



**Dancing into a New Season of Ministry
Growing Community to Seed God's Mission**

The 51st Annual Convention

Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota

October 8 & 9, 2021

The Radisson Hotel in downtown Bismarck

Convention Resolution on the Dissolution of Saints Mary and Mark, Oakes

October 9, 2021

Whereas the members of Saint Mark's in Oakes and Saint Mary's in rural Guelph and the union of the two into Saints Mary and Mark in Oakes have faithfully continued to minister to the spiritual needs of the congregations and their communities through worship, fellowship, and outreach for well over a century, keeping alive the faith and legacy of the hardy pioneers who established these congregations; and

Whereas the church building in Oakes was sold in 2018, and the congregation has not come together for worship, fellowship, or outreach regularly since that time, and the members are attending other churches; and

Whereas the elected leadership and a majority of remaining members of Saints Mary and Mark, grieving the loss of their building and community and seeking to move on with their lives as part of new spiritual communities, have requested the dissolution of the congregation; and

Whereas the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota will miss the fellowship and counsel of these long-time congregations, and we join the remaining members in mourning that loss even as we look to the future with hope and faith; therefore

Be it resolved that this Convention dissolves the congregation of Saints Mary and Mark, at the recommendation of the bishop, with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee, in accordance with the provisions of Canon 6, Section 6, of the Canons of the Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota.



The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota
3600 25th Street South • Fargo, North Dakota 58104
Telephone (701) 235-6688
Office of the Bishop

September 9, 2021

Dear clergy and lay delegates to the 2021 Diocesan Convention:

In accordance with the provisions of our Diocesan Canons (Canon 6. Sec. 6) I am informing you of my intention to recommend the dissolution of St. Mary and St. Mark, Oakes, at our upcoming Diocesan Convention, October 8-9, 2021. I have attached a copy of the pertinent Canon. I note that while the Canon seems to suggest that this action is taken at the bishop's initiative, the fact of the matter in this case is that the request for dissolution comes from the remaining members of the congregation following a period of discernment that included the Bishop, the Rev. Bart Davis (who has been providing occasional clergy services for the past several years) and recent conversations with our new Diocesan Minister, the Rev. Steve Godfrey.

A copy of the August 25, 2021, letter from the congregation is attached, which describes the conclusion of their discernment. This letter describes when the building was sold and the impact on the community following the death of their priest. It also describes how continuing members are meeting their spiritual needs through their association with other faith communities. On May 21, 2021, I paid a pastoral visit with these remaining members and celebrated the Eucharist in one of their homes. I am grateful for that opportunity and the chance to hear firsthand the story of their life together as a community of faith. Of historical note, the first mention of Oakes in the Wilkins's book, *God Giveth the Increase*, is of the first services held in Oakes on May 11, 1904, followed by the organization of St. Mark's Mission by Bishop Mann in 1912.

As noted in Canon 6, *"a two-thirds vote of the Lay delegates and Members of the Clergy entitled to a seat and vote, and present at the meeting of the Annual Convention, is required to dissolve a Congregation."* The Standing Committee has been advised of this request for dissolution and has given its consent. While there is a degree of sadness whenever a congregation is dissolved, in my judgement this is an appropriate measure and one that I recommend to the Convention. We will post the actual resolution in the next few days. This notice is so that the resolution will comply with the canonical provision that clergy and lay delegates are duly informed of my intention at least 30 days in advance of the Convention.

Faithfully yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Thomas C. Ely".

The Right Rev. Thomas C. Ely

Aug. 25, 2021

The Right Reverend Thomas C. Ely Bishop of North Dakota,

It is with heavy hearts that the Congregation of St Mary and St Mark Episcopal Church of Oakes ND are writing you with our request to dissolve the congregation. As a congregation we have been mourning the death of our church for years. In 2018 the congregation sold the building and went to worship in homes. On November 18th the congregation lost our beloved priest Doyle Burkhardt when he passed away. Our congregation is currently scattered around the area with many having to travel over an hour to get to the Oakes community. As a congregation each individual member has been meeting their spiritual needs from other places of worship.

Please let Anne Waite know that you have received our request to dissolve the congregation her contact information is below.

Sincerely,

St Mary and St Mark Episcopal Church
Linda Hokana (Senior Warden) mil2hok@drtel.net
Ella Waite (Treasurer)
Deb Peters (Clerk)

Anne & David Waite
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Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota Diocesan Canons

Canon 6. Section 6. The Bishop, with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee, may dissolve a Congregation in the following manner:

- (a) When the Bishop has determined that a Congregation has failed to conform to its obligations and responsibilities as provided by the Constitution and Canons of The Episcopal Church and of the Diocese, the Bishop, with the advice and consent of the Standing Committee, recommends to the next Annual Convention that the Congregation be dissolved.
- (b) A full report of the matter, together with the Bishop's recommendation, is made in writing and provided by the Bishop to the Member of the Clergy in Charge and Vestry of the Congregation and the delegates to the Convention and the Members of the Clergy canonically resident and in good standing in the Diocese at least thirty days prior to the time set for the Annual Convention.
- (c) The Member of the Clergy in Charge, the Vestry, and any member of the Congregation are given an opportunity to respond to the Bishop's recommendation and report at the Annual Convention.
- (d) A two-thirds vote of the Lay delegates and Members of the Clergy entitled to a seat and vote, and present at the meeting of the Annual Convention, is required to dissolve a Congregation.

Section 7. Upon dissolution of a Congregation, the title to all property, real and personal, is conveyed, transferred and assigned to The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota, and such title is conveyed, transferred, assigned to and vested in The Episcopal Diocese of North Dakota upon the execution by the Bishop of a certificate of dissolution of the Congregation following the procedures set forth in Section 6 of this Canon.