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**Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ), Timeline and Webinar Dates**

**Merger**

1. *Will EPA and GNJ be merging?*

No. This is not a plan of merger but affiliation.

1. *What is the difference between affiliation and merger?*

In their affiliation, EPA and GNJ will remain distinct conferences with their own tax exempt and incorporation status. A merger is where two entities become one organization and merge all functions together. Most functions between the two conferences will remain distinct and separate, such as pension programs, finances, health insurance programs and property insurance programs. Affiliations ask, “What can we do better together for the mission?”

1. *Is a merger anticipated in the future?*

No. This is not a step toward merger. It is aligning certain ministry functions so that the mission thrives.

**Clergy Appointments**

1. *If the cabinets of EPA and GNJ will be working together, will they be appointing clergy across conference boundaries?*

Rarely, and the pastor must agree to be appointed across conference boundaries. From time-to-time, clergy ask to be appointed in another conference because of family or other needs or an interest in a particular ministry. The superintendents may also initiate such an appointment when there is a strategic opportunity.

1. *If a clergy person is appointed across conference boundaries, does the clergy person have to become a member of the other conference?*

No. They continue their membership in the same conference. Clergy must request to join another conference.

1. *Will each conference be able to see each other’s appointments?*

Yes. Open churches and new appointments will be listed on both EPA and GNJ websites, and clergy may communicate interest in any of the appointments.

**Assistant to the Bishop**

1. *Will there be two assistants to the bishop, and will they work with both conferences?*

Yes. Dawn Taylor-Storm will oversee the affiliation of EPA and GNJ and work to align each region with resourcing leaders and congregations, as well as lead particular ministries shared by both EPA and GNJ. Nicola Milligan will oversee conflict resolution, episcopal office administration and appointment process management.

**Leadership Development**

1. *Will leadership development opportunities be reported in both EPA and GNJ?*

Yes, and lay and clergy leaders will have the opportunity to sign up for workshops in either conference.

1. *Will any leadership programs be combined?*

Possibly. For example, if there are only a few clergy available for the Residence in Ministry (RIM), there may be one RIM offering. Certified Lay Ministry, Christ Servant Ministry and Local Pastors School trainings and other programs may fall into this category as well.

**Ending the Sin of Racism**

1. *How will ending the sin of racism be affiliated?*

Both EPA and GNJ have had important anti-racism initiatives. Today, the focus is on education and action, including congregational plans to end the sin of racism in the church and community. Both EPA and GNJ will continue their present strategies and leadership, but they will be able to participate in one another’s training and planning efforts.

**Camping and Youth**

1. *Will camp & retreat ministry and youth ministry opportunities be available for EPA and GNJ youth?*

Yes, IGNITE youth conferencing will continue to be offered and will be open to both GNJ and EPA. In addition, camping and retreat ministry opportunities will be provided to both conferences, including confirmation camp, summer programming and year-long retreat opportunities.

**Communications**

1. *If there is one communications team between both conferences, to whom do I send information?*

All communication material is to be sent to [communications@epaumc.church](mailto:communications@epaumc.church) or [communications@gnjumc.org](mailto:communications@gnjumc.org). The material will all go to the same person who shares the information across the team.

1. *What happened to the communication staff that worked for my conference?*

They continue to work with the team. The team includes:

* Director of Communications – James Lee
* Editorial Manager – John Coleman
* Video Producer – Corbin Payne
* Communications Strategist - Laura Canzonier
* Graphic Designer - Lindsey Cotman
* IT and Web Specialist – David Beverly

3. *Will there be one communication media source for both conferences?*

No, there will be the present communications media for both EPA and GNJ:  dual websites, newsletter and newspapers. This question may be revisited in the future.

**Finances**

1. *Will this increase apportionments?*

No. Apportionment rates will not increase because of affiliation.

1. *Will there be cost savings?*

Not initially, but it is anticipated that better efficiencies will be created, and cost sharing may save money. Any savings will be invested in the mission and in our congregations.

1. *Will there be one budget?*

No, each conference will maintain its own budget, finances and apportionment systems.

1. *Will there be one annual conference session?*

No, each conference will continue its own annual conference and conduct the business of annual conference separately.

**Staffing**

1. *How will staffing work if there is joint resourcing and programs?*

There is still more work to be done on staffing and reporting. As listed above, the combined communications staffing is one model, with one director and staff serving both conferences in their ministry area of expertise.

1. *Will any staff be let go?*

No, staff will continue in their roles and be organized into an EPA/GNJ team.

**Will Affiliation Work?**

1. *How will we know if affiliation is working?*

Affiliations have been working in nonprofit organizations, hospitals, corporations and higher education. They have been successful in helping their mission thrive and creating efficiencies and better quality. This is our aim as well; to help the mission thrive and increase efficiencies and quality. This work will begin as an 18-month pilot effort. At the end of 18 months, it will be evaluated by each conference, with input from lay and congregational leaders across both EPA and GNJ. We will measure:

·         Are we growing more leaders and improving the abilities of leadership? Measured by an increase in the number of leaders participating in leadership development programs and the number of clergy available for appointments.

·         Are we seeing an increase in the number and quality of vital mission congregations? Measured by the number of vital congregations–that is, increases in worship attendance, small groups, new disciples, disciples engaged in community mission, and giving.

·         Is the administration of the affiliated areas being done with excellence? Measured through surveys of clergy and lay leadership.

·         Are we able to do more without increasing costs to congregations? Measured by maintaining the percent of the budget apportioned to congregations.

1. *Who has reviewed the affiliation work and who will continue to review the work?*

Human resources, CFA, Connectional Table and Extended Cabinets of both conferences have reviewed the initial affiliations, communications, regionalization and training. They will continue to monitor the work and progress.

The cabinets began having retreats, joint training and appointment procedure alignments more than six months ago. The cabinets will meet together starting January 1, 2023, for appointment-making.

1. *What happens if affiliation does not work, or everything does not go as planned?*

There will be regular reports to CFA and the Connectional Table and surveys of leaders in both EPA and GNJ. Adjustments will be made along the way. If it is not producing the desired results after 18 months, because the present structures, budgets, finances and staffing will be maintained in both EPA and GNJ, all or some of the affiliations can be ended without significant disruption to either EPA or GNJ.

**What can lay and clergy leadership do to help the mission and affiliation thrive for Christ and the Church?**

The leadership of EPA and GNJ recognize the pandemic has impacted congregations, its mission, and clergy and lay leadership. The staff of EPA and GNJ want to do all we can to support you through this season.

We also recognize there will be aspects of affiliation that will not go as planned or as designed.  We pledge to continue to improve. Here are some things you can do to  be helpful.

* Pray for the leadership and staff of both EPA and GNJ during this time. They are also praying for you.
* Take time to complete the surveys. Generally, they will occur in the fall and spring. Your feedback helps us to improve.
* Let us manage each other up. Instead of talking down the conference or staff, recognize the things that are going well and focus on the positive. We have a better chance of improving through positive reinforcement than through negativity. Also, know that staff continue to stamp out talking negatively about congregations and clergy. It is not of God.
* If you have experience with affiliations, please share with us what you learned, what cautions to take and how to do this well.
* Engage. Give the affiliation ministries a chance, even 2nd and 3rd chances, by participating in the various resourcing activities offered.

**What does success look like?**

A seamless shift to affiliated ministries, so that EPA and GNJ laity and clergy hardly realize what conference person is doing the work but appreciate that their experiences are positive and rewarding.

**Timeline**

* Appointment of Dawn Taylor-Storm as Assistant to Bishop – December 1, 2022
* Regionalization – January 1, 2023
* Affiliation in Appointments – January 1, 2023
* Affiliation in Leadership Development – April 1, 2023
* Affiliation in Connectional Ministries & Pathways:
  + Youth Ministries– March 1, 2023
  + Camping & Retreats– March 1, 2023
  + Urban Ministries – May 1, 2023
  + Hope and Wholeness Centers – May 1, 2023
  + Ending the Sin of Racism – May 1, 2023
  + Racial-Ethnic Ministries – May 1, 2023
* Affiliation in Communications – December 1, 2022
* Affiliation in Databases – Exploration by January 15 and implementation June 1, 2023
* Affiliation in Conflict Resolution – Already occurring
* Project Management Procedures – May 1, 2023

**Webinars for Further Clarification and to Answer Questions**

The following link will be used for each session: [https://gnjumc.zoom.us/j/81569870494](https://nam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Furldefense.com%2Fv3%2F__https%3A%2F%2Fnam12.safelinks.protection.outlook.com%2F%3Furl%3Dhttps*3A*2F*2Fgnjumc.zoom.us*2Fj*2F81569870494%26data%3D05*7C01*7Clcotman*40epaumc.church*7C4600b65f70f54151274908dacc27e596*7C440ab861ee6e47fab6e9bcf70a2c8474*7C1*7C0*7C638046768978429959*7CUnknown*7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0*3D*7C3000*7C*7C*7C%26sdata%3Dz44bpcFQ1WzHL5tOf3lmL8bGfLBDYfpvBD5H2YMg8b8*3D%26reserved%3D0__%3BJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUlJSUl!!LrwPMg!8uUSp2Of7tiqLkSmj_M-oeCxiE12RuUtDkc-cVCKQWxxmQjEYSm0BKs7fZPOqOue4ltUZrfg0PWioORe5Ms%24&data=05%7C01%7Clcotman%40epaumc.church%7Cc8448c5e4e034a7b721508dacc97831f%7C440ab861ee6e47fab6e9bcf70a2c8474%7C1%7C0%7C638047248391099400%7CUnknown%7CTWFpbGZsb3d8eyJWIjoiMC4wLjAwMDAiLCJQIjoiV2luMzIiLCJBTiI6Ik1haWwiLCJXVCI6Mn0%3D%7C3000%7C%7C%7C&sdata=9MHIZ4Ex%2FE8k2IW9mBCAhqDqTn18QyBxeY8B6kp4%2BEM%3D&reserved=0)

* Wednesday, December 7, 9:30 AM to 10:15 AM
* Thursday, December 8, 3:00 PM to 3:45 PM
* Thursday, December 8, 7:00 PM to 7:45 PM