



For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Guide for *Listening Circles*
Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria
Diocesan Phase 2021-2023



How to use this guide

This guide is designed to be a comprehensive resource for priests, parish staff, and lay leaders who will be helping to lead the synodal process at the local level. It has four parts:

1. An overview with frequently asked questions
2. Diocesan phase of the Synod – with information about the Listening Circle process
3. Listening Circle facilitator's package
4. Listening Circle participant's package

It is essential to understand that the Synod is not a one-time process, but a way of being the Church. Pope Francis has exhorted us to implement synodality throughout everything we do. We encourage you to think about how staff meetings, finance council gatherings, youth ministry events, sacramental preparation, and liturgical celebrations, all can reflect a spirit and process of synodality.



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Overview

Thank you very much for agreeing to act as a facilitator for the Diocesan Phase of the Synod convoked by Pope Francis, *For a Synodal Church: Communion-Participation-Mission*. Your role is essential to the Diocesan Phase called for by the Holy Father and the Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops in Rome.

We gratefully acknowledge that this *Facilitator's Guide*, originally designed by the Archdiocese of Grouard-McLennan, has been adapted (with permission) for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria. The guide provides you with information about the Synod, the Diocesan Phase, and the process for the collection of input from our Diocese.

What is a Synod?

A synod is a listening and discernment process. The word synod is derived from an ancient Greek term that means “coming together” or “travelling together.”

What do we mean by a “Synodal Church”?

The document from the Synod of Bishops explains that synodality is a path, a journey. In a Synodal Church, we journey together. The document goes on to say that this “journeying together” will help the Church – that is, us – learn which processes can help us live in Communion, achieve full Participation, and open up to our Mission as Church.

What is a Synod on Synodality?

As the global Catholic community sets on along the path to building a more “synodal” church, we explore the origin and meaning of this term, drawn from the pattern of discernment and decision-making from the earliest Christian tradition.

Pope Francis is inviting Catholics everywhere to re-learn the ways of being Church together, to create spaces of encounter and mutual listening that incorporate the gifts of all the baptized as we face the many challenges of renewing the life of the Church for our time.

[Synod.va](https://www.synod.va) is the official Synod website, where there is more information.

Why are we doing this?

It is our response to the call of the Holy Father, Pope Francis.

We want to begin renewing our local Church, in the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria, with an examination of how we are and how we are not, but could be, “journeying together”.



How is the Diocese doing this?

All of us can take time to reflect on the “fundamental questions” posed by the [Synod of Bishops](#):

Fundamental Questions

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together". How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church, or community? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow in our "journeying together"?

Many of us will bring our reflections to one of the *Listening Circles* in our parish, community groups, or online via Zoom.

At the *Listening Circles*, we will listen to one another as we share our experiences of journeying together in our churches within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria. As we listen, we will be invited to discern the Holy Spirit, in our individual and collective responses and discussions.

We will collect those expressions of experience, without forming any conclusions about them, and forward them to the Diocesan Synod Team synod@rcdvictoria.org.

We will begin to live our discernment of journeying together to better achieve “Communion-Participation-Mission” in our Diocese and its parishes.

What are we not doing?

We are not identifying and solving problems, issues, or concerns.

We are not focusing on drawing conclusions from the experiences we reflect on and learn about.

Who is included in the Listening Circles?

In a word...everyone! Pope Francis is asking that all baptized Christians participate in this synod. The Holy Father has emphasized that this process must not be solely for bishops, priests, or parish councils. We are being asked to go out of our way to involve individuals and groups whose voices are not always present at the highest levels of our Church—particularly young people, women, ethnic minorities, immigrants, and historically marginalized groups.

Furthermore, the Pope is urging us to seek out the perspective of Christians from other denominations, believers from other faith traditions, and those who have no religious affiliation.

Finally, in a particular way, it is important that the Church listens to those who were raised in the Christian faith, but who no longer practice or have felt pushed away. Everyone is guaranteed a seat at the table, and, in many cases, that will require us moving the table outside of the church building to where people are.



How are we going to get people to attend Listening Circles?

We want priests, parish leaders, facilitators, and other people to make personal invitations to people to participate. The sessions will be offered in small group sessions (online and face-to-face), and via a response form for those who cannot participate.

Promote the *Listening Circles* in the parish bulletin, on parish and Diocesan websites, through social media channels, in the local Catholic school(s), and all around the community.

How are we going to collect input?

The principal method of collecting input is at the *Listening Circles*, either in-person or online via Zoom. The secondary method is through the response form. For those people in your community circles who are shut-in, and/or do not have access to technology, please consider reaching out to them via telephone or in person, to listen and record their individual responses.

At the *Listening Circles*, the facilitators/notetakers make a record of what participants say and hear. Please note, it is important that all comments, including refusal to answer questions, or participate, are noted. These notes can be sent with the input collected at the *Listening Circles*.

If people prefer to make an individual submission, they may complete the response form located at www.rcdvictoria.org/synod, or submit information by mail, phone, fax or email:

Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria
1-4044 Nelthorpe Street,
Victoria BC V8X 2A1
Tel: 250-479-1331
Fax: 250-479-5423
synod@rcdvictoria.org

What happens to the input collected at Listening Circles?

The Diocesan Synod Team will analyze and synthesize the input into a ten-page document.

The Diocesan Synod Team will forward the final document to its counterpart at the Assembly of Western Catholic Bishops, who will combine it with all the documents from all western Canadian dioceses.

The combined document will be incorporated into one document for all of Canada.

The Canadian document will be sent to the Secretariat for the Synod of Bishops to be used in preparatory material for Synod 2023.

The final synthesis document will also be shared with the people of the Diocese.



Diocesan Phase of Synod 2021-2023

Listening Circles

Listening Circles have two parts:

Part One: Answering the fundamental questions: through our own experiences.

Part Two: Reflecting on what we heard from peoples' stories/experiences.

Some of the basics:

Each session is no longer than two hours.

Each session has no more than 24 people, in some cases we may have a larger session for a specific area (i.e., Victoria).

Divide into small groups of no more than six people (Parts 1 and 2).

Work to have each circle made up of diverse people from all walks of life.

As much as possible, provide the Fundamental Questions and the Participants' Information Sheet to participants in advance of the gathering. These will be available for download at www.rcdvictoria.org/synod.

Use any suitable venue, including but not limited to the parish church.

Schedule for any appropriate time of day.

Have as many listening circle sessions to ensure as many people as possible are included in sharing about our "journey together".

Listening Circles will begin in mid-February and will be completed by the middle of April 2022. Facilitators/notetakers submit the *Listening Circle* gathering input to the Diocesan Synod Team at synod@rcdvictoria.org within five days.

Identifying and Inviting Participants

It is very important that our *Listening Circles* are truly experiences of "journeying together". We recommend that facilitators spend time in prayerful discernment of how best to bring people together in these *Listening Circles*.

We suggest whenever possible to:

Directly engage parish councils, organizations, and associations by inviting them to register for a *Listening Circle* in person or online session.

Ensure that the *Listening Circles* reflect the diversity of the parish and community population.

Scheduling *Listening Circles* at different times to accommodate people's various schedules: mornings, afternoons, evenings and/or weekends, if possible.



Holding *Listening Circles* in a variety of ways, in addition to the parish, online, face-to-face, and via telephone.

Roles and Responsibilities

Listening Circle Facilitator

All *Listening Circle* will be led by a designated facilitator who will help to guide conversation, keep track of time, and promote an experience of prayer and discernment. The Synod Committee has designated facilitators, and parishes can assign one from their community. If you need any help orienting the facilitator, contact the Diocesan office.

Facilitators are not participants in a *Listening Circle*. The facilitator's role is to:

Keep the participants focused on the two purposes of the *Listening Circle*:

1. Part One: Answering the fundamental questions: through our own experiences.
2. Part Two: Reflecting on what we heard from peoples' stories, while answering the fundamental questions.

Listening Circle Notetaker

A key element of the Synodal process is recording what is shared during *Listening Circles*, so that information can be collected and organized into a report prepared at the Diocesan level. The

Listening Circle notetaker should be an attentive listener, capable of quickly and accurately transcribing remarks and themes that emerge. Following the *Listening Circle* session, the notetaker should prepare a summary report that will be sent to the Diocesan office Synod Steering Committee Team.

We suggest that the notetaker is in addition to the facilitator, although we know that in some cases that will not be practical.

The notetakers role is to:

- Transcribe what is said by the participants in the Listening Circles, and not to draw any conclusions.
- Record verbatim what people say, without judging the comments.
- Summarize and submit the notes to the Diocesan Synod Team synod@rcdvictoria.org

Here are some suggestions to help you effectively and respectfully carry out your role:

- For smaller groups (6 people) have one facilitator and one notetaker.
- In larger groups, have at least two facilitators for the main session. Each breakout group/room should have a facilitator to ensure discussions stay focused, and a notetaker to capture the conversation(s).

Listening Circle Timekeeper

The facilitator should assign a member of each small group to act as timekeeper.

The timekeeper's job is to keep each participant to the five-minute speaking time.



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Listening Circle Facilitator's Package



Listening Circles – Detailed Facilitator’s Lesson Plan (120 minutes max)

Listening Circles goals:

1. To listen to one another as we share our experiences of journeying together in our churches within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria.
2. To discern the Holy Spirit, in our individual and collective responses and discussions.
3. To collect those expressions of experience, without forming any conclusions about them, and forward them to the Diocesan Synod Team.
4. To live our discernment of journeying together to better achieve “Communion-Participation-Mission” in our Diocese and its parishes.

Introduction (10 minutes)

Welcome everyone. Provide a territorial acknowledgement.

Introduce the facilitators, notetakers, and explain what our roles are. Invite participants to introduce themselves.

Select an opening prayer, or appropriate readings. Invite everyone to listen to the prayer and reflect on it.

Show Bishop Gary’s Synod Introduction video

Provide to the participants notepaper/flipchart/whiteboard, and pens/pencils.

Overview of the Synod process (20 minutes)

Summarize the following in your own words:

1. What is a Synod?
2. What do we mean by a “Synodal Church”?
3. What is a Synod on Synodality?
4. Why are we doing this?
5. How is the Diocese doing this?
6. What are we not doing?
7. Who is included in the *Listening Circles*?
8. How are we going to get people to attend *Listening Circles*?
9. How are we going to collect input?
10. What happens to the input collected at *Listening Circles*?

These two videos explain the Synod very well – you may choose to show one or both of them:

1. Rahai – Synod on Synodality – All You Need to Know (through Sketches and Illustration (6:24 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5lAktuejwo>

2. Fr. Timothy Radcliffe: Synodality makes us ‘dare to listen’ (2:57 min) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGrc72hcQIE&list=PLYYUFA7x82GVHvKa7g3qixe3uyr0IJ5U7&index=7&t=4s>



Keep in mind that the sharing of experiences may bring to light wounds and difficult emotions in participants. State that we recognize that during the Listening Circle there may be sharing of experiences that cause strong emotions within you. Encourage participants to please reach out to one of these organizations or a trusted individual in your life to help you come to peace and healing.

Describe the *Listening Circle* program (5 minutes)

Review the Synod Listening Circles program format:

1. Part one: In small groups, we will spend some time sharing our reflections on the two fundamental questions.
2. Part two: After everyone has spoken, then we will take time respond to what was heard. It is in our responses, both as we are listening and as we share them with each other, that we want to discern the movements of the Holy Spirit.

Explain that a third part will be completed by the Synod team after they have received all of the information from the Listening Circles. The report will be summarized and eventually sent into the universal Church. That is, we will be sending our input to Pope Francis and the Synod of Bishops. They will use the input from dioceses around the world as the basis for the 2023 Synod in Rome.

There are two options for conducting Listening Circles:

1. In small groups (1 facilitator per group)

- 1.1. Form groups, no bigger than 6 people. Use any technique that you like: people count off, the facilitator selects groups, etc.
- 1.2. Assign a facilitator to each small group.
- 1.3. Ask each small group for a timekeeper volunteer, to keep track of the minute per person time allotment.
- 1.4. Optional, to have a notetaker to record notes. Use the form on page 19 or this eForm <https://forms.gle/AcmB1vw8FUgJHMHZ8>.

2. Option two: Remain as a large group (with 1-2 Facilitators)

- 2.1. Appoint at least one notetaker to take notes. Use the form on page 19 or this eForm <https://forms.gle/AcmB1vw8FUgJHMHZ8>.
- 2.2. Appoint a timekeeper, that person will let each speaker know when the five minutes are coming up.

Present the Ground rules for conversations (5 minutes)

As facilitator, you will be circulating to observe and coach the small groups, as needed.

- Explain to the group(s) that this is all about listening. It is not a discussion, a debate, or a conversation. At every stage, when one person is speaking, everyone else is listening.
- Encourage people to ask questions for clarification and to seek understanding.

Describe the ground rules for conversations:

- We are here to share our experiences
- We will each take it in turn to share our experiences



- We will use “I” statements when sharing experiences
- We will listen to each person share those experiences
- We will use “I” statements when responding to the experiences of others
- We will not discuss or debate what we hear, but will ask questions to clarify what we hear
- We will not seek to solve problems or come to conclusions but will put such items in the “Parking Lot” for follow up as needed
- We each have five minutes to speak when we share our experiences and responses

Note:

As facilitator, you will be circulating to observe and coach the small groups, as needed.

Monitor the small groups to:

- ***Provide guidance if there is confusion or hesitation***
- ***Ensure everyone has the opportunity to speak within the (5 minute) time limit***
- ***Help with note taking if there are difficulties***
- ***Intervene if there are lengthy discussions, dialogues, and/or debates***
- ***Explain that if anyone says that they cannot abide by the ground rules, use the sidebar strategy for those people and let the remaining group members continue with the process***

Part One: Answering the fundamental questions: through our own experiences (40 minutes)

Introduce the two fundamental questions:

1. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”. How is this “journeying together” happening today in your particular Church, or community?
2. What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow in our “journeying together”?

Say “let us take a couple of minutes in silent prayer to reflect on what those questions mean to each one of us”.

Invite participants to share their stories, keeping to the five minutes per person allotment.

Encourage others to listen and not talk or ask questions.

Explain to the group(s) that this is all about listening. It is not a discussion, a debate, or a conversation. At every stage, when one person is speaking, everyone else is listening.

Encourage people to ask questions for clarification and to seek understanding.

Note:

If people are struggling with the questions, you may need to prompt with As you reflect on “journeying together”:

- ***What are the ways you feel you are experiencing this?***
- ***Are there ways you wish you could experience it?***
- ***Can you think of anything that prevents you from experiencing it?***
- ***What comes to mind when you envision ways you would like to be more engaged in ‘journeying together’***



Part two: Reflecting on what we heard from peoples' stories/experiences (15 minutes)

Introduce part two by offering a few minutes of silent prayer to reflect on what we have heard from Part One.

Introduce part two by saying, "Having listened to everyone, what stirred in you when listening to others' experiences?"

Note:

If people are struggling offer these prompts:

- ***What joys does reflecting on 'journeying together' evoke for you?***
- ***What sorrows does reflecting on 'journeying together' evoke for you?***
- ***What insights do these joys and sorrows bring up for you?***
- ***These insights might relate to how you envision being part of 'journeying together' in new or expanded ways.***

Summary (15 minutes)

Summarize with a wrap up by:

Showing your notes that you took and ask if they reflect the conversations.

State that the group needs to be satisfied that the input is accurate and remind them that the notes will be going to the Synod Diocesan Team (without names as to who said what).

Ask if there is anything that you would like to change or add before we conclude?

Note:

If you were in breakout rooms, come together as a large group.

Wrap-up (10 minutes)

Express your gratitude to the group and invite them to close with a prayer.

Thank everyone for their hard work today. Remind them about the resource list that is available.

State that you will be gathering all the notes and sending them to the Synod Diocesan Team.

Close with the Synod prayer - *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*.

Gather and forward the input

Gather all the notes and summarize them, you can scan or photograph the notes to send by email or you can mail them "as is".

Provide your own report on your observations about the gathering and about the common and/or unusual points or themes that arose during the sharing of experiences. Submit the input from the gathering as soon as possible following the listening gathering, preferably within five days.



Facilitator - Listening Circle – Suggested Program Outline (120 minutes)

1. Introduction (10 minutes)
2. Overview of the Synod process (20 minutes)
3. Describe the Listening Circles (5 minutes)
4. Ground rules for conversations (5 minutes)
5. Part One: Answering the fundamental questions: through our own experiences (40 minutes)
6. Part Two: Reflecting on what we heard from peoples' stories/experiences (15 minutes)
7. Summary (15 minutes)
8. Wrap-up (10 minutes)

Notes and Summary

- The notetaker in every group takes notes. Use the form on page 19 or this eForm <https://forms.gle/AcmB1vw8FUgIHMHZ8>.
- One person from the small group provides a brief summary of the conversations to the larger group.

Ground rules for conversations

- We are here to share our experiences
- We will each take it in turn to share our experiences
- We will use "I" statements when sharing experiences
- We will listen to each person share those experiences
- We will use "I" statements when responding to others' experiences
- We will not discuss or debate what we hear, but will ask questions to clarify what we hear
- We will not seek to solve problems or come to conclusions, but will put such items in the "parking lot" for follow up as needed
- We each have five minutes to speak when we share our experiences and responses



Facilitator - Questions for Listening Circles

Part One: Answering the fundamental questions: through our own experiences.	
Questions to ask	Explanatory notes (for the facilitator)
1. A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together": How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church, or community?	<p><i>As you reflect on "journeying together", what are the ways you feel you are experiencing this?</i></p> <p><i>Are there ways you wish you could experience it?</i></p> <p><i>Can you think of anything that prevents you from experiencing it?</i></p>
2. What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow in our "journeying together"?	<p><i>What comes to mind when you envision ways you would like to be more engaged in 'journeying together'.</i></p>
Part Two: Reflecting on what we heard from peoples' stories/experiences	
Questions to ask	Explanatory notes (for the facilitator)
3. As you were listening to the stories from the fundamental questions, what thoughts and emotions stirred in you?	<p><i>These insights might relate to how you envision being part of 'journeying together' in new or expanded ways.</i></p>



Opening Prayer Options

To begin a Listening Circle

Option A: We are listening, Lord

Leader: Lord Jesus, you said where two or three come together in your name, you are there with them. And so, we begin our time together,

All: In the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen

Leader: As we gather to share our thoughts on journeying together; let us pray with one heart and mind.

All: We rejoice in the gift of this day and time together. May the light of your presence, O God, be with us today. Help us to truly listen to one another. Amen.

Leader: I invite you to listen and reflect on the following scripture passages related to listening.

- Remember this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to listen but slow to speak and slow to human anger; (James 1:19) *Short Pause*
- He called the people to him again and said, 'Listen to me, all of you, and understand. (Mark 7:14) *Short Pause*
- Let the wise listen and learn yet more, and a person of discernment will acquire the art of guidance. (Proverbs 1:5) *Short Pause*
- He called the people to him and said, 'Listen, and understand. (Matthew 15:10) *Short Pause*

Leader: May we keep these passages in mind as we listen to one another. And so together we pray the synod prayer.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.



Option B: "Who do you say that I am?"

Leader: Gathered as the People of God we begin In the Name of the Father and the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.

Lord, give us ears to listen, hearts to receive and hands to share your love with the world. Amen.

Scripture Reading

A reading from the Gospel of Matthew (Matthew 16.13-16)

When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist; others, Elijah; and still others,

Jeremiah or one of the Prophets." "But you," he said to them, "who do you say that I am?" Simon

Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

The Gospel of the Lord

Praise to you Lord, Jesus Christ

Leader asks the following questions for a few moments of silent reflection:

Who is Jesus to you?

Ask Jesus the same question "Who do you say I am, Lord?"

How does Jesus ask you to participate in Church/Community?

Leader: Jesus, you ask us to answer the question "Who do you say that I am?" every day of our lives. Help us to share your mercy, your love, and your compassion so we may be light for others. Help us to listen to the voices of one another and be open to the workings of the Holy Spirit in this place and time.

Leader: Together we pray the Synod prayer

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever. Amen.



Closing prayer

Adsumus Sancte Spiritus Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts.

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path

nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life

and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,

in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

Amen.



Listening Circle Notes Form

Date:	
Where was the <i>Listening Circle</i> held (In-person, on Zoom)?	
Who attended (list names, or attach to this document)?	

Part One: Answering the fundamental questions: through our own experiences.

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together":

Q1: How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church, or community?

Q2: What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow in our "journeying together"?

Part Two: Reflecting on what we heard from peoples' stories/experiences

Q3: As you were listening to the stories from the fundamental questions, what thoughts and emotions stirred in you?



Where to send notes from Listening Circles

Send the input and the Facilitator's Report to Chancery Office in Victoria:

- 1) Scan and send by email to synod@rcdvictoria.org
- 2) Package up and send by mail to:
Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria
1-4044 Nelthorpe Street, Victoria BC V8X 2A1
Tel: 250-479-1331
Fax: 250-479-5423
Office Hours:
8am-4pm, Mon-Fri
Closed: Holidays & Weekends

If you have questions or concerns, please contact Mary Clare Massicotte, Synod Facilitator, synod@rcdvictoria.org



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Listening Circle Participant's Package



Your invitation to participate

Please join us as we walk together!

You are invited to gather with us as we journey together in the Church and in society. There are three ways to participate in the Synod on Synodality:

1. Sign up for an in-person Listening Circle.
2. Sign up for a Synod Listening Circle online Zoom session.
3. If you cannot attend a Listening Circle you can still submit your comments using the Listening Church response form on the Synod website.



Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria

Synod Listening Circles

Together, listening to the Holy Spirit, let us be led by God

Thank you for participating in a listening circle, where we come together to share our experiences of "journeying together" and discern the movements of the Holy Spirit in those experiences. Please spend some time in prayerful reflection on the Fundamental Questions posed by Pope Francis and the [Synod of Bishops](#):

Fundamental Questions

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, "journeys together": How is this "journeying together" happening today in your particular Church, or community? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take to grow in our "journeying together"?

What is a Synod?

A synod is a listening and discernment process. The word synod is derived from an ancient Greek term that means "coming together" or "travelling together."

What do we mean by a "Synodal Church"?

The document from the Synod of Bishops explains that synodality is a path, a journey. In a Synodal Church, we journey together. The document goes on to say that this "journeying together" will help the Church – that is, us – learn which processes can help us live in Communion, achieve full Participation, and open up to our Mission as Church.

What is a Synod on Synodality?

As the global Catholic community sets on along the path to building a more "synodal" church, we explore the origin and meaning of this term, drawn from the pattern of discernment and decision-making from the earliest Christian tradition. Pope Francis is inviting Catholics everywhere to re-learn the ways of being Church together, to create spaces of encounter and mutual listening that incorporate the gifts of all the baptized as we face the many challenges of renewing the life of the Church for our time. [Synod.va](#) is the official Synod website, where there is more information.

What do we mean by a "Synodal Church"?

The document from the Synod of Bishops explains that synodality is a path, a journey. In a Synodal Church, we journey together. The document goes on to say that this "journeying together" will help the Church – that is, us – learn which processes can help us live in Communion, achieve full Participation, and open up to our Mission as Church.



What is a Listening Circle?

We have designed our Listening Circles to focus on listening to one another, in two parts:

Part One: Answering the fundamental questions: through our own experiences.

Part Two: Reflecting on what we heard from peoples' stories/experiences.

A third part, the discernment of the Holy Spirit, will be conducted by the Synod Team.

Many of us will bring our reflections to one of the *Listening Circles* in our parish, community groups, or online via Zoom.

At the *Listening Circles*, we will listen to one another as we share our experiences of journeying together in our churches within the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria. As we listen, we will be invited to discern the Holy Spirit, in our individual and collective responses and discussions.

Each session will take up to two hours, in which you will share your experiences and responses in a small group of no more than six (6) people. The small groups collect the experiences and responses as a record of the sharing.

The records from each Listening Circles will be collected so that the synthesis from the Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria can be sent on to other levels of the Church. Eventually, syntheses from dioceses around the world will be used in the 2023 Synod of Bishops, For a Synodal Church: Communion-Participation-Mission.

We will begin to live our discernment of journeying together to better achieve "Communion-Participation-Mission" in our Diocese and its parishes.

What are we not doing?

We are not identifying and solving problems, issues, or concerns.

We are not focusing on drawing conclusions from the experiences we reflect on and learn about.

Who is included in the *Listening Circles*?

In a word...everyone! Pope Francis is asking that all baptized Christians participate in this synod. The Holy Father has emphasized that this process must not be solely for bishops, priests, or parish councils. We are being asked to go out of our way to involve individuals and groups whose voices are not always present at the highest levels of our Church—particularly young people, women, ethnic minorities, immigrants, and historically marginalized groups.

Furthermore, the Pope is urging us to seek out the perspective of Christians from other denominations, believers from other faith traditions, and those who have no religious affiliation.

Finally, in a particular way, it is important that the Church listens to those who were raised in the Christian faith, but who no longer practice or have felt pushed away. Everyone is guaranteed a seat at the table, and, in many cases, that will require us moving the table outside of the church building to where people are.



Adsumus Sancte Spiritus Prayer

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts.

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path

nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life

and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time,

in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

Amen.



Listening Circle Evaluation Form

Listening Circle location (In-person, on Zoom): _____

	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
I felt like each person had an opportunity to share.			
I felt listened to.			
I gained something from listening to other people's experiences.			
The videos helped me better understand the Synod process.			
I would have preferred a longer event with more time for discussion.			
Overall, I am glad that I attended the session.			
I would be interested in follow-up sessions.			
I have hope that the Synod process might benefit our faith community.			

One highlight from this Listening Circle

One thing I would change about this Listening Circle

I would like to talk further about my experience (please circle) Yes No

I would be willing to help out with future Synod related events Yes No

Name (optional)

Best contact method (phone #, email) (optional)

Any additional comments
