



MEMORANDUM

To: Pastors & Administrators

From: Vy. Rev. Glenn M. Evers, Synod Co-Contact

Handwritten initials in blue ink, possibly 'GME'.

Subject: CDOW Synod Deanery Listening Sessions

Date: January 18, 2022

Bishop Koenig would now like to commence the *Diocesan Consultation Phase* of the *2021-2023 Synod on Synodality* for the Diocese of Wilmington. He will initiate this process by hearing firsthand from a representative group from each parish in *Listening Sessions* done at the deanery level. These *Listening Sessions* will be a time of prayerful reflection and sharing wherein your selected parishioners will gather with other parish groups in your deanery. Together, they will all then begin to answer the *Two Primary Synodal Questions* for us as a diocese:

Given, that a synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”:

(1) How is this “journeying together” happening today in your local Church?

(2) What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

REGISTRATION

With this in mind, the Bishop is requesting that each parish identify and send exactly five parishioners to the *Listening Session* being held for their deanery as listed below. The deadline for registration for the *Listening Session* for all parish groups will be on **Wednesday, February 2, 2022.**

After thoroughly reviewing the registration information detailed in this memorandum, please then select your parish representatives and use the web address provided here to register them online. Either you or your designate may complete the online registration. A checklist is provided at the end of this document to assist you in registering. Please register online at: www.cdow.org/synod or use the direct link to the registration page found here:

www.cognitofrms.com/CDOW1/SynodDeaneryListeningSessionRegistrationForm

DEANERY LISTENING SESSION DATES

There will be five separate "Deanery" *Listening Sessions* with some deaneries combined together. Each parish is asked to send their group of five parishioners to the specified date and location for your parish's deanery as designated here:

(1) City & Brandywine Hundred Deaneries

- Saturday, February 12th @ 10:00 AM at St. Elizabeth, Wilmington

(2) Iron Hill Deanery

- Sunday, February 13th @ 2:00 PM at St. Margaret of Scotland, Glasgow

(3) Ocean & Silver Lake Deaneries

- Saturday, February 19th @ 10:00 AM at St. Jude the Apostle, Lewes

(4) Central New Castle Deanery

- Sunday, February 20th @ 2:00 PM at St. Mary of the Assumption, Hockessin

(5) Eastern Shore Deanery

- Sunday, February 27th @ 2:00 PM at SS. Peter & Paul, Easton

Listening Sessions will be about 2 hours in length and held in the hall of each parish.

COVID-19 STATUS

The Bishop has taken into consideration the recent surge in coronavirus cases and he is optimistic that conditions will improve enough by the time these gatherings are to be held. He would like to start the process of *Listening Sessions* for the Synod in our diocese as soon as possible before his schedule becomes too busy. If circumstances dictate alternate plans are necessary, adjustments will be made as needed. The latest COVID precautions as outlined by the diocese will be observed at all *Listening Sessions*. Parish groups will be spread out from one another to provide a low risk setting. These environments will effectively be no more risk laden than attending Mass on Sunday in our churches. Please take this into account when identifying your parish representatives.

PARISH REPRESENTATIVES

As aforementioned each parish will send **five parishioners** to the *Listening Session*. Anyone from your parish may be chosen to participate and represent the parish as one of your five representatives. The representative group should be diverse so as to better capture the landscape of your parish community. A one page summary document entitled, *Synod Listening Session – Information for Participants.pdf* is provided for you to share with your parish group and further help you and your prospective representatives understand what they are being invited to do and what a Listening Session is.

As appropriate, please note for this initial series of *Deanery Listening Sessions*, Mission Church representation should be included within the cohort of five parishioners. Also know that a series of *Listening Sessions* for our Hispanic Communities will be offered at a later date along with other opportunities for the other established cultural groups within our diocese. Parish schools will also have separate opportunities for *Listening Sessions*.

Additionally, please note that after registering your group, should someone become unavailable who was initially registered to represent the parish, simply have a new person attend in that person's place and identify him/herself the day of the *Listening Session*.

SMALL GROUP LEADER & REPORTER

Two separate people in your group must be identified in advance at the time of registration to fulfill a specific role for your parish group. One person is needed to function as the **Small Group Leader** for your parish group. The Small Group Leader will guide and direct the group discussion that will be conducted within your parish group during the *Listening Session*. Another person in your group will need to function as a **Reporter**. The Reporter will record and then report the important points from the group sharing that takes place.

There are specific instructions also provided alongside this memorandum that should be given to the Small Group Leader and the Reporter which specifically describe their duties during the *Listening Session*. The Small Group Leader should receive the document entitled, *Synod Listening Session – Instructions for Small Group Leaders.pdf*.

The Reporter should be given two documents, *Synod Listening Session – Instructions for Reporters.pdf* and *Synod Listening Session – Small Group Report Form.pdf*. Again please make sure to identify and designate these two people in advance of registration they are essential to the process. When trying to identify these persons, simply think about: *Who do I know is good at leading a meeting and conversation? Who is good at listening and taking notes?* These are your Small Group Leader and Reporter respectively. Once identified, these persons should prepare themselves for their roles by simply reviewing the aforementioned instructions that are adjoined to this memorandum.

ATTENDANCE OF PASTORS & CLERGY

Pastors are encouraged to attend with their parish groups, however, this is only recommended. In their stead, an Associate Pastor may take their place. In the absence of a priest, one Permanent Deacon from the parish may attend. Clergy who choose to participate should know that they are doing so only as an **Observer** as this is an opportunity to listen to what our parishioners have to say. At this time, Pastors will neither lead nor participate in the discussion of the group, but simply listen to what is being said. In late Spring 2022, there will be a separate opportunity for all priests to participate and share their input in another *Listening Session* with the Bishop. Permanent Deacons should not participate at this time either as they will also have their own separate *Listening Session*. The focus here in these *Deanery Listening Sessions* is on the laity.

DUAL OBJECTIVE: TO LISTEN & TO MODEL

These deanery *Listening Sessions* serve at least two purposes. First, they complete the explicit mission of the Synod by affording the Bishop the opportunity to listen directly to a sampling of his flock from all of his parishes guaranteeing at least someone from each parish was incorporated in this Synodal process.

Second, this initial series of *Listening Sessions* will also serve to model and teach how a *Listening Session* should properly be conducted in a parish should you choose to have such gatherings for the broader community of your own local church. Holding parish *Listening Sessions* is highly encouraged and recommended by the Bishop. It is suggested that parish consultations should be done after a parish has already participated in their deanery *Listening Session*.

With this in mind, a pastor may intentionally select as members of his parish group those he would like to help him in holding future *Listening Sessions* within his parish. This also might mean that a lay parish staff member would be an ideal candidate and then could be one of the five parish representatives for the initial deanery *Listening Session*. This is acceptable here as the staff member will later assist in engaging more parishioners.

FUTURE LISTENING SESSIONS

In the beginning of February 2022, the diocese will provide a complete ***Listening Session Toolkit*** and an accompanying virtual training that can be used by parishes and other Catholic organizations to conduct their own *Listening Sessions*. When this is available full details will be provided on the recommended process for a *Listening Session* along with instructions on how to properly report the results of your *Listening Session* to the diocese.

The Diocesan Synodal Team is committed to reaching out to as many Catholic Parishes, Schools, and Organizations as possible within the Diocese of Wilmington. As this is a new process, this initial series of *Listening Sessions* at the deanery level will help the Synodal Team to refine the process and make it as user friendly as possible for those that would like to host their own event. This is just the beginning of diocesan consultations not the end, so your patience is appreciated as this project continues to be developed and to unfold.

There will also be the opportunity to participate in a recorded virtual *Listening Session*, so that any person, at anytime can be included in some fashion and provide their feedback. The period of *Listening Sessions* will continue until May 31, 2022, so there will be plenty of time to organize *Listening Sessions* and consult with everyone who would like to participate. As soon as new resources are made available, you will be among the first to know about them. All resources that have been disseminated including those mentioned in this memorandum will be available on our website at: www.cdow.org/synod

Thank you for your help and for your support of the Synodal Process in our diocese and for ensuring that your parish is represented. Should you have any questions or need assistance, please feel free to contact me at gevers@cdow.org.

May God be with you as we all strive to “journey together” for the glory of God and the salvations of souls in our parishes and in our diocese!

DEANERY LISTENING SESSION REGISTRATION CHECKLIST

- ✓ Identify the **Date & Place** of your Deanery Listening Session
- ✓ Select **five parish representatives** to attend and give them
 - The Listening Session Date & Place
 - ***Synod Listening Session – Information for Participants.pdf***
- ✓ Identify your **Small Group Leader** within your parish group and give him/her
 - ***Synod Listening Session – Instructions for Small Group Leaders.pdf***
- ✓ Identify your **Reporter** within your parish group and give him/her the Documents
 - ***Synod Listening Session – Instructions for Reporters.pdf***
 - ***Synod Listening Session – Small Group Report Form.pdf***
- ✓ Decide if an **Observer** either the Pastor, Associate Pastor or Deacon will attend
- ✓ Register your parish cohort online by **Wednesday, February 2, 2022** at www.cdown.org/synod or using the direct link here:
www.cognitofrms.com/CDOW1/SynodDeaneryListeningSessionRegistrationForm
 - Provide their phone number and email address when possible
- ✓ If anyone becomes unavailable to attend, find a replacement and share the appropriate documentation based on their role.