



On the Way Together

Diocese of Victoria's
Permanent Pastoral Synod



On the way together....
Diocese of Victoria Permanent Pastoral Synod





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Bishop Gary Gordon invites you to help chart a course for our journey together, now and in the future, as the people of God.

On the Way Together (Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod) is the Diocese of Victoria's long-term commitment to becoming a more deeply listening Church. It is not a program with an end date, but a way of being Church—rooted in prayer, grounded in the Gospel, and shaped by the lived experience of the People of God.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, this journey invites the whole Diocese to listen to God and to one another, to walk together in shared responsibility, and to bring Good News to the world—especially to those who are hurting or on the margins. Since its announcement at Pentecost 2023, *On the Way Together* has moved intentionally from vision, to formation, to listening, and into ongoing cycles of discernment that shape our common life, leadership, and witness.

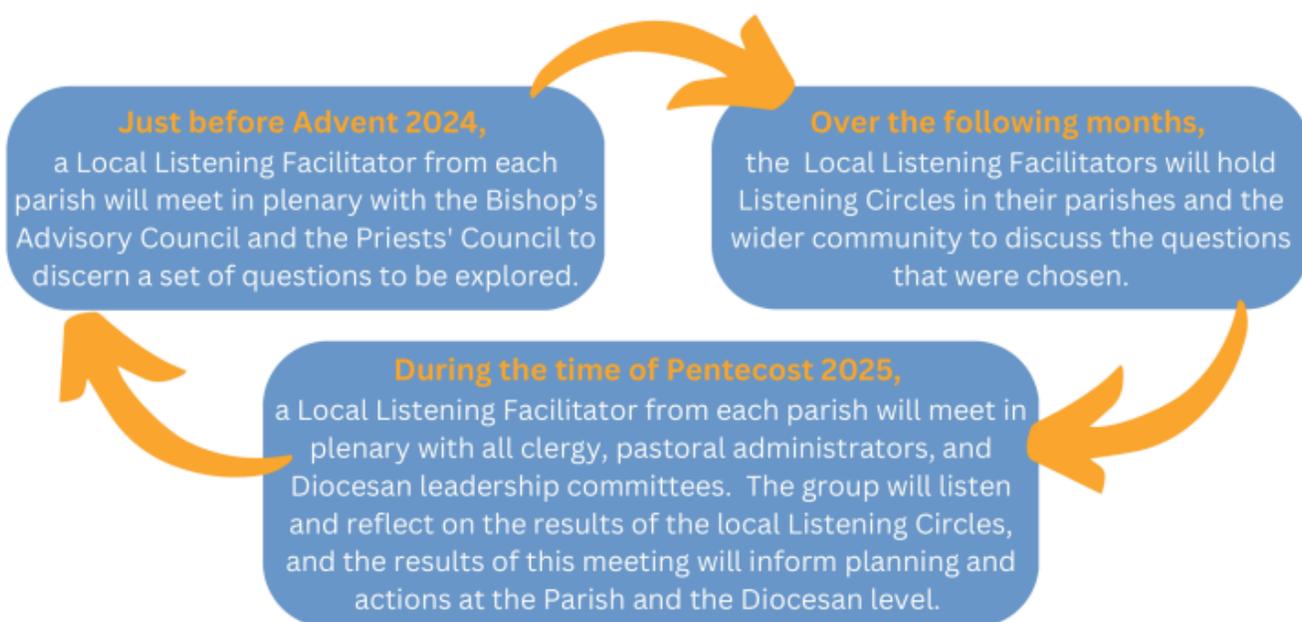
This booklet is meant to serve as a resource—to inform our journey forward as a Diocese, serve as a reference for all participants, and offer guidance to others discerning a similar synodal path.



The Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod

Continuing our journey on the road of
Communion, Participation, and Mission

*Over the months of 2023/2024, each pastor/pastoral administrator with their parish will be asked to choose one or two **Local Listening Facilitators**. These people will be provided with training and guidance in the skills of listening and creating safe environments to ensure healthy dialogue.*



The Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod cycle will then begin again with another Local Listening Facilitator plenary before Advent 2025.

The whole People of God have been called to walk together
as the Holy Spirit helps us to discern
the Lord's will for his Church.

"I am inspired by the wisdom that has been shared in Synod 2021-2024 so far, and am confident the Holy Spirit will guide and direct us as we establish a Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod in the Diocese of Victoria."

+Gary Gordon, Bishop of Victoria

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The Synod on Synodality (2021–2024)

The Synod on Synodality (2021–2024) offered Bishop Gary Gordon two foundational gifts that shaped the beginnings of *On the Way Together*:

1 A Synod Leadership Team

Four individuals were entrusted with developing and guiding a Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod, supported by Diocesan Pastoral Centre staff in communications and information technology. This provided the capacity and continuity needed to sustain a long-term synodal process.

2 Guidance from the Vatican Synod Office

The Synod on Synodality provided clear processes, theological grounding, and practical direction that could be thoughtfully adapted to the local Church.

Throughout this period, the Bishop's role remained essential. Drawing on his experience of listening across the Diocese, Bishop Gary Gordon discerned direction in light of local history, cultural context, Sacred Scripture, the teaching of the Magisterium, and the signs of the times—ensuring the journey was rooted in the lived reality of the Diocese of Victoria.

Bishop Gordon chose to focus *On the Way Together* on Luke 4:16-21, which is the blueprint for the proclamation and ministry of Jesus.



Luke 4:16-21

When he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, he went to the synagogue on the sabbath day, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was given to him. He unrolled the scroll and found the place where it was written:

*“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 favour.”*

And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to say to them, “Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.”

Read a reflection on Luke 4:18-19
from scripture scholar Sister Wendy Cotter
(CSJ, a Sister of St. Joseph and a full professor of
New Testament at Loyola University, Chicago)



Where We Started: A Call to Walk Together

On the Way Together was formally announced by Bishop Gary Gordon in his [2023 Pastoral Letter on the Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod](#), inviting the Diocese of Victoria into a permanent synodal journey. The establishment of the Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod was rooted Pope Francis' call for us to "enlarge the space of our tent" (Isa 54.2).

Pastors/pastoral administrators and principals from Island Catholic Schools from each parish/school selected Local Listening Facilitators to help support this new synodal process by utilizing this guide:

- [Local Listening Facilitator FAQ](#)

Local Listening Facilitators were trained, and continue to be trained, to support Conversations in the Spirit (formerly known as Listening Circles), creating prayerful spaces where people could speak honestly, listen attentively, and discern together.



The first annual *On the Way Together* cycle then began with the Fall Plenary on November 30, 2024, at St. Andrew's Cathedral. The questions were discerned from reflections on Luke 4:16-21.

One Local Listening Facilitator from each parish/school met with the Bishop's Advisory Council and the Council of Priests to discern the questions that were explored in this inaugural cycle.

The synodal process will repeat each year, ensuring our ongoing commitment to fostering a vibrant and engaged listening community.

Questions for 2025

On November 30, 2024, the Feast of St. Andrew (Apostle and martyr), Listening Facilitators from each parish, the Council of Priests, and the Bishop's Advisory Council gathered in prayer and discernment to reflect on Luke 4:16-21.

This scripture passage is the blueprint for the proclamation and ministry of Jesus.

From this passage, the questions (along with an optional opening question) for the 2025 cycle were discerned:

Optional Opening Question:

What is a story from your own journey of faith and life that you would like to share?

Question 1:

What is your experience/connection with Christ, the Anointed One, in your faith journey?

Question 2:

How have you experienced blessings and hope in your life, in your parish, in your school, in your church, or in your family?

Read Bishop Gary's full pastoral letter from January 2025, announcing the 2025 DPPS questions, [here](#).

Spring Plenary 2025

Listening Facilitators, priests, deacons, pastoral administrators, executive committee members from each parish, the Bishop's Advisory Council, principals and school board members, the Diocesan Health Care Committee, the Diocesan Finance Committee, the Diocesan Liturgical Commission, the Diocesan Ecumenical Officers, prison chaplains, and the Synod Leadership Team gathered for the Spring Plenary to reflect on what was heard in the 2025 Conversations in the Spirit.

In that Jubilee Year of Hope, the answers we heard brought us great hope indeed.

Opening Question

We asked: What is a story from your own journey of faith and life that you would like to share?

We heard: I belong to Christ, who participates in my life.

Question 1

We asked: What is your experience/connection with Christ, the Anointed One, in your faith journey?

We heard: I feel a deep and consoling joy in encountering Christ.

Question 2

We asked: How have you experienced blessings and hope in your life, in your parish, in your school, in your church, or in your family?

We heard: This joy gives me trust in the community of the Church, and inspires me to share Christ with others.

Read the 2025 Spring Plenary Report.

Where We Are: Listening, Discernment, and Shared Responsibility

Grounded in prayerful listening and shared discernment, the Diocese of Victoria is now actively living *On the Way Together* as a permanent way of being Church.

The three foundational pillars of our Diocesan efforts are Communion, Participation, and Witness.

1. Communion: Listening as a Way of Love

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

2. Participation: Every Voice Matters

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

3. Witness: Bringing Good News Together

The Church exists to bring Good News by word and action. The Gospel calls us to bring hope, dignity, and freedom to all people. Inspired by Luke 4:16–21, 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.

Read the full *On the Way Together* explainer, a guide to the purpose, language, and intentionality of the Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod.

Questions for 2026

On October 17, 2025, Listening Facilitators and clergy from across the Diocese, the Council of Priests, and the Bishop's Advisory Council gathered once again for a Fall Plenary to reflect on the blueprint of the ministry of Jesus in Luke 4:16-21.

This year, the focus of the reflection was specifically on the concept "to bring." The 2026 cycle invites renewed participation through Conversations in the Spirit, supported by updated formation materials and pastoral leadership.

From this concept, the questions for the 2026 cycle were discerned:

Question 1:

How do we bring a sense of connection to others?

Question 2:

How do I listen to others with compassion and respect?

Question 3:

How do I bring the Good News to family and friends?

Read Bishop Gary's full pastoral letter from January 2026, announcing the 2026 DPPS questions, [here](#).

Where We're Going: Continuing On the Way Together

On the Way Together will continue in annual cycles of listening and discernment.

Each cycle will contain:

1. Fall Plenary

A gathering of Diocesan leaders and Local Listening Facilitators from across the Diocese, where participants pray and reflect on the scripture passage from Luke 4:16–21.

2. Discernment Period

A period following the Fall Plenary when the Bishop and Diocesan leadership prayerfully review and reflect on what was shared. This time helps identify key themes, consider the needs of local communities, and discern how the Holy Spirit is guiding next steps.

3. Announcement of Cycle Questions

Following discernment, the Bishop shares the questions that will guide the next cycle of listening, rooted in what has been heard and attentive to Communion, Participation, and Witness.



4. Community Conversations in the Spirit

Parish, school, and ministry communities across the Diocese take part in Conversations in the Spirit, centred on the questions chosen for that year's cycle. Listening Facilitators ensure that feedback is recorded anonymously and shared with Diocesan leadership.

5. Spring Plenary

A gathering to share what has been heard in Conversations in the Spirit. The Spring Plenary synthesizes insights from Conversations in the Spirit, identifies themes for ongoing discernment, and fosters shared understanding across the Diocese.

The Art of Listening

True listening goes beyond words—it honours the whole person and their story.

In Conversations in the Spirit (formerly known as Listening Circles), listening helps us live as a Church that listens, walks together, and serves.

It deepens Communion, values Participation, and strengthens our Witness as we bring hope, healing, and love to the world.

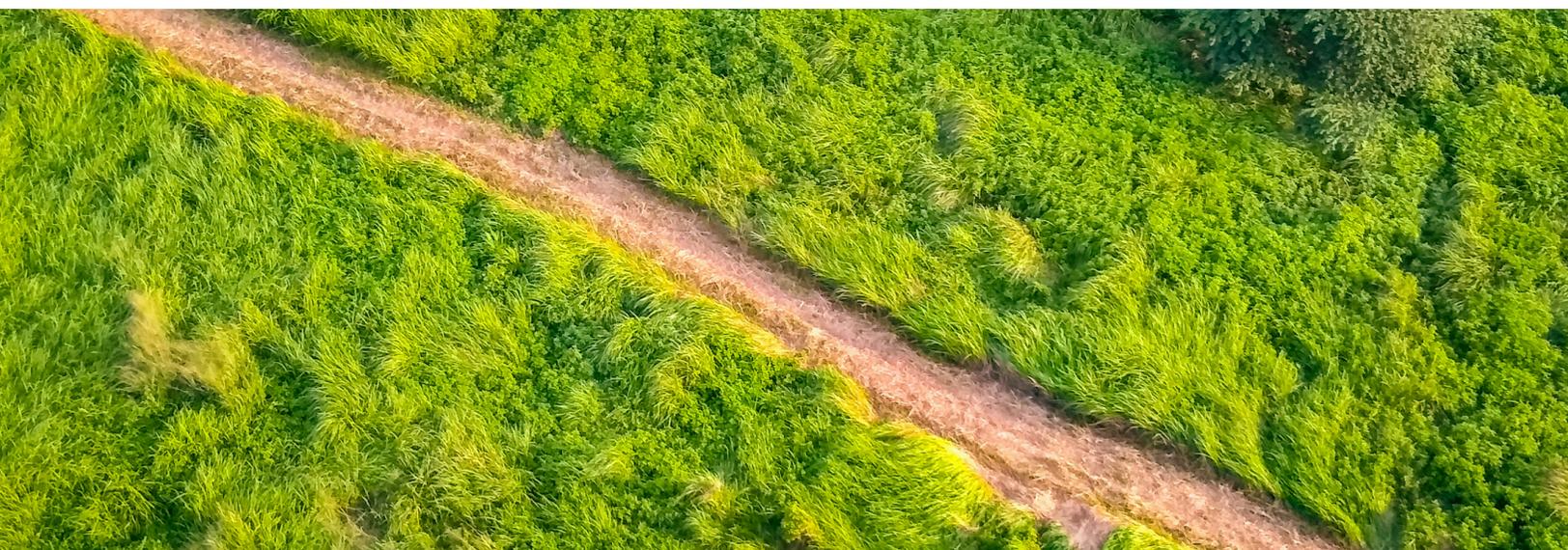
Read *The Art and Science of Listening* here.

Facilitators' Guide

The 2026 Facilitators' Guide is a resource for Local Listening Facilitators and anyone curious about how Conversations in the Spirit (formerly known as Listening Circles) work.

Facilitating or participating for the first time can feel intimidating, but every voice matters, and sharing your experiences is essential to shaping the future of our Diocese.

Read the 2026 Facilitator's Guide here.



Intentional Language Updates

Some of the language used in earlier documents, letters, and resources preceding 2026 has been updated to better reflect the vision and communal focus of our synodal journey.

These changes help ensure clarity, inclusivity, and a pastoral tone while remaining faithful to the purpose of *On the Way Together*.

Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod → *On the Way Together*

The previous name was technical and required a certain level of understanding of the Synod on Synodality (2021–2024). *On the Way Together* is a more pastoral name that emphasizes the communal nature of this process. The formal title, Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod, is now included as a subheading to provide clarity without being overwhelming.

Listening Circles → Conversations in the Spirit

To better reflect the spirit of dialogue and shared discernment, what were once called Listening Circles are now known as Conversations in the Spirit. This language emphasizes that these gatherings are prayerful, reflective, and rooted in deep listening, not simply discussion.

Mission → Witness

While the Vatican Synod on Synodality (2021–2024) used the phrasing “For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission,” the Diocese of Victoria has chosen to use the word Witness instead of Mission. This change is intentional: in Canada, the word “mission” carries historical weight connected to colonization and harm experienced by Indigenous Peoples and other marginalized communities. By using Witness, we emphasize lived faith, shared responsibility, and walking together—while still answering the Church’s call to love, serve, and proclaim hope.

More Resources

Learn more about *On the Way Together* (Diocesan Permanent Pastoral Synod) at:

www.rcdvictoria.org/dpps

Contact

Get in touch with synod@rcdvictoria.org to speak with one of our Synod Leadership team members.



ROMAN CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF VICTORIA