**CURRENT STATUS OF PARISH SYNOD**

**AND ASSESSMENT INITIATIVES**

**MARCH 27, 2022**

Since January 2022 Ascension Parish has been involved in a churchwide Catholic SYNOD initiative. As part of this process, Pope Francis asked Catholics to listen to the Holy Spirit and prayerfully discern God’s will for our Church. For those of us in the Diocese of Richmond, this entailed a discussion at the parish level with four specific questions about our universal Catholic church and parish mission. Parishes across the world are responding to the SYNOD process. The results will be discussed throughout the Church’s hierarchy and at the World Synod of Bishops in Rome in October 2023.

This Church-wide initiative complemented an Ascension parish-wide effort begun in 2021 to celebrate our 50th Anniversary and create a new 50-year parish vision to inspire and renew us for the next half-century as Missionary Disciples. The first phase of our SYNOD initiative consisted of “listening sessions” across the parish. More than 160 parishioners from 12 to 80 plus years of age gathered in more than 22 small groups to discuss the four basic questions provided by the Diocese. In addition, more than 25 individual discussions were conducted with people identified as being on the margin of our church. These are people who attend Mass infrequently or who have stopped attending parish activities completely. These sessions are now complete. We thank all that participated.

A summary of the process used, participant demographics, and major themes discovered were recently provided to the Diocese. Our parish writing team is currently developing a lengthier summary of the parish results and suggestions. The information from Ascension’s SYNOD journey, along with the results of a soon-to-be conducted parish assessment survey, will be combined to give us a comprehensive view of our current parish performance. This synopsis will provide us with a solid foundation from which to launch future parish-wide strategic conversations. These will address objectives, growth as Missionary Disciples, program revisions, and timelines for our parish vision.

Timing: The new parish vision is scheduled to be introduced in April. The synopsis of both the “listening sessions” and the parish performance assessment surveys are scheduled to be completed by early summer.