



Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria - Synod 2021-2023

Organizing Diocesan Synod *Listening Circles*

Before

- Read the Facilitator's Guide (26 pages):
<https://fs.hubspotusercontent00.net/hubfs/2912651/Listening%20Circles%20Facilitators%20Guide.pdf>
- Watch all of the videos:
 1. Bishop Gary's introduction: <https://www.rcdvictoria.org/synod>
 2. Synod on Synodality- All You Need to Know (through Sketches and images) ||
Rahai: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5lAktuejwo>
 3. Fr. Timothy Radcliffe: Synodality makes us 'dare to listen':
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OGrc72hcQIE>
- Choose the facilitators, keeping in mind optimal ratio of 6 participants to 1 facilitator.
Facilitators should:
 - ✓ Have excellent communication and strong people skills
 - ✓ Be emotionally mature with the ability to manage uncomfortable situations
 - ✓ Be compassionate, humble, and capable of understanding diverse views
 - ✓ Be able to gently, but firmly, interrupt speakers who begin to dominate the conversation and redirect individuals who lead the discussion off-topic
 - ✓ Be capable of accurately restating complex or convoluted statements in a manner that helps distill and clarify remarks for the larger group
 - ✓ Be sensitive to the experiences of historically marginalized or oppressed communities, including Indigenous peoples, ethnic minorities, immigrants, refugees, LGBTQ+ persons, women, disable individuals, and abuse survivors, with an understanding that some participants may require a level of pastoral care that cannot be provided in a Listening Circle or large group forum.



Before (continued)

- Consider holding conversations with small groups first (i.e., friends and fellow parishioners).
- Decide if the parish will sponsor a large meeting format where all gather and then split into individual groups, or many small groups meeting independently, or both? If in a large group, what will the agenda be? Who will be the main facilitator/notetaker? Note, in some cases the facilitator will also be the notetaker, this is only suggested for small groups of six participants, not for the large group format.
- Consider the following:
 - Who are most likely to attend?
 - Who are least likely to attend?
 - When is the best date/time for most people?
 - Which venue makes most sense (in-person, or online)?
 - What might make people more likely to attend (food is always good!)?
 - How can we get the word out to people (email, announcements, insert, word of mouth)?
- Select dates to hold Listening Circles (in-person, or online).
- Advertise the *Listening Circle* dates in your parishes and/or groups (bulletin, website, eNewsletter, social media).
- How will you engage people beyond the regular congregation (i.e., shut-ins, marginalized people, people with disabilities, people who feel alienated, etc.)?
- Send the participants package in advance (see Facilitator's Guide p. 20-26) to those who are participating.
- Ensure that the facilitator and notetakers are familiar with their role(s) and have reviewed their package (see Facilitator's Guide p. 9-19).



During

- Set up the room to show the videos, flipchart paper/whiteboard.
- Provide note paper, pens/pencils for participants.
- Follow this format for the program Facilitator - *Listening Circle* – Suggested Program
 - Outline (120 minutes):
 - Introduction (10 minutes)
 - Overview of the Synod process (10 minutes)
 - Describe the Listening Circles (5 minutes)
 - Ground rules for conversations (5 minutes)
 - Part One: Answering the fundamental questions: through our own experiences (40 minutes)
 - Part Two: Reflecting on what we heard from peoples' stories/experiences (15 minutes)
 - Summary (15 minutes)
 - Wrap-up (10 minutes)
- Ask for volunteer timekeepers for each Listening Circle group, this is especially important when participants are answering the two fundamental questions, they are given 5 minutes each to answer the two questions. While they are doing so, everyone else is listening and not interrupting.
- Use the paper Listening Circle Notes Form (see Facilitator's Guide p. 19) – OR- use the eForm <https://forms.gle/AcmB1vw8FUgJHMHZ8> directly to record the notes.
- Identify additional facilitators and notetakers in each conversation. Invite them to join as notetakers (and then as facilitators) in future conversations. Once facilitators are more comfortable with the process spread the net wider to invite those even beyond the parish membership.



After

- Gather the notes, and submit them to the Diocesan Synod Team, within five days, to synod@rcdvictoria.org. *Note: If you used the eForm the notes would have gone directly to the team, you do not need to resubmit them.*
- Debrief with the team to review how it went and make any necessary adjustments for the next Listening Circle session.