



For a synodal Church  
communion | participation | mission

## General Overview

### What is a Synod?

- The word “Synod” comes from Greek words that mean “Journeying Together”
- Pope Francis has asked the whole Church to reflect on our journey together, how we listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to each of us, and how we make decisions as a Church
- “The objective of this Synodal Process is... to provide an opportunity for the entire People of God to discern together how to move forward... in the long-term.” (from *Vademecum*, a Vatican handbook on the Synod)

### Synod Timeline

- April 2021 – Pope Francis proposed a new, collaborative approach to preparing for this Synod
- October 2021 – Pope Francis presided at the official opening of the Synod process
- From now until May 2022 –
  - Parishes hold small group “listening sessions” around 10 questions provided by the Vatican (our diocese has combined these into four questions). Great care is to be taken to include all ages, inactive Catholics, those served by the church, etc.
  - Dioceses gather data from parishes and submit a short report to the US Bishops in June
  - The US Bishops send a combined report to the Vatican in August
- August & September 2022 – The Vatican prepares a working document based on the reports of all the national bishops’ conferences
- September 2022-March 2023 – Continental meetings in Africa, Oceania, Asia, Middle East, Europe, Latin America, and North America to respond to the working document (who will be involved in these meetings – beyond bishops – has yet to be determined)
- June 2023 – The Vatican prepares a second working document based on the continental meetings
- October 2023 – The Synod gathers in Rome to discuss and make decisions on the second working document (attendees – again, beyond bishops – have yet to be determined)
- **From this world-wide, collaborative process will come direction for the future of the Church**

### What Are We Going to be Talking About?

- The themes of the Synod process are communion, participation, and mission
- The four questions given to us by the diocese (originated by the Vatican) for reflection and discussion are:
  - How is God calling us to be a Christ-centered Church that “Journeys Together”?
  - How is God calling us to be a Christ-centered Church that is a welcoming, Eucharistic community?
  - How is God calling us to be a Christ-centered Church that is open to listening, dialogue, and renewal?

- How is God calling us to be a Christ-centered Church that is fully engaged in evangelization and mission?
- We will focus on one question each week for four weeks, February 14-March 13
- Each question will also have six questions for reflection to go along with it

## How to Participate at St. Ann's

We will have three ways to participate – you can choose the one(s) that best suit you:

- Listening sessions (one week for each of the four questions from the diocese)
  - Each week parishioners will have three listening sessions to choose from
  - You can participate all four weeks or just one, whatever fits your schedule
- Written survey (online and hard copy) – this will cover the same questions as the listening sessions, just in abbreviated, written form
- Interview cards – to reach out to others; all will be encouraged to take some of these cards and talk with family, friends, those who have left the Church, those to and with whom we minister, etc.

## How Will We Prepare and Where Will We Get Information?

- The first step in preparation is prayer. Since October, we have been saying the Synod prayer (*Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus*) at Mass and we will continue to do so. Please pray for our parish and for the world-wide church throughout this process.
- To get ready for each week's listening sessions, we will prepare a document with the question for that week, the reflection questions that go with it, scripture quotations, and background information
- That document will be available:
  - In the Synod email sent out the Friday before each week begins
  - In the bulletin that weekend
  - On the parish website
  - On the parish Facebook page

If you want more information about the entire Synod process, check out these resources:

- Vatican's main website for the Synod: [www.Synod.va/en](http://www.Synod.va/en)
- Vatican's Facebook page for the Synod: <https://www.facebook.com/Synod.va>
- Diocese's webpage for the Synod: <https://richmonddiocese.org/journeying-together-to-the-world-Synod-of-bishops/>

## You Can Help!

Our four weeks of listening sessions will consist of small group discussions, and right now **we are looking for 15-25 parishioners to serve as small group facilitators and note takers** (recorders) during the listening sessions. Please volunteer! There will be an orientation on Sunday, February 6 after the 11:15am Mass, and possibly a make-up date. You can sign up with someone else and work as a pair, so talk to your spouse or a friend if you would like to do that. If you are interested or have questions, contact Katie Johnson (kjohnson@stanncc.com; 804-526-2548; or after Mass on Saturday or Sunday) by February 5.

**Looking Ahead:** Next week we will provide very specific information about our timeline and listening sessions at St. Ann's