



Roman Catholic Diocese of Victoria Permanent Pastoral Synod

Communion, Participation, and Witness: On the Way Together January 5, 2026

This document is meant to help explain the why behind *On the Way Together*. It describes the vision, prayer, and purpose that shape this process—not only what we are doing, but why it matters for the life of the Church today. At its core, *On the Way Together* seeks to renew how we listen, walk with one another, and bring Good News with the world.

Overview

At its heart, this is about how the Church listens, walks together, and serves the world.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.” (Jn 3:16)

Every person matters, every voice matters, and the Church, a pilgrim people, works best when leaders and all people listen to God and to each other as they try to love and serve the world—especially those who are hurting.

The Journey Together process is a way of being Church that is rooted in listening, shared responsibility, and service. It reflects a vision where every person is integral, where Church leaders and people journey together, and where the Church is renewed by listening to God and to one another.

At its heart, this approach seeks to help the Church bring hope, healing, and Good News to the world—especially to those who are most vulnerable.

*“God has a special place in his heart
for those who are discriminated against and oppressed.”*
Pope Leo XIV, *Dilexi te*

Purpose: Why This Matters

The Church believes that faith, hope, and love are gifts of the Holy Spirit, and that through Baptism each person is called to help share these gifts in the world.

- Everyone has gifts, experience, and insight.
- Sharing those gifts helps bring hope, compassion, and justice into the world.
- Faith isn't meant to stay inside church walls—it's meant to show up in daily life.

The Church is called to be a living body, not a distant institution. Every Baptized person is essential to the life and witness of the Church. Through intentional listening, discernment, and shared responsibility, the Church is strengthened in its ability to respond to the needs of today's world.

This vision is guided by three foundational pillars: Communion, Participation, and Witness.

Communion: Listening as a Way of Love

Listening is an act of love.

- Listening to God (through prayer and Scripture)
- Listening to one another (especially people who may not usually be heard)

When the Church listens—to God through Scripture and prayer, and to one another through shared reflection—it creates what is known as a Conversation in the Spirit. In plain terms, that means making space for reflection, honesty, and shared wisdom.

This form of listening:

- Honours the dignity of every person
- Creates space for healing and truth
- Allows leaders and community members to discern the way forward together

Communion means walking together. In communion, bishops, priests, deacons, religious, and the People of God shepherd the Church collectively, through trust and mutual listening.

Participation: Every Voice Matters

Participation affirms that all are welcome, and all are called.

- The voice of each person matters to the Bishop, pastors, and appointed lay leaders.
- Each person brings unique charisms, talents, and life experience.
- Participation calls people to be intentional disciples—active contributors, not passive observers.

When the Church truly listens, individuals experience that being heard is as powerful as being loved.

Everyone discerns together—meaning they pray, listen, reflect, and inform the best way forward. It means the Bishop, pastors, and Diocesan leadership create pastoral direction by truly hearing the people they serve.

This doesn't mean everyone votes on every single issue or topic. It means leaders make better decisions because they've truly heard the people they serve.

Witness: Bringing Good News Together

“He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written:

*“The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to proclaim good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to set the oppressed free,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour”*

Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, “Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.” (Luke 4:16-21)

The Church exists to bring Good News by word and action.

- Every Baptized person is a bearer of this witness.
- The Gospel calls us to bring hope, dignity, and freedom to all people.

Inspired by Luke 4:16–21 (which is considered a blueprint for Jesus' ministry and therefore the way of the Church) the Church is especially called to serve the poor, the blind, prisoners, and the oppressed.

Witness is not only something the Church *does*—it is something the Church *is*. We announce the “time of God's favour” by how we live, listen, and serve together.

Jesus did this through word and deed, through stories (parables) and signs (miracles), which reached people's hearts.

Three key scripture passages help explain this work:

- The Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13, Mark 4, and Luke 8): feeding and nurturing life
- The Good Samaritan (Luke 10): healing and compassion
- The Mercy Parables (Luke 15: the Lost Sheep, the Lost Coin, and the Prodigal Son): every life is valuable

These stories continue to shape the Church's witness today.

For this listening journey to bear fruit, particular care is given to how leadership is exercised within the Church.

Leadership as Facilitators of the Listening Journey

In *On the Way Together*, leadership is exercised through listening, accompaniment, and stewardship of the process. Bishops, priests, and lay leaders serve as facilitators who create prayerful, respectful spaces for dialogue, trusting that the Holy Spirit speaks through the lived experience of the People of God.

Leadership in a listening Church is not about directing outcomes, but about walking with others, honouring every voice, and discerning together how God is calling the Church forward.

Process: How This Takes Shape

This vision becomes reality through encounter, Scripture, and shared discernment.

1. Encountering God's Word:

Rooted in Luke 4:16–21, we reflect together on Jesus' witness and how it speaks to our local context.

2. Walking Together:

- Participation: "On the Way Together" is Church
- Communion: "Conversation in the Spirit" is the Way
- Witness: The Good News to all the world (Jn 3:16) by charity and service

3. Discernment Through Listening:

Decisions emerge from prayerful listening, reflection, and discernment.

On the Way Together: Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod

What It Is: Think of it like a listening and advisory circle.

On the Way Together (Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod) provides a structured way for listening and collaboration within the Church.

Why It Exists

- To improve communication across the Diocese
- To listen for how the Holy Spirit is guiding the Church today
- To work together with the bishop and pastors by sharing the lived experiences of God's people
- To inform pastoral planning through authentic listening

How It Works

- People gather in a circle of equal voices for a Conversation in the Spirit
- Rooted in prayer and mutual respect
- Focusing on listening, healing, and serving

The On the Way Together initiative is a space for discernment where the wisdom of the community informs Church leadership.

Being truly heard is understood as a powerful experience—as important as being loved.

In Summary

This is about building a Church that listens deeply, walks together, and serves the world with compassion—where leaders and people alike share responsibility for bringing hope, healing, and justice to others.

We are inviting the Diocese of Victoria to deepen its commitment to:

- Communion: Listening deeply to God and to one another
- Participation: Honouring the voice, gifts, and dignity of every person
- Witness: Bringing the Good News through service and love

It calls us to be a community that listens before it speaks, serves before it directs, and walks together as it brings Christ's love to the world.

A Note on Intentional Language

The Vatican Synod on Synodality (2021–2024) used the phrasing “*For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission.*” In the Diocese of Victoria, we are choosing to use the word “Witness” in the place of “Mission.”

We want to choose our language carefully and intentionally. In Canada, the word “mission” carries historical weight connected to colonization and harm experienced by Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities. While the Church’s call to love, serve, and proclaim hope remains unchanged, the words we use to express that call matter deeply.

By using language such as Witness, we emphasize lived faith, shared responsibility, and walking together—rather than imposing or conquering. This choice reflects our continued commitment to reconciliation, listening, and a Church shaped by relationship and humility.