

Engaging with Synodality: the journey in one parish

Robert Czerny

November 20, 2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

St. Basil's Parish, Ottawa: before 2022

- Progressive parish founded 1960; energetic, educated, engaged laity; long-time habits (parish pastoral council, women at altar...)
- “Imagine St. Basil’s” exercise 2015-17
- Supportive pastor
- Indigenous resonances
- Networks (Concerned Lay Catholics, FutureChurch etc.)

Link to the full text that underlies these slides:

[St Basils 2nd Assembly Synodality.pdf](#)

Winter-Spring 2022

- 22 listening and sharing circles (some virtual, mostly in person with Covid precautions)
- 100 parishioners, 20 visitors
- Facilitators, note-takers
- Three report writers for report to the diocese, and longer version for the parish
 - subsequent Diocesan and CCCB reports were consistent with what we had submitted
- Strong support for continuing a synodal journey
 - what to do? (welcoming; women's reflections; youth leader)
 - versus how we do?

2023

- Joined Parish Pastoral Council to support the Women in the Church Ministry and synodality at St. Basil's
- Weekly reports before, during and after First Assembly
- Post-Synod presentation by Dr. Catherine Clifford
 - invitations to people from outside St. Basil's
- Two-track proposal for upcoming Lent: test the appetite and methods for
 - conducting more small listening and sharing circles
 - applying synodality to parish groups and activities

Winter-Spring 2024

- Four listening and sharing circles during Lent
- Two major meetings in Lent utilized “Conversations in the Spirit”
- Parish report to Rome (May 15)
 - history
 - repeat the perennial issues - how do we listen to the Holy Spirit and incarnate Christ today?
 - key learnings from Lent activities
 - worries about widespread lethargy/ hostility

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Learnings and challenges: small circles

- There is an appetite for more small listening and sharing circles
- What should be the schedule and scope?
- How to invite participants?
 - new and repeat participants
 - both within and outside our parish
- Logistics
 - communications
 - venue
 - facilitators

Synod
2021
2024

For a synodal Church
communion | participation | mission

Key learnings: synodal culture

- Embrace synodality fully, as *how we do what we do*, by entrenching synodal principles, processes and culture in all ministries and committees. This means:
 - inclusion—welcome a wide range of members plus “Nothing about us without us”
 - co-responsibility—balance of lay and clerical responsibility
 - using the “Conversations in the Spirit” methodology in regular and special discussions.

Conversations in the Spirit

In conducting the affairs of a group, this approach:

1. values all members fully, rather than having one person or a few dominate.
2. encourages each member to make a genuine contribution.
3. commits all members to listen and respond deeply rather than holding onto preconceived ideas and agendas.
4. values prayer and prayerful reflection in order to hear the urgings of the Holy Spirit.

Findings: not easy; needs careful planning and competent facilitators.

Summer-Autumn 2024

- Formed a six-member Synodality Ministry team to plan and promote how we continue to journey together
 - reports to Parish Pastoral Council
- Two more uses of “Conversations in the Spirit”
- Messages before, during and after the Second Assembly
- Dr. Clifford will present again

Takeaway: ***Try it!*** To reach me: 613-858-6936 cell; czerny@sympatico.ca

Use our May 15 report if you wish: [St Basils 2nd Assembly Synodality.pdf](#)