



## **SMALL GROUP – YEAR 1/ST. PASCAL BAYLON – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

*Note: These FAQs have been prepared by members of the Synod Evangelization Team (SET) at St. Pascal Baylon for the use and benefit of parish members and other interested persons as we continue our Synod journey and move forward to implement the Synod Priority of Small Groups for Year 1 (July 2023 – June 2024) in the parish. The FAQs are based on information currently available to us and are current as of the revision date noted below. FAQs may be adjusted and new FAQs added as new or updated information becomes available.*

### **Small Groups for Lent 2024** (content below new as of 12/20/23)

- **Question:** How may I join a Small Group for this Lent?

**Answer:** Every adult parishioner is invited to join a Small Group by completing the Sign-up Form and Questionnaire available at the table in the Gathering Space after weekend Masses on January 6/7, 13/14, and 20/21, or from the parish office, or download and print the form and questionnaire from the parish website ([www.stpascals.org/archdiocesan-synod](http://www.stpascals.org/archdiocesan-synod)) or the Pulse weekly e-newsletter. Drop off your completed form at the parish office or the table in the Gathering Space after those weekend Masses. *Please return your completed form and questionnaire to the parish office or to a SET member at the table in the Gathering Space after weekend Masses no later than Sunday, January 21, 2024.*

- **Question:** What will the Small Groups at St. Pascal's be like this Lent?

**Answer:** Groups of 6-10 members will meet weekly for 1-1/2 hours for the six weeks of Lent. Each Small Group will be guided by a Small Group leader (and possibly a co-leader) from our parish who has been specially formed and trained for this role. Each Small Group will have a common format or structure, which will include prayer, personal sharing, and teaching and content which will be prepared each week by Pastor Fr. John Mitchell, Deacon Rich Moore, and Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation Kim Roering. The goal of each Small Group is to help its members grow in intimacy with the Lord, grow in love of one another, share Jesus with others in our daily lives by word and deed, give and receive support, deepen our identity as Catholic Christians, and, collectively, help make St. Pascal's a stronger, vibrant faith-filled community.

- **Question:** Can you help me understand the structure of and how to fill out the Small Group Sign-up Form and Questionnaire?

**Answer:** The document is divided into two parts: the Sign-up Form on page 1 and the Questionnaire on pages 2 and 3.

*Sign-up Form.* If you wish to join a Small Group, please sign-up by providing your name and requested contact information (telephone number and e-mail address).

**SMALL GROUP – YEAR 1/ST. PASCAL BAYLON –  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

*Questionnaire.* The Questionnaire is a series of five questions which provide you with the opportunity to communicate certain preferences you may have for the Small Group in which you may be placed. For example, if you wish, you may indicate your preference to be placed in a Small Group as an individual, or as a couple, or possibly as a group that you identify (subject to conditions stated in the Questionnaire). You may indicate your preference about the general age of group members or an interest you have that may be shared by other group members in a particular subject or activity that is important to you. You may also indicate a preference for the general time and day and location you would like your Small Group to meet. You will indicate your preference to each of the five questions by ranking them in order (1 – 5) of importance to you.

*Note:* Your preferences regarding Small Groups provided in the Questionnaire are important and we appreciate knowing about them. The Pastor and the Synod Evangelization Team (SET) will carefully consider all responses provided in the Questionnaire. Please understand, however, that our ability to accommodate preferences noted will depend on a variety of factors, including the number of Small Group Leaders we have, the number of people who wish to join a Small Group, the scheduling availability of Small Group Leaders, participants, and meeting locations, the alignment of preferences with other participants, direction and guidance we receive from the Archdiocese and our pastor, etc. We may not be able to accommodate all preferences in this first year of Small Groups. We appreciate your understanding and support.

- **Question:** Who will the Small Group be composed of?

**Answer:** Each Small Group will be composed of 6-10 parishioners, including the Small Group Leader and possibly a co-leader. Every effort will be made to accommodate a participant's request to be placed in a group of individuals, couples, or an identified group (subject to conditions stated in the Questionnaire) and, if possible and depending on the importance a participant has indicated in the Questionnaire, with people who align with a stated age preference (if any) or share an interest in a given subject or activity.

- **Question:** Who decides who is going to be in a particular Small Group?

**Answer:** For the launch of Small Groups at St. Pascal's for Lent 2024, Fr. John Mitchell and the parish Synod Evangelization Team (SET) will be organizing the participants in each Small Group as best they can taking into account the individuals who have signed up to be in a Small Group and the preferences they indicated in their Questionnaires, and, as guided by the Spirit, with the overarching goal of forming each Small Group to have the greatest likelihood of being an enjoyable and fruitful experience.

**SMALL GROUP – YEAR 1/ST. PASCAL BAYLON –  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

- **Question:** Do I have to sign-up as an individual in order to join a Small Group? Or may I sign up as a couple or as a group?

**Answer:** You are welcome to sign up as an individual or as a couple or as an identified group (of up to 6 people) and, if possible, we will try to accommodate the preference of those who wish to join as a couple or as an identified group. Please note, however, we reserve the right to combine an identified group with other individuals or couples as necessary.

- **Question:** May I be in a Small Group with people close to my own age?

**Answer:** Participants may indicate whether being in a Small Group with people close to their own age is important to them and, if possible, we will try to accommodate this preference.

- **Question:** May I be in a Small Group with people who share my interest in a particular subject or activity?

**Answer:** Participants may indicate whether being in a Small Group with people who may share their interest in a particular subject or activity (e.g., social justice, the Mass, prayer ministry, evangelization, Bible study, faith sharing, sacramental preparation, etc.) is important to them, and, if possible, we will try to accommodate this preference.

- **Question:** When will Small Groups meet?

**Answer:** Small Groups will meet once a week for 1-1/2 hours during each of the six weeks of Lent (February 14 – March 22). We hope to have meeting times available weekday (Monday – Thursday) mornings and evenings and possibly Sunday mornings before the 10:30 a.m. Mass. When a Small Group meets will be determined taking into account as best we can the preferences as to meeting day(s) and time(s) that participants have indicated in their Questionnaires.

- **Question:** Where will Small Groups meet?

**Answer:** Small Groups will meet at St. Pascal's and possibly other locations to be determined such as a parishioner's home or other suitable location (e.g., the social room at a parishioner's apartment building, townhouse, condominium, or senior residential facility). Where a Small Group meets will be determined taking into account as best we can the preferences as to meeting location that participants have indicated in their Questionnaire.

**SMALL GROUP – YEAR 1/ST. PASCAL BAYLON –  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

- **Question:** What will the content of the Small Group meeting be like?

**Answer:** For this initial experience of Small Groups at St. Pascal's in Lent 2024, the content of the meeting will be the same for every Small Group. A teaching and related discussion questions will be prepared each week by Pastor Fr. John Mitchell, Deacon Rich Moore, and Pastoral Associate for Faith Formation Kim Roering. Fr. John has indicated that the content will focus on the weekly Sunday Scripture readings during Lent. In addition to the same content, the Small Groups will also have a common format or structure, which will include prayer, personal sharing, and discussion. Although using the same content and a common format or structure, the experience of Small Groups will be unique to each Small Group depending on the experience, interests, and openness of the participants in each Small Group and the Group's collective willingness to be open to and guided by the Spirit.

- **Question:** What will happen to Small Groups at the end of Lent?

**Answer:** Archbishop Hebda has made clear that his wish is for Small Groups to continue after Lent and into the future for every parish and parishioner. We hope Small Groups will not solely be a Lenten exercise for participants. We appreciate, however, that Small Groups in the form offered here are new to St. Pascal's and that your commitment to join a Small Group is for Lent. Following Lent, Fr. John Mitchell and the parish Synod Evangelization Team (SET) will review the Small Group experience at St. Pascal's this Lent and assess whether Small Groups will continue and, if so, in what form in the future and, hopefully, with an eye towards fuller implementation of Small Groups in the parish. We will likely be following up with Small Group leaders and members alike for their feedback on the Small Group experience to help us in this review and assessment.

**Small Group Leader Formation for Lent 2024** (content below new as of 08/29/23, 07/25/23, and 06/18/23)

- **Question:** You are currently referring to "potential" or "candidate" Small Group leaders. What does that mean? If someone agrees/volunteers to be a Small Group Leader, won't that person be a Small Group Leader?

**Answer:** We are very grateful to those who are willing to be Small Group Leaders and go through formation. We are sure you can understand that how many Small Group Leaders we will ultimately need for Small Groups beginning in Lent 2024 will depend on, among other things, the number of parishioners who wish to join a Small Group, the types of Small Groups we will have, and further direction from the Archdiocese. All of that will be determined as we complete Small Group Leader formation and move forward with the process of implementing Small Groups at St. Pascal's.

**SMALL GROUP – YEAR 1/ST. PASCAL BAYLON –  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

- **Question:** What can you tell me about the formation series to be offered to potential Small Group Leaders?

**Answer:** Every potential Small Group Leader is expected to participate in the Small Group Leader Formation Series. The formation series has been developed by the Archdiocese and will be provided in each parish, including St. Pascal's. There will be seven weekly sessions beginning in late September. Each session will last less than two hours and be presented by video and virtually facilitated by Bishop Williams, similar in format to how the sessions in the Parish Consultation step of the Synod process were conducted at St. Pascal's in fall 2021. The video will run continuously during each session and will include times of prayer, teaching, and small group sharing.

- **Question:** If I agree to participate in the Small Group Leader Formation Series, am I committing to lead a Small Group?

**Answer:** No. Participating in the formation series does not commit you to lead a Small Group.

- **Question:** What will be covered in the Small Group Leader Formation series?

**Answer:** In the Small Group Leader Formation series, participants will learn more about Small Group ministry, the background and objectives of the model of Small Group ministry (which you will hear referred to as the Parish Evangelization Cells System (PECS)) that the Archdiocese has selected as part of our Synod implementation for Small Groups, and the fundamentals of small group leadership, all of which is intended to allow participants the opportunity to hear the call of the Holy Spirit and allow them to discern whether they are called to be a Small Group Leader.

- **Question:** Do potential Small Group Leaders have to attend every session of the Small Group Leader Formation Series?

**Answer:** Because this series is a formation toward leading Small Groups, and small group sharing during the sessions will be an important component of it, participants are expected to attend most, if not all, sessions in person. Recognizing that "life happens," we will be exploring the possibility of making up missed sessions, but make-up sessions (if offered) are intended to be the exception and not the rule.

- **Question:** What is the schedule for the formation series sessions at St. Pascal's?

**Answer:** The schedule for the formation series session is as follows:

- **Session 1** – Monday, September 18, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **OR**  
Tuesday, September 19, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.



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- **Session 2** – Monday, September 25, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **OR**  
Tuesday, September 26, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **Session 3** – Monday, October 2, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **OR**  
Tuesday, October 3, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **Session 4** – Monday, October 9, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **OR**  
Tuesday, October 10, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **Session 5** – Monday, October 16, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **OR**  
Tuesday, October 17, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **Session 6** – Monday, October 23, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **OR**  
Tuesday, October 24, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m.
- **Session 7** – Monday, October 30, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. **OR**  
Tuesday, November 7, 6:30 p.m. – 8:30 p.m. (Note: No Tuesday session on October 31).

All sessions of the formation series will be in Brioschi Hall.

- **Question:** Am I “locked” into choosing either the Monday morning session or the Tuesday evening session? Or may I go to either session, depending on my schedule?

**Answer:** Participants in the formation series are welcome to join either the Monday morning session or the Tuesday evening session in a given week, whichever works best for your schedule that week. The content and materials for the Monday and Tuesday sessions each week will be the same. We would like, however, to have at least 6 people present for each session. So, if you are going to go to a session other than your “usual” session (i.e., the one you indicate a preference for) in a given week, please be sure to let Kim Roering in the parish office know so the number of attendees for each session can be confirmed.

- **Question:** What happens when the formation series concludes?

**Answer:** When the formation series concludes, there will be a mutual discernment, which will include our pastor Fr. John Mitchell, about whether each participant will want to lead a Small Group during Lent 2024 and, if so, what type of Small Group he or she might feel comfortable leading. Not everyone who participates in the formation series will become a Small Group Leader. The discernment may also help participants determine whether they are called to serve a Small Group in a supporting leadership role other than “the leader,” such as hospitality, hosting, communications, etc. And some participants may determine that they would simply prefer to be a member of a Small Group next Lent.





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### Archdiocesan Synod (content below new as of 06/18/23)

- **Question:** What is the Synod?

**Answer:** In 2019, Archbishop Hebda initiated a Synod process grounded in parish life and intended to discern and establish clear pastoral priorities to promote greater unity and more vigorous proclamation of the Good News in the Archdiocese. The Synod process began with Prayer and Listening Events at parishes, including St. Pascal's, during 2019-2020 and Parish Consultation in fall 2021. An Archdiocesan Synod Assembly followed in June 2022 at which 40 Synod Propositions coming out of the Listening Events and Consultation were discussed and voted on by members of the Assembly.

- **Question:** What was the result of the Synod?

**Answer:** In November 2022, Archbishop Hebda published his Post-Synodal Pastoral Letter, *You Will Be My Witnesses*, to the Faithful of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. In his Pastoral Letter, the Archbishop shared his thoughts about the Synod process and how to begin the work now of Synod implementation. To that end, the Archbishop, among other things, asked pastors to form a Synod Evangelization Team (SET) for each parish to assist the pastors in the implementation of Synod Priorities for the parish going forward. The Archbishop established one Synod Priority at the parish level for each of the next three years. The Synod Priority for Year 1 (July 2023 – June 2024) is Small Groups. The purpose of this Synod Priority is to create and grow a small group ministry at every parish that fosters personal relationships, builds community, and provides formation to help parishioners grow as disciples of Christ. Archbishop Hebda has a stated goal of every parishioner in the Archdiocese participating in a Small Group. The result of the Synod is ongoing and continuing.

- **Question:** What does this “Synod thing” have to do with St. Pascal's?

**Answer:** St. Pascal's is now undertaking the Year 1 Archdiocesan Synod Implementation Plan for Small Groups. Fr. John has formed the SET for the parish (Jaci Bush, Nicole Fisch, Julie Moore, Deacon Rich Moore, Kim Roering, John Scanlon, and Mary Weyandt) to assist him in developing and implementing Small Groups at St. Pascal's beginning in Lent 2024. We will need a lot of help to make Small Groups a success, including Small Group Leaders and Small Group participants. We are now at the point (June – August 2023) of identifying parishioners who have the potential to be Small Group Leaders and inviting them to Small Group Leaders formation to be provided at St. Pascal's in the fall 2023.

**SMALL GROUP – YEAR 1/ST. PASCAL BAYLON –  
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQs)**

- **Question:** What will the Small Groups be like?

**Answer:** At this time, we do not have many details about the Small Groups. What we know at this time is that the Small Groups will be small, no more than 6-10 members in each group and will meet weekly during Lent 2024 and be facilitated by Small Group Leaders from the parish. The details about the Small Groups (e.g., formation of Small Group Leaders, what kinds of Small Groups we will have, how membership in a particular Small Group will be determined, how Small Group Leaders will be assigned to Small Groups, the subject matter focus of the Small Group meetings, location of the meetings, when the meetings will be held, how long the meetings will be, materials to be used in the meetings, etc.) are being developed in collaboration with the Archdiocese. We hope to have more detailed information about the Small Groups to share later in the fall.

Revised: 12/20/23  
Supersedes: 08/29/23