

2021 Synod 2023

For a synodal Church

Diocese of Cheyenne: Synod 2021 – 2023 Synod Plan

Phase II: Outreach (March - April 2022)

Notes due: May 2, 2022

As we, sisters and brothers, in the Diocese of Cheyenne, continue on our Synodal path, let us keep in mind the following statement. "...[T]he purpose of this Synod is not to produce more documents. Rather, it is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to make people's hopes flourish, to stimulate trust, to bind up wounds, to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, warm hearts, and restore strength to our hands for our common mission" (PD, 32).

Phase I: In-reach of Synod 2021 – 2023 in the Diocese of Cheyenne is organized according to the principle of subsidiarity so that parishes are empowered to conduct listening sessions using models and methods that work best for their particular community. **Phase II: Outreach** also will be organized using the principle of subsidiarity because local communities are where relationships are formed and nurtured, as well as where the most fruitful interactions occur.

Phase II: Outreach in the Diocese of Cheyenne will adhere to the following statement: "We must *personally reach out* to the peripheries, to those who have left the Church, those who rarely or never practice their faith, those who experience poverty or marginalization, refugees, the excluded, the voiceless, etc." (*Vademecum* 4:1). Communities throughout the state of Wyoming have their own particular marginalized and overlooked people. For this reason, parishes may wish to start **Phase II: Outreach** by working with existing organizations and services, beginning with those who are closest and easiest to reach and gradually moving farther out to the peripheries.

To begin **Phase II: Outreach**, pastors and/or deacons who are involved with ecumenical groups may wish to *personally invite* members who share our common baptism (the Office of Communications has provided a letter sample for adaptation) to attend one or more listening sessions. The same three-step method used for parish gatherings may be used and/or adapted (see *Guidance for Parish Coordinators* on the Diocese of Cheyenne webpage: <https://dioceseofcheyenne.org/synod-2021-2023>).

In addition, some pastors and/or deacons may wish to also reach out to members of other faith systems [The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, Muslims, Jews, etc.] Those who do so need to be mindful of differences in scripture usage and prayer forms.

Because **Phase II** also involves *personally reaching out* to those who have left the Catholic Church, those who do not have a relationship with God, and those who may be angry with God and/or the Church, the method for dialogue needs to be adjusted.

The first step is to move away from the language and model of "Listening Sessions" and "Church Gatherings" into the language and model of "Encounters"—in particular, encounters with "the other" [those who are different from the person initiating the encounter—age, gender, nationality, race, political leanings, economic situation, worship, etc.]. As followers of Jesus, we are co-responsible for his mission, and this is an opportunity for the People of God in the Diocese of Cheyenne to follow in the footsteps of Jesus. We know from the Gospels that Jesus encountered people; he

listened to them; and he revealed himself in those dialogues, thereby changing lives (see John 4:1-42), and sometimes allowing himself to be changed (see Matthew 15:22-29 and Mark 7:24-30).

To create encounters with those who are on the peripheries:

1. Make a list of organizations—soup kitchens, food banks, elderly care centers, homeless shelters, etc.—in the town in which the parish is located [such organizations vary in each community]. Then identify parish members who currently volunteer or work in these places. Synod 2021 – 2023 parish coordinators also were asked to identify such persons during listening sessions, so pastors should consult with them, as well.
2. Pastors may find it effective to *personally invite* parishioners who work or volunteer at these organizations to set up an “encounter” with people whom they already serve and know. **[NOTE: If a pastor cannot take on this responsibility, he needs to appoint a deacon and/or staff member and/or volunteer(s).]**
3. If no one in the parish currently is serving or working in these organizations, pastors or whomever is responsible for this task should *personally invite* other parishioners whom they believe have the qualities needed to conduct these encounters. Qualities include:
 - a. Spiritually mature persons
 - b. Effective communicators who can instinctively lead natural conversations
 - c. Ability to interact well with people of diverse cultural, generational, and ecclesial backgrounds
 - d. Ability to remember key points to make notes after the encounter
 - e. Willingness to share information with a small group for discernment purposes (more on that below)
4. Many parish coordinators have asked how to engage our sisters and brothers who have left the church. Pastors and parishioners, who know people who have left the church, may *personally reach out* to these individuals to ask if they would be willing to visit. [This is an opportunity to engage *all* parishioners to play an active role in the Synodal process. Those who have left the church likely will be more comfortable talking with a friend or acquaintance than they would be talking with someone whom they never have met.]
 - a. Those who have left the Church may not wish to come to the Church building, so encounters will need to take place where these individuals feel comfortable. In this case, the statement “meet them where they are” may be taken literally. If a pastor believes it would be effective to run an ad in the local newspaper or on the parish social media platforms to invite those who have left the Church to a gathering (in a space other than the Church Building), they should do so.
5. While they may not be easily identified as “on the margins,” some practicing Catholics still are not comfortable attending large in-person gatherings. Parishes should identify and *reach out* to those people to offer other options for participation, which could include small-group Zoom Listening Sessions, which, at least allows people to see one another’s faces.
6. Parishes may be aware of other marginalized persons in their particular location that are not referenced above. Keeping in mind, that every community has specific demographics and needs, the Chancery Office does not presume to know exactly how each parish should conduct outreach.

How one-to-one (or small group—no more than six people) relational meetings work [Note: Below are suggestions intended to ignite creativity in those who will have encounters. The Chancery Office cannot provide a script for encounters because every person and situation is different.]:

1. Either by phone or in person, connect with the person(s) you want to visit.
2. If these person(s) do not yet know you or may have forgotten who you are, introduce yourself. **For example:** “My name is Maria. I am a member of St. Paul’s Catholic Church. I wonder if you would be willing to talk with me about your experience with the Church.” OR “This is Father Joe at St. Anthony’s, and I’ve noticed that you haven’t been in Mass for a while. I want you to know that you are missed.”
3. Request an opportunity to visit. **For example:** “Would you be willing to visit with me for a half hour or so?”
4. During the encounter:
 - a. Get to know the person’s thoughts and concerns. Ask them about their experience, if any with the Catholic Church, or ask them what their impression is of the Catholic Church’s involvement in the community and of the Church in general.
 - b. When encountering elderly homebound persons who identify as Catholic, ask what they miss the most about attending Church or ask them how the Church can better serve them.
 - c. When encountering folks at homeless shelters, soup kitchens, etc., ask them, “If you were to belong to a church what that church would be like?”
 - d. When encountering those who have left the Church, ask them what, if any, joys, they remember from when they were practicing their Faith; ask them what about the Church breaks their hearts.
5. Invite. If someone is very passionate, enthusiastic, or interested, invite him or her to get involved in a more concrete way—for example, ask if he or she would be willing to take part in a larger gathering with other people also concerned about these same issues.
6. After the meeting:
 - a. Make some notes about whom you met, where and when you met, what you learned, and any other important information that came from the encounter.

(Source adapted from: <https://www.wearesaltandlight.org/reach-out-together/building-relationships-creating-culture-encounter-through-one-ones?fbclid=IwAR3hotnDVLXTve78AVej38acG5uUCQBAo6IInnq66w7uhrg67vk8CCC3iTU>)

Gathering of the Fruits

Parishes should hold gatherings for those who have Outreach Encounters so they may share what they did and learned. At that meeting, the Gathering of the Fruits should take place, as participants ask themselves, “based on what we have shared, what is the Holy Spirit saying to us?” Someone should take notes during these gatherings and clearly identify the Gathering of the Fruits. Notes from all Outreach gatherings need to be given, as a Word file, to the Record Keeper for the parish [this is the coordinator who took the role of record keeper for parish listening sessions/gatherings]. The Record Keeper will then merge those notes into one file to send to Diana Marie Waggener no later than **May 2, 2022**.

Contributors:

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