CATHOLIC
DIOCESE OF
BROKEN BAY

How do we nurture a culture of being a synodal Church?

ACCOMPANIMENT GUIDE

DIOCESAN OFFICES



"While they were talking and discussing, Jesus himself came near and went with them."

Luke 24:15

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Team: ..... **Date:**.....

Name of person completing this Accompaniment Guide: .....

A Synodal Church

"We want to be a synodal Church, a Church that moves forward, a Church that always seeks peace, that always seeks charity, that always seeks to be close above all to those who are suffering."

Pope Leo XIV,
"First Blessing 'Urbi et Orbi,'" The Holy See, 8 May 2025

Nurturing a culture of being a synodal Church

In his address to commemorate the 50th Anniversary of the Synod of Bishops in 2015, Pope Francis invited the Church to rediscover its synodal character. In his words:

"Synodality is the path that God expects of the Church in the third millennium."

To walk this path together is not simply a strategy for pastoral effectiveness—it is a theological expression of who we are as the People of God.

To be a synodal Church in mission is to embrace encounter, listening, discernment, participation, and shared responsibility as essential expressions of our communion. It requires us to pause and reflect on where we are, so that we may prayerfully discern where the Spirit is calling us to go—and how we are to get there, together.

This document draws upon the Final Document from the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Synod on Synodality (2024), translating its proposed actions into a practical framework for local implementation. **(Appendix I)**

Through in-depth evaluation, prayer and conversations rooted in listening and dialogue, parish communities are invited to assess how synodal practices are being fostered across key dimensions of Church life—such as encounter, listening and discernment, shared decision-making, co-responsibility, inclusion, accountability, safeguarding, formation, and leadership.

In the words of the late Pope Francis;

"A synodal Church is a listening Church, aware that listening 'is more than hearing.' It is a mutual listening in which everyone has something to learn." (2015)

And affirmed by Pope Leo.

"Synodality is a style, an attitude that helps us to be Church, promoting authentic experiences of participation and communion." (June 2025)

In the context of the Synod on Synodality, Pope Francis has emphasised that the goal is not simply to produce a report, but to animate ongoing conversion, planning, and growth. May this process be a meaningful step forward in nurturing a culture of being a synodal Church—one that walks together in faith, with open hearts.

Purpose

This **Diocesan Offices Accompaniment Guide** is a self-reflection tool designed to assist Diocesan Office staff in deepening their synodal journey by embracing the principles of **communion, participation,** and **mission**.

The insights drawn from **each reflective statement** and **reflection question** aim to support discernment, considering ways that our team may nurture a culture of being a synodal Church.

Instructions

Step One: Welcoming all to Participate

Invite members of your Diocesan Office to participate in a prayerful conversation responding to the five key themes:

Theme 1: Participation and Listening

A synodal Church grows when every team member is welcomed as a valued contributor to the Church's life and mission. Participation begins with attentive listening - listening to one another, to those we serve, and to the Holy Spirit, recognising that wisdom is discovered through the diverse experiences, gifts and perspectives of the People of God. For our Diocesan Office, listening is a way of working together that nurtures trust, strengthens relationships and informs mission.

Theme 2: Shared Leadership and Decision-Making

Synodality calls every member of the Church to embrace co-responsibility for its mission, where leadership is exercised as service and authority is lived in communion. Within our Diocesan Office, shared leadership values the gifts, experience and expertise of each person, fostering collaboration and prayerful discernment so that decisions are made together in service of the Diocese's mission.

Theme 3: Openness to the Holy Spirit and Discernment

The synodal journey is not primarily about structures or processes, but about continually discerning God's will through the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Authentic discernment requires prayer, humility and attentive listening, creating space for God to reveal new possibilities. For our Diocesan Office, discernment shapes the way we reflect, plan, make decisions and accompany the ministries and communities which we serve together.

Theme 4: Inclusion and Welcome

A synodal Church seeks to reflect the welcome of Christ by recognising the dignity of every person and creating a culture where all experience respect, belonging and participation.

For our Diocesan Office, we foster relationships marked by hospitality, compassion and openness, ensuring that those we serve encounter the Church as welcoming, attentive, responsive, and inclusive.

Theme 5: Mission and Outreach

Everything the Church does is directed towards its mission of proclaiming the Gospel and serving God's people. The work of our Diocesan Office supports and strengthens this mission by accompanying parishes, ministries, communities, and each other with generosity and collaboration. Rooted in communion and guided by discernment, we are continually called to respond to the changing needs of the Diocese and the wider community.

Theme 6: Mission and Outreach

Everything entrusted to the Church, its people, resources, ministries and mission is a gift to be received with gratitude and exercised with faithful stewardship. A synodal Church nurtures a culture of integrity, transparency and shared responsibility, where accountability strengthens trust, deepens communion and supports the Church's mission. For our Diocesan Office, this means exercising our responsibilities with integrity and accountability, fostering a culture of trust where our leadership, stewardship and decision-making reflect our shared commitment to **communion, participation** and **mission.**

Step Two: Listening Deeply and Discerning Together

Before beginning, invite your team to **gather in prayer**. You may wish to use the Scripture references provided under each theme title, or prepare a prayer of your own.

Each key theme includes four to five reflective statements intended to support meaningful reflection and discernment. These statements invite you to consider how your team is nurturing a synodal culture. The accompanying code (e.g., "**FD94**") refers to the relevant paragraph in the *Final Document* from the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Synod on Synodality (2024).For each statement, indicate the stage of development as one of the following:

- Developed and Embedded
- Developed
- Developing
- Yet to Develop

After reflecting on and recording your progress for each **Reflective Statement,** use the **Reflection Question** below each table to prompt deeper group discussion and discernment. Teams are encouraged to apply the ***Conversation in the Spirit*** methodology **(Appendix II)** when engaging with each Reflection Question.

Step Three: Discerning next steps for Mission

After your time of prayer and reflection, identify **three** priority areas that your team will focus on as you continue the journey towards nurturing culture for a synodal Church.

Once these priority areas are identified, develop SMART goals—goals that are **S**pecific, **M**easurable, **A**chievable, **R**elevant, and **T**ime-bound. These goals should outline how your team will actively work towards fostering a culture of synodality. **(Appendix III)**

Theme 1: Participation and Listening

Where two or three are gathered in my name,
I am there among them.
Matthew 18:20

Nurturing a synodal culture
Where are we on the journey?

Our team:	Developed and embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to be Developed
Reflective Statements: ...intentionally creates opportunities for every person to participate in the shared mission of our team, recognising that through Baptism all the faithful possess gifts to contribute to the discernment of the Church. **FD 28**				
...listens respectfully and attentively to one another before making decisions, believing that authentic listening is an essential expression of communion. **FD 78**				
....values the experiences, wisdom and perspectives of all members, recognising that the Holy Spirit speaks through the whole People of God *(sensus fidei)*. **FD 22**				
...reflects on what we hear and allows listening to shape our planning, priorities and decisions. **FD 82**				

Reflection Question:

How might our team grow in listening more deeply to one another and to those we are called to serve?

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Theme 2: Shared Leadership & Decision Making

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another
as good stewards of God's varied grace.

1 Peter 4:10

Nurturing a synodal culture
Where are we on the journey?

Our team:	Developed and embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to be Developed
Reflective Statements				
...understands leadership as a ministry of service rather than authority exercised in isolation. **FD 74**				
...works collaboratively, recognising that responsibility for the Church's mission belongs to the whole People of God, together. **FD 36, 40**				
...values the diverse charisms, vocations and professional expertise of every member. **FD 57, 36**				
...seeks to make decisions through prayerful discernment rather than relying solely on efficiency or organisational processes. **FD 84**				
...encourages shared responsibility and transparency in the way decisions are made and communicated. **FD 93**				

Reflection Question:

How might we strengthen shared leadership, collaboration and prayerful discernment in the way we work together?

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Theme 3: Openness to the Holy Spirit & Discernment

Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God—what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Romans 12:2

Nurturing a synodal culture
Where are we on the journey?

Our team:	Developed and embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to be Developed
Reflective Statements				
...begins its work with prayer, trusting that discernment begins by listening together to the Holy Spirit. **FD 84**				
...intentionally creates space for shared discernment before making significant decisions. **FD 79**				
...remains open to new possibilities, recognising that the Spirit continually renews the Church. **FD 61**				
...regularly reflects on how God is inviting us to grow in our service and mission. **FD 51**				
...is willing to adapt and change when discernment reveals new directions for mission. **FD 84**				

Reflection Question:

Where do we acknowledge and celebrate the movement of the Holy Spirit in our team's work, and to what new possibilities might God be calling us?

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Theme 4: Inclusion and Welcome

Welcome one another, therefore, just as Christ has welcomed you, for the glory of God.

Romans 15:7

Nurturing a synodal culture

Where are we on the journey?

Our team:	Developed and embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to be Developed
Reflective Statements				
...strives to ensure that every person experiences welcome, dignity and respect in all our interactions. **FD 77**				
...seeks to remove barriers that prevent people from participating fully in our shared mission. **FD 48**				
...values diversity and recognises that the richness of different experiences strengthens the Church. **FD 63**				
...accompanies people with compassion, patience and hope, particularly those experiencing difficulty. **FD 50**				
...continually reflects on how our policies, practices and attitudes foster a culture of belonging. **FD 56**				

Reflection Question:

How might our team become a more welcoming, inclusive and compassionate presence for one another and for those we accompany?

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Theme 5: Mission and Outreach

Go and make disciples of all nations.

Matthew 28:19

Nurturing a synodal culture

Where are we on the journey?

Our team:	Developed and embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to be Developed
Reflective Statements				
...recognises that every ministry exists to support the mission entrusted to the Church. **FD 48**				
...seeks to serve parishes, ministries and the wider community with generosity and humility. **FD 20**				
...regularly asks how our work contributes to evangelisation and missionary renewal. **FD 32**				
...is attentive to emerging pastoral needs and remains responsive to the changing realities of our Diocese. **FD 109**				
...actively collaborates with others across the Diocesan Offices and Diocese so that together we better serve the People of God. **FD 94**				

Reflection Question:

How might our team better support the mission of the Diocese through the work entrusted to us, with others?

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Theme 6: Stewardship and Accountability

Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received.

1 Peter 4:10

Nurturing a synodal culture

Where are we on the journey?

Our team:	Developed and embedded	Developed	Developing	Yet to be Developed
Reflective Statements				
...exercises stewardship with integrity, shared responsibility and transparency. **FD 97**				
...accepts accountability for the responsibilities entrusted to us. **FD 90**				
...regularly evaluates the impact of our ministry on the Diocese's mission. **FD 141, 95**				
...is committed to fostering a culture where every person's dignity is protected through safeguarding practices that builds trust, accountability, and participation of all. **FD 98**				
...uses structures and processes to support communion, participation and mission rather than simply administration. **FD 102**				

Reflection Question:

How might our team exercise greater stewardship, transparency and accountability in service of the Diocese's mission?

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Step Three: Discerning next steps for mission.. continued

"Synodality is a path of spiritual renewal and structural reform that enables the Church to be more participatory and missionary so that it can walk with every man and woman, radiating the light of Christ." (FD28)

Where to now?

Setting priorities and developing SMART Goals

After your time of prayerful reflection and dialogue, your team is invited to take the next step in continuing to nurture a culture of synodality by identifying **three** priority areas for action. These priorities should emerge from the key themes explored in your conversations and reflect where the Team is being called to grow. As you discern these areas, consider which actions will have the greatest impact in building a more participatory, inclusive, and mission-oriented Church.

For each priority area, develop one or more **S M A R T** goals—goals that are:

Specific — Clearly define what you aim to accomplish.

Measurable — Determine how you will assess progress and success.

Achievable — Ensure the goal is realistic given your available resources.

Relevant — Align the goal with your Diocesan Office's mission and current needs.

Time-bound — Set a clear deadline or timeframe for completion.

For each SMART goal indicate:

Who will be responsible for implementing it (e.g., an individual, ministry, or or small team within your team).

When the goal is expected to be achieved (a specific date or timeframe).

As you formulate each goal, take time not only to define what you hope to achieve but also prayerfully consider any potential obstacles that may arise. Anticipating challenges—such as limited time, resources, or differing expectations—can lead to more thoughtful and realistic planning. As a team, reflect together on these possible barriers and explore practical ways to address or overcome them. This shared awareness deepens commitment and nurtures a spirit of collaboration as you continue the journey forward.

Fostering shared ownership and responsibility throughout the goal-setting and implementation process is key. These intentional steps will support the Team in walking the synodal path with greater unity, purpose, and hope.

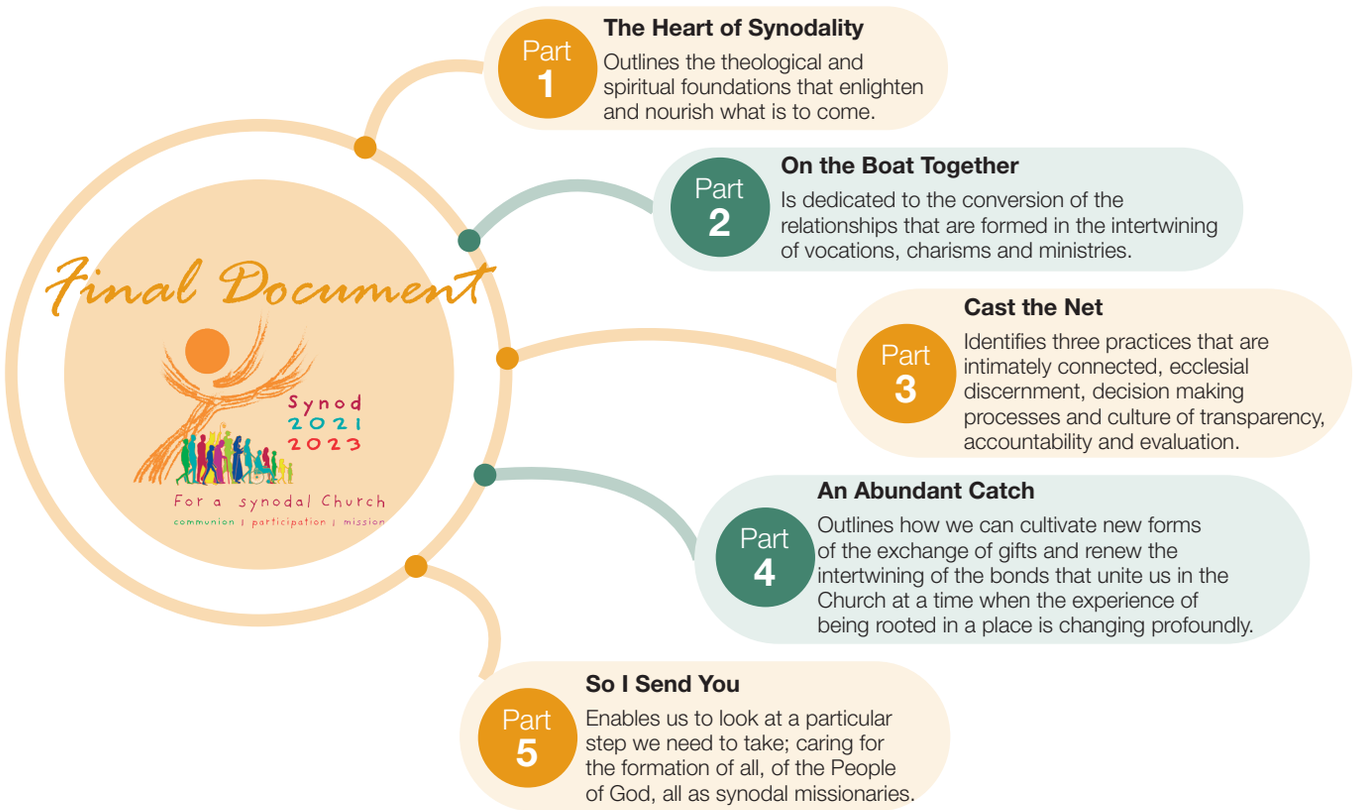
A synodal Church *"is not to produce documents, but to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands."*

Pope Francis — 11 December, 2023

Appendix I: The Final Document

For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, Mission

Final Document



In 2021, Pope Francis issued a historic invitation to the entire People of God to embark on a synodal journey—a global process of listening, dialogue, and discernment. His vision was for a Church that walks together, rooted in communion, participation, and mission. This synodal path involved local and continental consultations, culminating in two major gatherings in Rome: the first in October 2023 and the second in October 2024. These assemblies brought together bishops, laypeople, religious, and clergy in a spirit of prayerful reflection to discern how the Church can more fully embody synodality at every level.

The **Final Document** presents key insights and proposals shaped by the voices of the faithful worldwide. It emphasises shared leadership, inclusion, discernment, and renewal in mission. Pope Francis has urged the Church not to let this work remain theoretical, stating at the closing address at the First Session of the Synod on Synodality, October 28, 2023;

> ***"We must not be afraid to implement the fruits of the synodal process. The Holy Spirit is the protagonist, and we are called to listen, discern, and act with courage."***

The Synod calls all communities to engage deeply with these proposals and to live synodality as a way of being Church—together.

Appendix II: Conversation in the Spirit Methodology

Conversation in the Spirit is a prayerful discernment methodology that invites participants to listen deeply to the Holy Spirit and to one another, fostering a respectful and reflective space for sharing. Rooted in synodal practice, it emphasises silence, attentive listening, and communal reflection to seek God's guidance — together.

Round 1:

- Everyone takes equal turns to share,
- Each person is invited to speak for one or two minutes,
- Each person begins with ***"In my prayer",***
- There is no discussion and no response during this round,
- Each person is invited to share what God is speaking to them about through prayer.

One minute of silent, prayerful reflection on what you have heard.

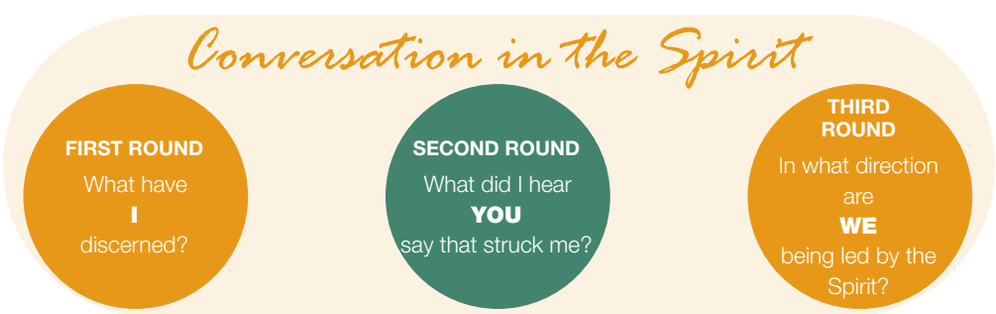
Round 2:

- Participants share what struck them most, what resonated during the time of silence,
- Everyone takes equal turns to share,
- Each person will have one or two minutes to share,
- Respond with questions such as;
  - ◊ *How was I affected by what I heard?*
  - ◊ *Is there a comment or thread that is shared?*
  - ◊ *Have I received any particular insight?*
  - ◊ *Where did I experience a sense of harmony in what I was hearing from others?*
  - ◊ *What am I feeling now?*

One minute of silent, prayerful reflection on what you have heard.

Round 3:

- Participants are invited to share what seems to be resonating in the conversation,
- Participants are not obliged to speak and can speak spontaneously,
- Respond with questions such as;
  - ◊ *What shared discernment has emerged?*
  - ◊ *Where is the Holy Spirit calling us to go?*
  - ◊ *What seems to be resonating in the conversation from the group?*



Appendix III: Discerning the next steps — Goal Setting

Goal 1 Start Date | Due Date

S M A R T Goal

Goal Progress 0% | | | | | | | | | | 100%

ACTION STEPS	Possible obstacles
	How to overcome obstacles

In review…

Goal 2 Start Date | Due Date

S M A R T Goal

Goal Progress 0% 100%

ACTION STEPS	Possible obstacles
	How to overcome obstacles

In review…

Notes and Reflections

Notes and Reflections

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This **Accompaniment Guide** was developed by Patti Beattie,
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It draws on the **Final Document** from the XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops, Synod on Synodality (2024), translating its proposed actions into a practical framework for local application. The guide is designed for use in parishes, ministry groups, and other community settings to support shared reflection, dialogue, and planning, as we continue to nurture a culture of being a synodal Church.

This guide is a formation resource and does not constitute doctrinal, canonical, or professional advice.
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