Ms. Katelyn Nicoloff
Ms. Deborah Seals
Ms. Amy Swanson
Ms. Susan Woods



AN INVITATION TO DISCERN

We are listening. To one another. To you, our potential nominees. To the Holy Spirit. We initially began our search process like most other dioceses—we built our team, set our calendar, surveyed the diocese, and held listening sessions in every deanery. We heard that we needed to heal and do the work of meeting people where they are rather than asking them to come to us. So with the blessing of the Standing Committee, we put a short pause on our search and spent more focused time in conversation and connection. Over the summer, we hosted dedicated listening sessions with remarkable participation: 49 of our 51 congregations, almost 96 percent.

What emerged was strikingly consistent. We want to be connected. We want to rediscover what it means to be a diocese. We don't need a bishop to rescue us: we are a resilient, gritty people who deeply love our communities and neighbors. We desire a bishop who will walk alongside us, someone who is spiritually grounded and willing to listen, who will connect people, and who will help us imagine what comes next.

We are excited to share who we are. We love to feed people and animals alike, to share meals, and to come together in fellowship. We often use humor to lift our spirits, and we are blessed to live in a stunning part of the world where all four seasons shape our lives and where nature is always close at hand. We know how to drive in the snow, catch fish in the summer, and cheer on our favorite sports teams, professional, collegiate and local high school alike.

We are a diocese willing to take faithful risks when it serves the flourishing of our people. We are not perfect, yet we are committed to walking with Christ on the road toward unity, peace, and justice. We are shaped by our traditions, geography, history, and ministries. As you may notice, water figures prominently on all sides of our diocese. "Where the river flows, everything will live" (Ezekiel 47:9). Come walk with us. Live with us. Lead with us.

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Nicholas Evancho
SEARCH COMMITTEE CHAIR







THE SPIRITUAL LEADER WE SEEK

Like most churches and dioceses, we want a spiritual leader who is prayerful, pastoral, visionary, collaborative, communicative... the list goes on! But as we have listened to one another, we have refined and honed the qualities we seek in our next bishop.

We dream of a spiritual leader who will:

ROOT US IN CHRIST

God and Love are at the heart of our diocese. For that reason, the most essential quality we seek in our next Bishop is deep spiritual maturity—a lived relationship with God that is visible, authentic, and sustaining. We seek a Bishop whose life is rooted in prayer and worship, and whose trust in God shapes not only what they say, but how they lead.

We long for someone to help unify us, who can help us rediscover a shared identity after seasons of disruption, and who can hold together the diversity of our congregations with clarity, humility, and grace. We seek someone who can articulate a compelling, Christ-centered vision that invites us into deeper common purpose. We are drawn to a Bishop who teaches not only by instruction, but also by example—who shows us what it means to live the Gospel in real and tangible ways.

SHOW UP

We want a Bishop who shows up for the fundraiser, the Pride celebration, the community dinner, and the youth rally. We want a Bishop willing to put boots on the ground, going beyond Sunday visitations to get to know our people and communities.

Our clergy long for a Bishop who will walk alongside them as a pastor, mentor, and advocate. Our people seek a leader with emotional intelligence and integrity—someone who can hold complexity with compassion, speak truth with care, and model faithfulness through their own life.



CONNECT US

We hope for a "storyteller-in-chief," someone who can name who we are and where we are going, and who can communicate that vision with clarity, consistency, and hope. Our congregations care deeply about their communities. We seek a Bishop who will notice, celebrate, and amplify the outward-facing ministry already happening across Western New York—from food programs to refugee resettlement, from neighborhood partnerships to acts of quiet compassion.

We want a leader who can help us rediscover ourselves as one diocese—rural and urban, large and small, well-resourced and struggling congregations—and also help us build new and stronger connections between our congregations. We seek a Bishop who is not afraid to ask hard questions, to name what needs healing, and to guide us through difficult but necessary conversations, and when needed, reconciliation.

HELP US IMAGINE WHAT'S NEXT

We are a diocese that knows both possibility and fragility. We need a leader who understands the balance between care and challenge—who knows when to apply gentle pressure and when to remain present long enough for trust to grow. This includes navigating financial realities with honesty and creativity, supporting congregations facing difficult decisions, and helping us reimagine how we steward our buildings, resources, and ministries for the future.

We seek a Bishop who leads with integrity, humility, and sound judgment—someone who understands that no bishop leads alone. Our diocese is rich with gifted leaders, both lay and ordained, who are ready to partner in ministry. We want a Bishop who recognizes and draws upon these gifts, fostering a culture of shared leadership and mutual accountability.



WHO WE ARE – IN THE MOMENT

We are hopeful. And we are tired.

Both things are true.

As we have listened to one another, we have heard both deep commitment and real fatigue among our clergy and lay leaders. Many report a strong sense of purpose and love for their communities, paired with exhaustion, isolation, and a longing for clearer direction and shared support. Clergy consistently name the emotional and spiritual weight of leading through extended seasons of change and uncertainty, even as they remain hopeful about what God may be doing among us.

ABOUT OUR DIOCESE

We are in a season of transition and rebuilding. In 2018, the Diocese of Western New York tried something bold. We entered a partnership with the Diocese of Northwestern Pennsylvania, sharing a bishop—Bishop Sean Rowe—and staff while remaining two dioceses. The partnership did not become permanent. After Bishop Rowe moved into a new position as Presiding Bishop, the two dioceses spent time reflecting on their future. In May 2025, both dioceses voted—by strong majorities—to dissolve the partnership.

We don't see this as a failure. We learned a great deal from one another. We learned what worked, and what didn't. We did not fall into the pattern of what happens so often in the church, continuing down a path without making the hard decision to let something end. Starting something new takes courage; so does ending something that isn't working.

Since the end of the partnership in July 2025, the Diocese has focused on rebuilding relationships and capacity. Even as we are finding our way, our congregations are committed to serving others and sharing the Good News of Christ. Buffalo's nickname—the City of Good Neighbors—is lived out daily across Western New York, and our churches embody this spirit through food pantries, addiction recovery programs, and a wide range of outreach ministries.



ABOUT US

Once a Western New Yorker, always a Western New Yorker. This loyalty marks our diocesan life. We show up. We stay. We care for who and what we love. We honor our history and those who have paved the way before us, from the founders of St. Philip's, Buffalo, one of the first Black Episcopal churches in the country, to St. Paul's Cathedral, a national historic landmark.

Even as our history shapes us, we know the future will look different. We know that some hard discussions will need to take place. We know many of our buildings carry heavy burdens of deferred maintenance. We know our climate can be challenging. We do not despair over this. We love it here.

Most importantly, we love Jesus Christ. We believe that being his hands and feet in this particular place matters deeply—to him and to us. We are committed to living within our means, feeding, housing, and clothing our neighbors, offering traditional liturgy in beautiful spaces while also embracing new liturgies at new times in new settings. In Western New York, we are open to dreaming together and crafting new ways of being the church in our part of the world.



OUR MINISTRIES

Our Diocese has long entrusted ministry to the places where faith is lived most immediately: parishes embedded in their neighborhoods, clergy and lay leaders who know the contours of local need, and communities shaped by relationships rather than programs. What emerges is not a single diocesan initiative replicated across geography, but a constellation of ministries—each distinct, deeply contextual, and profoundly effective.

Across urban centers, small cities, towns, and rural communities, Episcopal congregations respond creatively and faithfully to hunger, displacement, isolation, recovery, racial injustice, and environmental and economic uncertainty. These ministries arise not from a centralized mandate, but from proximity, prayer, and persistence. They are sustained by volunteers, partnerships, and a theological conviction that God is already at work in the lives of our neighbors—and that the Church's task is to show up.

Taken together, these parish-based efforts form a powerful diocesan witness. They feed households and pets, welcome newcomers, support recovery, nurture youth, sustain rural presence, dismantle racism, and strengthen local food systems. While varied in scope and expression, they share a common DNA: dignity, relationship, adaptability, and love of neighbor.

The ministries highlighted in this profile do not represent the totality of the Diocese's work. But the examples reveal the character of a Diocese that trusts its people, honors place-based leadership, and understands ministry as something grown from the ground up—patiently, faithfully, and with enduring impact.



Commission to Dismantle Racism and Discrimination (CDRD)

The Commission works to promote awareness, education, healing, and reconciliation within the Church and the wider community. Our ministries have included Sacred Ground programming, guest speakers and book studies, Racial Healing Circles, and a pilgrimage to Montgomery, Alabama, exploring the history of slavery, civil rights, and mass incarceration. The Commission has supported congregations and vestries in signing Pledges of Faith and Action Against Racial Injustice, facilitated Becoming Beloved Community conversations, and most recently presented—and passed—a convention resolution, "Need for Diverse Staffing at All Levels."

Genesee Regional Initiative *(GRI)*

The Genesee Regional Initiative is a collaborative ministry supporting Episcopal presence across Genesee and Orleans Counties. The Initiative responds to clergy retirements, declining populations, and reduced clergy availability by pooling resources and reimagining shared ministry. In this model, churches with greater resources assist those with less, strengthening regional bonds and sustaining Episcopal witness. The hope is that GRI will continue to serve both as a model for sustainability and a catalyst for renewed ministry in rural communities.

Welcoming the Stranger *(Refugee and Immigrant Ministry)*

Buffalo and Western New York is a national leader in refugee resettlement. Our work has long reflected a deeply rooted commitment to welcoming newcomers fleeing violence, instability, and displacement across the globe. The Diocese has partnered primarily with Journey's End Refugee Services (JERS), historically connected to Episcopal Migration Ministries, while also collaborating as needed with Catholic Charities, Jewish Family Services, the International Institute, and Jericho Road.





Garden of Love & Cathedral Ministries

One of the most important ministries of the cathedral revolves around feeding and clothing the unhoused, many of whom actually live in Cathedral Park or nearby. The Garden of Love ministry provides a bagged lunch and free clothing on Tuesday mornings in the Ministry Center. Six parishes from across the diocese partner with the Cathedral, taking turns providing some elements of the lunches. On Thursday mornings, Cathedral Cares starts with CANA Art Studio open to all; at noon, a special Eucharist geared toward the unhoused is celebrated, followed by distribution of meal kits and other nourishment to a growing number of those who need it most. On remaining weekdays, the Cathedral partners with Feed 716, a local 501c3 to help serve upward of 500 lunches per week.



Youth United in Ministry *(YUM)*

Launched in 2024, Youth United in Ministry represents a renewed commitment to diocesan youth formation. Beginning as a regional collaboration among four parishes, YUM now welcomes youth from across the Diocese, and numerous congregations take part, including St. Matthias', East Aurora; Church of the Advent, Kenmore; Trinity, Lancaster; St. Patrick's, Cheektowaga; St. Martin-in-the-Field, Grand Island; St. Paul's Cathedral, Buffalo; St. Paul's, Harris Hill; St. Luke's, Jamestown; and St. Mark's and All Saints, Buffalo. Monthly gatherings rotate among host churches and include worship, fellowship, and leadership development. YUM also anchors the Diocese's annual summer Church Camp.

Jamestown Farmers Market Food Access Programs *(St. Luke's, Jamestown)*

At St. Luke's, food ministry is about more than hunger relief—it is about equity, community health, and local resilience. Through the Jamestown Farmers Market, a program of the parish, St. Luke's supports fresh food access and farmer sustainability through a weekly downtown market, a Mobile Market serving low-income neighborhoods, a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) program, a Winter Farmers Market hosted in the church's undercroft and a Medicaid-funded medical food box program. This work is woven into parish formation, engaging children, youth, and adults in hands-on food justice and stewardship.



Pete's Pet Food Pantry *(Good Shepherd, Buffalo)*



Founded in 2011 by the Rev. Lucinda "Pete" Dempsey-Sims, Pete's Pet Food Pantry grew from a simple insight: for many people living with poverty or isolation, their pets are family. While serving as a deacon in Buffalo, Pete noticed food pantry guests asking for food for their animals and responded by creating a ministry rooted in dignity, compassion, and stewardship of creation. Now a thriving ministry of the Church of the Good Shepherd and in other congregations across the diocese, the pantries distribute free dog and cat food—no paperwork required—along with occasional supplies such as litter, leashes, and toys.

OTHER MINISTRIES INCLUDE:

The Genesis Center *(South Buffalo):* a diocesan food sustaining ministry serving neighbors in South Buffalo with compassion and dignity. In 2025, the ministry served more than 41,000 meals, gave 5,000-plus families food to prepare 200 complete meals, and gave baby food, diapers, and hygiene supplies to over 200 babies.

Hope Center *(Recovery Ministry):* provides a safe, alcohol-free space for recovery meetings and community support. Hosting primarily 12-Step–based groups, the Center supports spiritual growth rooted in the principles of the Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions. The Hope Center is entirely self-supporting, sustained by donations and the commitment of the recovery community.

Education for Ministry (EfM): two classes meet each week on Zoom, currently drawing from five different parishes across the diocese.

Threads of Hope Linen Pantry *(St. Peter's, Eggertsville):* serves Western New York residents by providing bedding, linens, and essential household items. Operated by parish volunteers, Threads of Hope also distributes seasonal gifts and winter clothing. The pantry receives monetary and material donations from multiple parishes (and denominations) around the diocese.



WE ARE READY TO IMAGINE

Perhaps one of the most exciting aspects of the listening sessions was hearing the dreams that people have for our life together as a diocese. Rooted in the Gospel, our hope is lived out in our liturgy and shared worship, our fellowship with one another, and our service to our neighbors. We have hope because we have experienced leadership and ministry that revives, energizes, and unites. We have hope because we have ideas. *What about...*

A bishop in residence.
What if the bishop spent a week each year living and ministering in every deanery?

Formation across generations.
What if children, teenagers, adults, and elders learned, prayed, served, and played together?

Convention as reunion and revival.
What if convention were something people couldn't wait to attend?

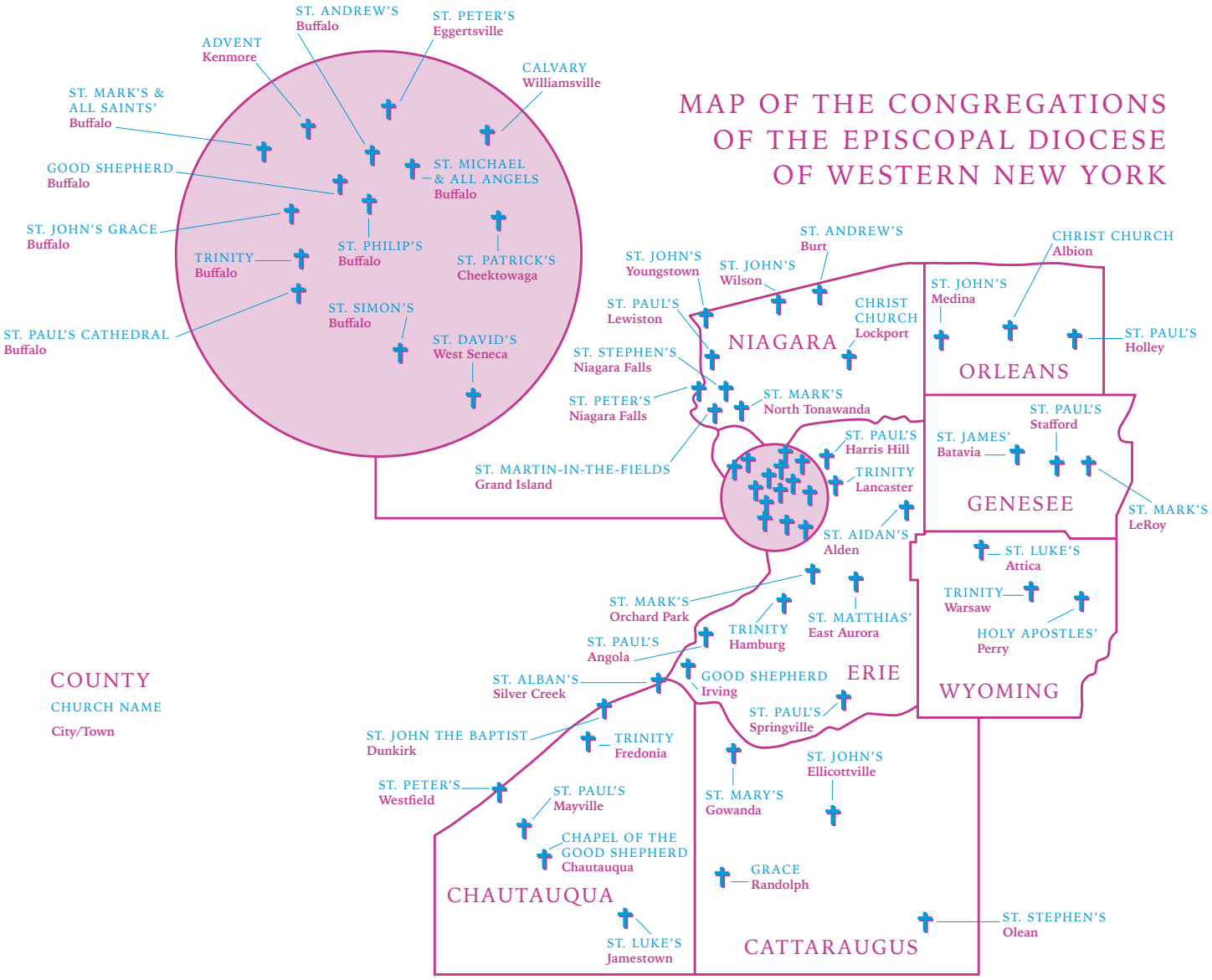
Leaders connected to leaders.
What if wardens, treasurers, and ministry leaders had networks for sharing ideas and solving problems?

Congregations as neighbors.
What if parishes shared resources, relationships, and mission rather than facing every challenge alone?

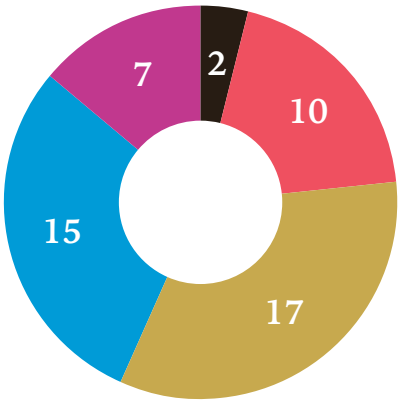
This isn't a set-in-stone checklist for the next bishop.
It is evidence of something more important:
Western New York is ready to imagine again.

THE DIOCESE AT A GLANCE

MAP OF THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN NEW YORK



CONGREGATIONS BY ASA



ACTIVE CLERGY

17 Full Time Priests
(Supporting 29 congregations and Diocesan Office)

23 Part Time, Long Term Supply, Non-Stipendiary Priests
(Supporting 24 congregations)

15 Vocational Deacons
(Supporting 17 congregations and Diocesan Roles)

2 Transitional Deacons

THE DIOCESE BY THE NUMBERS

The Diocese of Western New York encompasses the seven westernmost counties, covering approximately **5,423 square miles**. Within these boundaries, approximately **3,620** communicants worship in **51 congregations**, supported by two seasonal chapels. Diocesan offices are located in Tonawanda, and St. Paul's Cathedral anchors our common life in the heart of downtown Buffalo.

Our congregations are supported by a mix of full-time and part-time clergy. Two of our congregations have an average Sunday attendance of 100-plus, while more than half of our congregations have an ASA of 25 or fewer. Most churches with fewer than 25 ASA are served by part-time clergy, many of whom support more than one congregation.

The Diocese's 2026 operating budget is **$1,101,214**. Personnel expenses total **$589,014** and represent more than half of the overall budget, including salaries, pension contributions, and benefits.

Approximately 67% of the diocesan budget is funded by congregational support. The remaining funding comes from conservative withdrawals from diocesan endowments—both restricted and unrestricted—representing less than 1.4% of principal annually.

The Diocese is blessed with approximately $25 million in endowment funds, divided roughly evenly between restricted and unrestricted assets. The 2027 budget can be found here.

You may also like to view other resources, including:

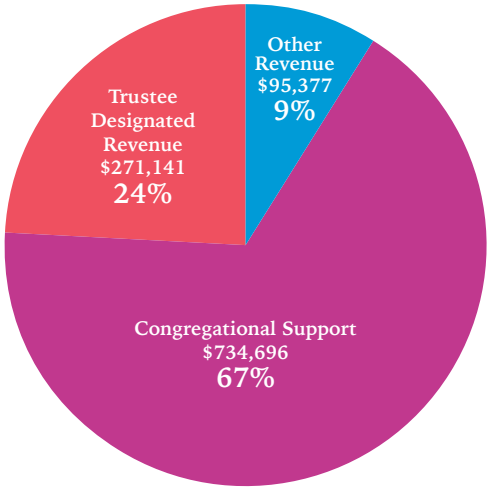
An Evaluation of the Episcopal Partnership

Mini-Profiles of Diocesan Parishes

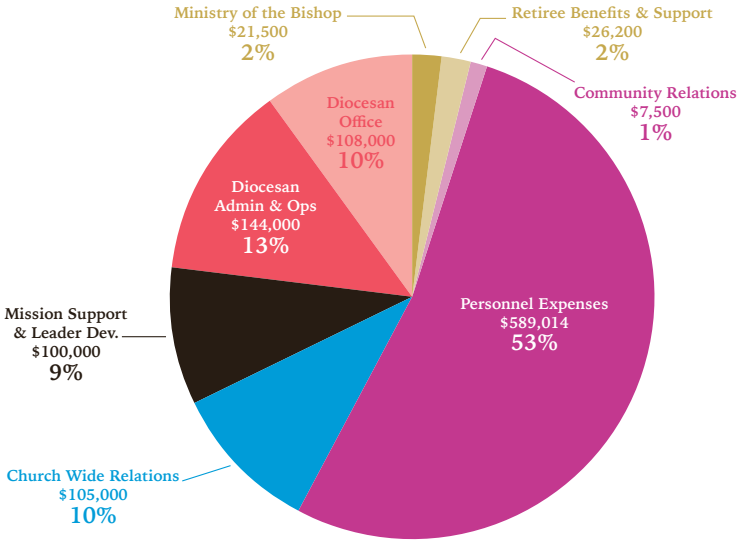
A Brief History of the Diocese of Western New York

Former Bishops of Living Memory

2026 FUNDING SOURCES



2026 OPERATING EXPENSES





BEING A WESTERN NEW YORKER

Western New Yorkers know how to commit. We show up with casseroles, snowblowers, pet food, and an opinion about the Bills. We are proud of this place without pretending it's perfect.

Living in Western New York offers a distinctive quality of life shaped by natural beauty, rich history, and a deep sense of community. One of the region's greatest strengths is its access to remarkable landscapes. The world-famous Niagara Falls is both an international destination and a cherished local treasure, with surrounding parks and trails residents enjoy year-round. Beyond the Falls, the region features rolling farmland, wooded hills, and dramatic gorges, including Letchworth State Park, often called the "Grand Canyon of the East." The Erie Canal, a 200-year-old engineering marvel, winds its way through the diocese and offers opportunities for both history and recreation.

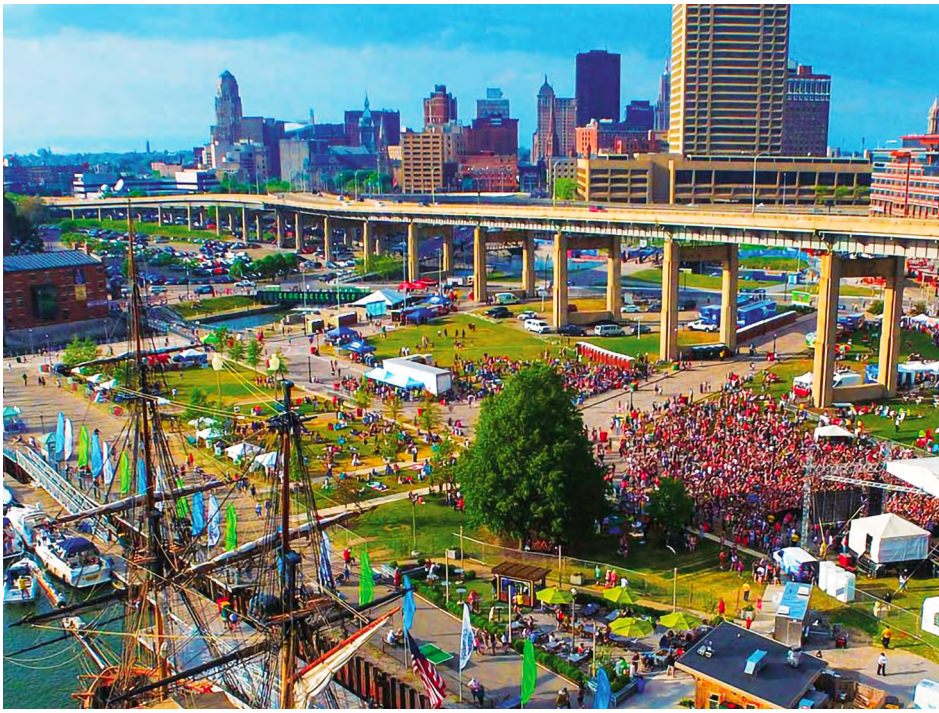
Western New York's cities and towns further enhance its appeal, especially Buffalo, which has experienced a vibrant renaissance. Buffalo's waterfront along Lake Erie has become a hub of activity with parks, bike paths, concerts, and summer festivals. The city is also known for its architectural legacy, including notable Frank Lloyd Wright designs, as well as a flourishing arts, theater, and music scene. Combined with a celebrated local food culture, these features make Buffalo both culturally rich and deeply livable.

Western New York is also home to unique cultural and intellectual destinations, including the renowned Chautauqua Institution. Located near Chautauqua Lake, its summer programs feature lectures by leading thinkers, performances by world-class musicians, and opportunities for lifelong learning, drawing visitors from across the country while remaining a point of pride for residents. This includes the Episcopal Cottage, which welcomes guests and chaplains each season.



Sports play a central role in Western New York's identity, uniting communities with unmatched loyalty and pride. Fans of the Buffalo Bills are known nationwide for their passion, resilience, and camaraderie, turning game days into regional celebrations. The Bills Mafia, as fans are known, brings people together around the world for everything from partying to charitable work. Hockey supporters rally just as fiercely around the Buffalo Sabres, while the Buffalo Bandits consistently draw enthusiastic crowds and championship-level excitement. These teams are more than entertainment—they are shared traditions that bring generations together and strengthen the region's collective spirit.

Affordability is another key advantage of living in Western New York. Housing costs are significantly lower than in many other parts of New York State and the country, allowing residents to enjoy historic homes, walkable neighborhoods, or peaceful rural settings without excessive financial strain. Shorter commutes and less congestion contribute to a balanced lifestyle, giving people more time for family, community involvement, and recreation. Another advantage is the diocese's proximity to Toronto, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh, all within an afternoon drive.



Above all, it is the people who define Western New York. Known for friendliness, generosity, and perseverance, residents foster strong neighborhoods and a genuine sense of belonging. Through changing seasons, shared traditions, and a deep love of place, Western New York offers not just attractions, but a welcoming home where quality of life truly thrives.



NEXT STEPS

AN INVITATION TO DISCERN WITH US

Have someone in mind? Send us their information via our Referral Form (also available by scanning the QR code). Referrals close on Wednesday, November 25, 2026 (11:59 pm EST). ***Please make sure you have discussed this with your referral beforehand.***

Application Deadline: Monday, December 7, 2026 (11:59 p.m. EST)

- **Interviews:** January-February & review of submitted materials
  - First Round: Zoom interviews
  - Second Round: In-person interviews
- **Discernment Retreat with Finalists:** February 19-20, 2027
- **Electing Convention (Buffalo, NY):** May 1, 2027
- **Ordination and Consecration (Buffalo, NY):** September 18, 2027

Eligibility Requirements

The following represent the minimum criteria for nominees for Bishop in the Diocese of Western New York:

- Nominees shall be priests or bishops in good standing in the Episcopal Church.
- Nominees shall give evidence of **active ministry with more than one focus** (e.g., parish leadership, diocesan administration, or engagement in the wider Church).
- Nominees must be able to answer **"heartily and truthfully"** the Examination for the Ordination of a Bishop found in the *Book of Common Prayer* (pp. 517–18).

Commitment to Recovery and Well-Being

- Nominees should demonstrate a strong understanding of the challenges associated with substance use disorders and show a commitment to both **personal and community recovery**. Compassionate leadership in supporting individuals and families affected by addiction is essential.
- If a nominee is in recovery from a substance use disorder or other addictive behavior, the nominee shall have a minimum of **five years of continuous sobriety** and be actively working a program of recovery.

Non-Discrimination

In accordance with the Canons of the Episcopal Church, no person shall be denied access to the discernment process or to any deployment for ministry, lay or ordained, on the basis of race, color, ethnic origin, immigration status, national origin, sex, marital or family status (including pregnancy or childcare plans), sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, disability, or age, except as otherwise provided by these Canons. No right to employment, ordination, call, or election is hereby established.

Application Materials

Applicants must submit the following materials by applying online (you can also access by scanning the QR code):

1. **Completed Application Form**
2. **Cover Letter** describing why you wish to join the Diocese of Western New York in discernment
3. **Current résumé or curriculum vitae**
4. **References - Provide four to five references** who have known you over an extended period and can speak to your pastoral experience, leadership, and suitability for this call. **References should include:**
   - Your current ecclesiastical authority
   - A colleague in ministry
   - At least one lay person
   - A person you supervised
5. **Responses to three essay questions** (maximum 500 words per question)
   - ***Your Spiritual Life:*** Describe your daily prayer life and tell us what sustains you in your relationship with God.

- ***Experience with Reconciliation:*** Discuss ways in which you have had experience dealing with and supporting multicultural populations (race/ethnicity, economic, gender, education, health, housing) and what is the role of the bishop in bringing a diocese together? What gifts do you bring to the ministry of unity?
- ***Leadership:*** Tell us about your vision and plan for what a successful first year as our bishop would look like to you.

6. **Current Office for Transition Ministry (OTM) Profile *(the Vocation Hub)***
7. **Signed Consent and Authorization Agreement**

Please direct any questions to wnybishopsearch@gmail.com

Compensation and Benefits

The Diocese of Western New York offers a comprehensive and competitive compensation and benefits package commensurate with the responsibilities of episcopal leadership.

Compensation is budgeted at $175,000, inclusive of cash compensation, housing allowance, and SECA reimbursement, structured in accordance with Episcopal Church and IRS guidelines.



In addition, the diocese provides:

- Pension benefits through the Church Pension Fund
- Family health insurance coverage, including medical, dental, and vision benefits
- Coverage of ministry-related expenses, including transportation, communication (such as cell phone), and other expenses required for the faithful exercise of episcopal ministry
- Continuing education, retreat, and professional development support, consistent with Church norms

Final details of compensation and benefits will be reviewed with the bishop-elect and structured in consultation with the Standing Committee and diocesan leadership.

SAVING YOU A SEAT



THE EPISCOPAL DIOCESE OF WESTERN NEW YORK