



On the Way Together – 2026 Spring Plenary

The Diocese of Victoria's 2026 Spring Plenary confirms that On the Way Together is successfully taking root as a practical diocesan method for listening, discerning, and acting together. Drawing on insights from over 365 participants across 24 listening gatherings and 33 theme summaries, the central finding is a clear call for deeper belonging, radical hospitality, and a transition from dialogue to concrete pastoral outreach.

As we conclude the 2025–2026 "To Bring" cycle, we are being challenged to embrace an "Incarnational Shift": moving from "doing charity for" others to "being in relationship with" those who are vulnerable, overlooked, or living with hidden struggles. This report marks our commitment to seeing the "rejected stones"—the lonely, the unhoused, and the marginalized—not as problems to be fixed, but as the essential cornerstones God uses to build our welcoming common home.

This report is a shared synthesis of what we have heard, what we are discerning, and how we are being called to walk together into the 2026–2027 cycle. To help parishes and schools fulfill Bishop Gary's request to move "from dialogue into concrete actions," the report is organized into four strategic sections:

1.0 Spring Plenary Report 2026:

What Emerged from the Spring Plenary 2026: A summary of key themes—including Deep Listening and Relational Connection—and a review of the "Conversation in the Spirit" model as a permanent diocesan practice.

2.0 Appendix 1 – Foundations and History of On the Way Together:

An overview of the three theological pillars (Communion, Participation, and Witness) and the intentional language changes made to reflect our path toward reconciliation.

3.0 Appendix 2 – Draft Questions for 2026–2027 Cycle:

A structured "5 Ws and H" tool designed to help local leadership teams identify the specific needs of the vulnerable in their own neighbourhoods.

4.0 Appendix 3 – Pastoral Planning Outline:

A strategic framework for parishes and schools to draft local pastoral plans that prioritize working with the marginalized and recognizing their hidden struggles.

1.0 On the Way Together - Spring Plenary 2026 Report

1.1 Scriptural Foundation and 2025-2026 Cycle Questions

Based on [Bishop Gordon's February 2026 Pastoral Letter](#), the cycle focused on the theme “**To Bring**”, drawn from Luke 4:16–21. Groups reflected on three questions:

1. How do we bring a sense of connection to others?
2. How do I listen to others with compassion and respect?
3. How do I bring the Good News to family and friends?

1.2 Spring Plenary Theme: Connection and Belonging

The main theme for the 2026 Spring Plenary was *Connection and Belonging*, based on what we heard in the reports and theme summaries from the Conversations in the Spirit.

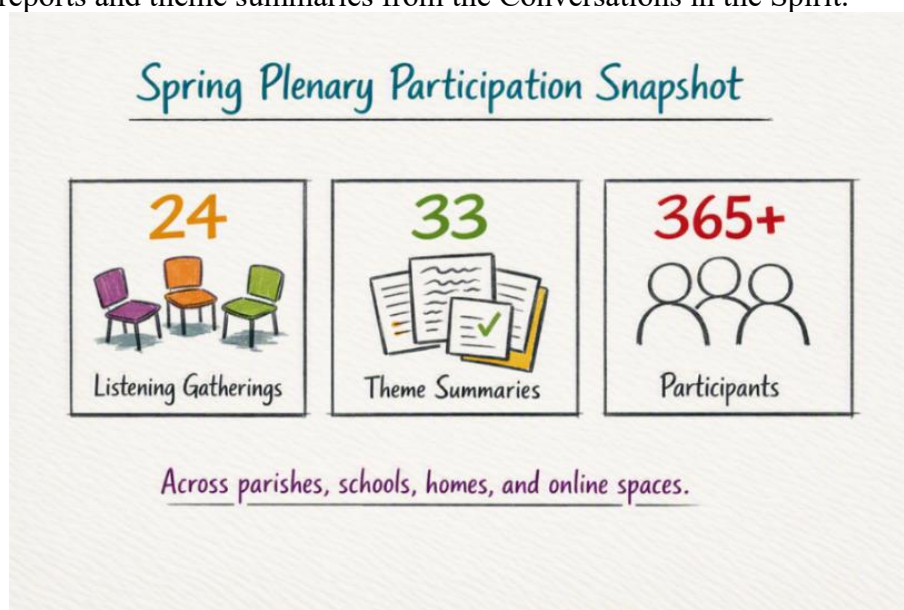


Figure 1. The 2026 Spring Plenary drew on 24 listening gatherings and 33 theme summaries, representing more than 365 participants across the Diocese of Victoria.

This shows that many people across the Diocese took part. The theme did not come from a single group; it appeared in many local conversations.

1.3 Key Themes from Community Reports

1. **Deep Listening:** Listening to understand, not just to respond, and giving people our full attention.
2. **Relational Connection:** Making time to notice people, welcome them, and create space for those who feel like strangers.
3. **Shared Vulnerability:** Sharing personal stories can help people feel safe, connected, and less alone.
4. **Leadership and Witness:** Leading by example, serving quietly, and helping parishes make listening a normal part of parish life.
5. **Prayer and Hope:** Allowing prayer to guide difficult conversations and trusting the Holy Spirit when problems cannot be fixed quickly.

1.4 Plenary and Synthesized Dialogue

During the plenary, participants took part in three *Conversations in the Spirit*. They reflected on:

1. The past year as facilitators
2. Fostering belonging at weekly liturgies
3. How the Church can better connect with the wider community.

1.4.1 Conversation 1: Facilitator Experience

Participants shared what worked well for facilitators and what was challenging during the past year.

- **The process works:** Facilitators said that *Conversations in the Spirit* created welcoming and meaningful spaces.
- **People want to be heard:** Many people expressed a strong desire to be listened to and acknowledged.
- **The process is flexible:** Some groups faced challenges at first, but the model worked in both formal meetings and informal settings.

1.4.2 Conversation 2: Belonging at Sunday Liturgy

Participants discussed simple ways to help people feel welcome before, during, and after Sunday liturgy.

- **A real welcome:** Learn people's names, welcome visitors clearly, and pay attention to those who may feel left out.
- **Hospitality around liturgy:** Invite people to gather before or after Mass, open doors in practical ways, and help break down cliques.
- **Being the Church:** Going to church is important, but being the Church also means listening, serving, and building community together.

1.4.3 Conversation 3: Encountering the Vulnerable and Overlooked

After a spiritual reflection by Bishop Gordon on the next section from the blueprint of Jesus Christ as written in the Gospel of Luke Chapter 4:16-21:

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to **the poor**. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."*

Participants considered how the Church can meet Christ in people who are vulnerable, overlooked, or in need.

- **Seeing those who are often overlooked:** Participants named people who may not always have a voice, including people who are unhoused, incarcerated, elderly, living with addiction, or facing mental health challenges.

- **Recognizing hidden struggles:** Vulnerability/poverty is not always about money. It can also appear as loneliness, emotional pain, perfectionism, overwork, or isolation within our own families.
- **Walking with people without judgment:** The conversation called people to move past fear and prejudice, see Christ in others, give and receive help, and allow honest vulnerability to build real connection.

1.5 Conclusion: A Permanent Way of Being Church

The 2026 Spring Plenary has demonstrated that our diocesan journey is not merely a series of meetings, but a transformative "Incarnational Shift" in how we relate to one another and the world. By moving from dialogue into concrete pastoral plans, we are answering the Holy Spirit's call to be a Church where everyone—especially the "rejected stones" of our society—finds a place of belonging and dignity.

Rooted in this transformative 'Incarnational Shift,' we begin the 2026–2027 cycle with the confidence that On the Way Together has become a permanent ecclesial method for the Diocese of Victoria. We are no longer just "doing synodality"; we are becoming a synodal Church—one that listens with the heart of Christ and acts with the courage of the Gospel to bring hope to those on the margins.

As Pope Leo XIV beautifully reminded us recently in his letter *Magnifica Humanitas*, the people the world often pushes aside, or rejects, are exactly the cornerstones God uses to build a welcoming home.

“The ‘rejected stones’ — the poor, the sick, the migrants and the least among us — will become the cornerstone, and a solid, welcoming common home will emerge on the earth, where love and faithfulness will finally meet, and righteousness and peace will embrace.”

“Human dignity does not depend on a person’s abilities, wealth, or position in life... it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of his unfailing love.”

— Pope Leo XIV, *Magnifica Humanitas* (May 15, 2026).

Source: <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>

1.6 Summary and Next Steps

As we look toward the 2026–2027 cycle, our leadership team is committed to three key strategic actions to bring these conversations from dialogue into concrete actions:

1. **Revisit and Discern Local Questions:** At the upcoming Fall Plenary, participants will revisit the deep inventory of questions brainstormed during Conversation 3. The leadership team will use these submissions—fully preserved in Appendix 2: Parish

Discernment Inventory—to formulate our focused annual cycle questions centred directly on hospitality, inclusion, and reaching out to the margins.

2. **Deploy Local Pastoral Planning Tools:** To help move our insights into action, we are providing a ready-to-use outline for communities to build their own local pastoral plans. Parishes and schools are encouraged to use the Pastoral Planning Outline in Appendix 3 to equip their volunteers to recognize hidden struggles and to accompany others without judgment.
3. **Expand Community Support and Facilitator Training:** We will offer more facilitator training, mentoring, and administrative support across the Diocese to ensure more volunteers feel confident hosting these beautiful, prayerful Conversations in the Spirit in their local communities.

2.0 Appendix 1 – Foundations and History of On the Way Together

2.1 A Permanent Synodal Journey

Bishop Gary Gordon formally announced *On the Way Together* in his [2023 Pastoral Letter](#). It is the Diocese of Victoria's long-term commitment to becoming a Church that listens deeply. Inspired by Pope Francis's call to "*enlarge the space of our tent*" (Isaiah 54:2), it is not a short-term program. It is a lasting way of being Church, shaped by prayer, the Gospel, and the real experiences of the People of God.

"Synodality is an ongoing journey of renewal—calling us to listen, discern, and engage with one another in a spirit of communion."
— Bishop Gary Gordon

Source: [Synodality and the Diocese of Victoria – Canadian Catholic Campus Ministry 2026](#)

Diocesan Framework: Communion, Participation, and Witness



Figure 2. Communion, participation, and witness form the three primary pillars that support On the Way Together as a shared diocesan practice of listening, discernment, and pastoral witness.

1. Communion: Listening as a Way of Love:

When the Church listens to God in Scripture and prayer, and listens to people through shared reflection, it creates a Conversation in the Spirit. Communion means walking together with trust, prayer, and mutual listening.

2. Participation: Every Voice Matters:

Participation means that everyone is welcome and everyone has something to offer. When people are truly heard, they know they belong. Together, the Bishop, pastors, diocesan leaders, and the People of God listen, pray, reflect, and help shape the way forward.

3. Witness: Bringing Good News Together:

The Church brings Good News through both words and actions. The Gospel calls us to bring hope, dignity, and freedom to all people, especially those who are poor, sick, imprisoned, or pushed aside. Witness is not only something the Church does; it is who the Church is called to be.

2.2 Annual Synodal Cycle

To keep this change moving forward, the synodal journey follows a five-stage cycle each year.

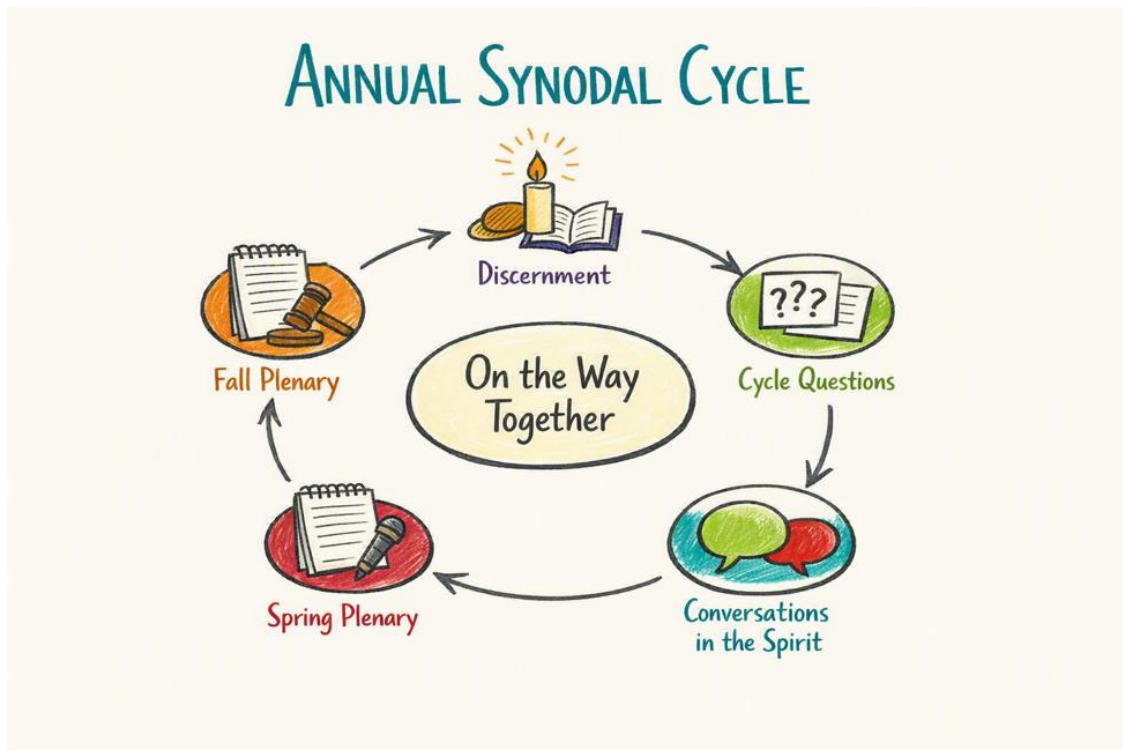


Figure 3. The annual synodal cycle sustains On the Way Together as a permanent diocesan practice of prayer, listening, discernment, community conversation, and shared pastoral direction.

2.3 Alignment with National and Universal Synodal Pathways

The diocesan process is connected to the wider synodal work of the Church in Canada and around the world. This connection shows that Victoria is part of a larger Church movement and makes clear that *On the Way Together* is a permanent diocesan process.

- **National connection:** On April 15 and June 8, 2026, Bishop Gary Gordon, Chancellor Teresa Kellendock, and Mary Clare Massicotte represented the Diocese at meetings of the CCCB National Network on Synodality ad hoc committee.
- **Global connection:** The diocesan process also connects with the Vatican's [*Pathways for the Implementation Phase of the Synod 2025–2028*](#) and the [*Towards the Assemblies 2027–2028*](#).

The global synod timeline ends in 2028, but *On the Way Together* will continue in the Diocese of Victoria as an ongoing way of listening, praying, and acting together.

2.4 Intentional Language and Practice Changes

In December 2025, we engaged with clergy and leadership through a couple of Thought Exchanges; three changes were made to clarify and better align the language with that used by the wider Church.

These changes made the process easier to understand, more pastorally sensitive, and easier to recognize as part of the wider synodal journey.

1. **From “DPPS” to “On the Way Together”:** This name is easier to understand and focuses on the shared journey.
2. **From “Listening Circles” to “Conversations in the Spirit”:** This name points to prayerful listening, reflection, and discernment.
3. **From “Mission” to “Witness”:** In Canada, the word “mission” can carry painful history for Indigenous Peoples. “Witness” focuses more clearly on living the faith with others.

2.5 Centralized Digital Hub and Facilitation Resources

The updated website (rcdvictoria.org/dpps) gathers key resources in one place. These resources help parishes, schools, ministries, and communities put the diocesan vision into practice.

- [*On the Way Together Resource Booklet*](#) is a guide for community reflection and discernment.
- *A Comprehensive Synodality Timeline (2021–2024)*, which shows the Diocese's progress over time.
- [*2026 Facilitators' Guide*](#), which helps people host sessions with more confidence.
- *The Art of Listening* and *The Art and Science of Listening*, which support deeper listening and dialogue.
- **Direct contact:** synod@rcdvictoria.org connects people with the Synod Leadership Team.

3.0 Appendix 2 – Draft Questions for the 2026–2027 Cycle

This appendix provides a structured inventory of questions from the participants at the Spring Plenary. These prompts are organized using the 5 Ws and H framework to support the Fall Plenary 2026 discernment process and supplement the pastoral outreach workshop in Appendix 3.

WHO? (Identifying the Vulnerable & Our Partners)

Identifying the Vulnerable:

- Who are the poor in our community, parishes, and families?
- Who lives beside me?
- Who is vulnerable?
- Who do we *not* see?
- Who is not at the table?

Identifying Collaborators:

- Who can we approach to discuss how to collaborate in doing "good works" (e.g., government, other charities, non-profits)?

WHAT? (Definitions, Present Actions, & Future Steps)

Defining Poverty:

- What does "poor" mean to you?
- What does poverty mean?
- What is "poor in spirit"?
- What is Good News for the poor?

Assessing Our Current Response:

- What are we/I currently doing to help the poor?
- What have you done in your parish to be with the poor?
- What gets in the way of engaging with others?

Discerning Future Action & Accompaniment:

- What could we/I be doing to help the poor?
- What is one thing I can do to bring the love of Jesus to them this year?
- What steps can we take to accompany the vulnerable with love?
- What does accompaniment look like?
- What would help us to connect with others?
- What are the ways of encountering the poor?
- Being aware of the needs of the people—welcoming, smiles—what does that do to change things?

WHEN? (Personal Experiences of Poverty & Grace)

Encountering One's Own Poverty:

- When have I been spiritually poor?
- How are you poor?

- How have you experienced your own poverty?
- When has another seen my own poverty?
- How has being poor given you helpful growth and insights?

Encountering Christ in the Poverty of Others:

- When have I encountered the poverty of others?
- When do we see Christ in others?

WHERE? (The Geography of Poverty & Inclusion)

Locating Poverty:

- Where do you see poverty in your parish? Community? Family? World?
- Where do we see the poor?
- Where are you in your poverty?

Creating Space for Others:

- Where can we make the tent bigger?

WHY? (The Purpose of Our Community)

- Why do we invite your friends/family to Mass?

HOW? (Practical, Spiritual, & Institutional Approaches)

Hearts and Mindsets (Overcoming Judgment):

- How do we encounter without judgment?
- How can the Church actively overcome judgments in our ministry?
- How could we acknowledge the dignity in each person we encounter?
- How do we learn "how else to see"?
- How can we slow down so that we can accompany the vulnerable with love?

Welcoming and Parish Life:

- How can we provide a welcome before and after Mass?
- How do we live out our encounter with God?
- How do we respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit?

Ground-Level Ministry and Specific Groups:

- How can the Church actively minister to the poor (ground-level service)?
- How can the Church minister to LGBTQ Catholics while being faithful to the teachings of Mother Church?

Spiritual Poverty & Christ-Likeness:

- How can we define poverty?
- How can we attend to spiritual poverty?
- How was Jesus poor?
- How can we be poor like Jesus?

4.0 Appendix 3 – Pastoral Planning Outline

Objective: To assist leadership teams in moving from "dialogue into concrete actions". This outline provides a structure for creating a local pastoral plan that addresses the 2026–2027 focus on encountering the vulnerable, overlooked, and marginalized.

4.1 Vision and Scriptural Foundation

- **The Blueprint:** Reflect on Luke 4:18–19. How does our community specifically hear the call for “the poor”?
- **The “Rejected Stones”:** Based on Pope Leo XIV’s *Magnifica Humanitas*, who are the “least among us” in our local neighbourhood that God is calling us to make our “cornerstone”?

4.2 Local Discernment (The 5 Ws and H)

Parishes are encouraged to select 2–3 questions from the Draft Questions (Appendix 2) to identify their local priorities.

- **WHO** is not at our table? Who are the “unseen” poor in our specific geography?
- **WHAT** gets in the way of us engaging with those who feel like strangers?
- **WHERE** can we “make the tent bigger” within our parish layout or culture?
- **HOW** can we slow down to accompany the vulnerable with love and without judgment?

4.3 Strategic Action Pillars

Identify one concrete goal for the upcoming year under each of the three diocesan pillars.

1. Communion (Listening as Love):
 - *Action:* How will we foster “prayerful listening” and “shared reflection” among our leadership and parishioners?
2. Participation (Every Voice Matters):
 - *Action:* What specific steps will we take to ensure the marginalized know they belong and have “something to offer”?
3. Witness (Bringing Good News Together):
 - *Action:* What ground-level service or “relational model” of ministry will we implement to bring dignity to those in need?

4.4 Identifying and Addressing "Hidden Struggles"

- **Non-Material Poverty:** How will we train our community to recognize “hidden struggles” like loneliness, emotional pain, overwork, or isolation?
- **The Ministry of Presence:** What practical ways will we create to “sit with someone else’s pain” without immediately trying to “fix” it?

4.5 Implementation and Resilience

- **Lead Coordinator:** Who will shepherd this plan forward?
- **Boundaries and Safety:** What “Dignity-Centered Boundaries” and safety protocols will we put in place to protect both our volunteers and those we serve?
- **Review Cycle:** How will we evaluate our progress?