

**INTRODUCTION:** The Diocese of Tucson is a mission diocese located in southern Arizona and is bordered by California, New Mexico, the Dioceses of Phoenix in Arizona, the Diocese of Gallup in northern Arizona and New Mexico and northern Mexico. Three Native American Nation are included in our diocesan boundaries: Tohono O’Odham, Pasqua Yaqui and Apache.

A steering committee was appointed to review the Synodal documents and create a process for listening sessions throughout the diocese. From November to February one hundred thirty-three in-person listening sessions were held in the parishes. Twenty of these sessions were in Spanish. Additional sessions for youth and young adults were added. An ecumenical session, an online survey and virtual session with the consecrated religious were offered. A webpage, email address and on-going invitation for responses were sources of additional information. Close to two thousand people participated in the listening sessions. The following five topics of the ten offered in the *Vademecum* document (section 5.3) were used for the sessions. The topics selected were Companions on the Journey, Listening, Celebration, Dialogue, and Discerning and Deciding.

Each listening session was ninety minutes in length and included the discussion of the five topics. Participants were divided into groups of five to eight people, allowing for small group discussion, as well as reporting to the large group. Facilitators and reporters submitted the comment sheets to the steering committee. The steering committee members summarized each topic noting the general comments and anything outstanding or unique.

## **TOPIC SYNTHESSES**

### **TOPIC #1 – COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY**

**VOLUNEERS AND COWORKERS:** Parishioners who either participated or volunteered in one or more ministries were perceived to be “Walking together.” Giving of one’s time to a cause, ministry or volunteering seemed to make it easier for people to be companions on our journey of faith. Those who attended Mass on a regular basis, particularly daily Mass, were also seen as walking together. Similarly, many people felt that those who followed church teaching and were “spiritually stronger” tended to walk together.

**FAITH FORMATION:** Those who participate in some form of catechesis, bible studies or small discussion groups felt closer together. Members of clubs or organizations affiliated with the church such as the Knights of Columbus, Cursillo, Catholic Daughters etc. were seen in a comparable way. Some comments cautioned about the perception or reality that ministries, groups, and organizations can easily be seen as, or become cliques and exclude others from participation. One comment suggested: “We are called to walk together, but not many of us do.”

**GROUPS APART:** Youth and young families were the groups mentioned most often as those who seem further apart. Others named were “marginal” Catholics who attended Mass on an irregular basis (Christmas & Easter), minority and ethnic groups, those not involved in any ministries and the LGBTQ community, and those who speak English as a second language or not at all. Other identified groups included those who were divorced, married outside of the church and single parents as feeling distanced from the rest of the congregation. New parishioners and

visitors, especially winter visitors, those who have been reluctant to return to in-person participation and the elderly who are homebound were also mentioned.

**NEED FOR PROGRAMS:** The sessions revealed a genuine concern to connect with and draw the youth, young adults, and families into the Church. Problems identified that were related to this group included a lack of programs for the youth and young couples, “losing” young people after they have received their sacraments and parish ministries and groups dominated by older parishioners.

**WELCOMING:** The call to bring people together expressed itself in various ways. The most frequent comment was to “be more welcoming” inclusive and open to accepting “people who are different than us.” One comment that stood out was to create a “culture of involvement” which could include a parish welcoming committee to reach out to new parishioners; having greeters at Mass and encourage a personal invitation to involve new people into ministries, groups and other volunteer opportunities were mentioned.

**EVANGELIZATION:** Many comments indicated a need for more evangelization to the general community and to lapsed Catholics. Some reminded us of the “missionary nature” of our church and our baptismal call to evangelize and others suggested that we might learn from other faiths on how they draw people in. More opportunities for adult catechesis, bible studies and small groups were also suggested. Many participants had varied comments that indicated a need for us as a community to become less judgmental of others and better listeners.

**OBSTACLES:** The comments from this topic revealed some communal experiences but also showed some divisions that exist in our Church very similar to those in the secular world. Though groups and individuals were identified as being “further apart” or “left on the margins”, there is still some reluctance to accept them as companions on the journey. As one participant succinctly stated: “We identify with a political party first rather than as a Christian.”

## **TOPIC #2 – LISTENING**

**OUTREACH:** This topic surfaced discussion about the ways in which parishes have programs and service groups that reach out to those who are experiencing poverty and are marginalized. Programs such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society and groups like the Knights of Columbus provide opportunities to listen to those who are most vulnerable and practice compassion. Participants feel that they are being called to justice and service to all who seek help but recognize that there are many in need that do not ask for help. In the area of social exclusion, many are left to question how they should reach out to those in the LGBTQ community, those who feel excluded due to cultural or racial barriers, and those who feel shunned by the church.

**EXCLUSION:** Overall, the participants feel that the laity is not listened to. There is a feeling of exclusion if a person does not explicitly belong to a group within the parish or the church at large. An overwhelming number of participants feel that women are well respected in parishes as they are leaders in many ministries. However, for as much as women are present in the life of the church, many feel they should have more opportunities in leadership. While women seem to play a big role in the life of the community, many indicated that lay men are less involved. The same was said regarding young people. Many indicated that the church does little to involve

young people in the life of the church although some parishes do provide youth groups and opportunities for youth ministries. There is little invitation for young people to speak up and be heard, although many indicated that they are willing to listen. Fewer young people and families attend Mass regularly. Many parish groups and programs are primarily run by those who have been there for some time creating an unwelcome feeling for newcomers. Lastly, other groups that feel excluded are those experiencing language barriers, cultural differences, and those that live far from their parish, specifically those in rural areas.

**BROADER COMMUNICATION:** Many participants expressed that there is a need for better communication within their parishes and within the structure of the church. The “top-down” perception leaves communities without a way to be heard. Many indicated a desire for the Bishop to be present in their communities and invite them to dialogue. While most feel listened to by their priests/pastors, they would like to feel more informed within the larger scope of the church. Some suggestions included regular listening sessions/forums at parishes; the use of technology although not perfect, is an option; creating a space for dialogue rather than monologue diminishing feelings of being judged or offended due to age, race, language, and other social issues that carry a stigma such as divorce and LGBTQ issues.

**PREACHING AND TEACHING:** In a more literal sense, many participants indicated difficulty in connecting with the readings and homilies. For engaging young people, bringing real world experiences and relevance to their lives may entice them to come and listen. Some indicated difficulty in being able to understand priests/pastors/lectors for whom English is not their primarily language. And lastly, many indicated difficulty in being able to hear during Mass due to poor technology. There is much concern for those who are elderly and those who experience hearing loss.

**MARGINALIZED MEMBERS:** Overwhelmingly, many participants indicated that their communities do not engage those on the margins and would like to see more outreach. Others felt that it was difficult to know who needs assistance or needs to be heard within the community. The impression is that many who are on the peripheries do not speak up for fear of judgement and shame, so it becomes difficult to know who needs help. One participant stated, “Those on the peripheries do not come to church. We can’t listen to them if they are not there.” A secondary rationale for why we do not listen to those on the peripheries is that people are often too busy in their personal lives. They feel constrained by life commitments and limited amounts of time. Lastly, many participants felt that their parishes just do not have the resources to reach out effectively to those that feel they are not welcomed in the church.

### **TOPIC #3 - CELEBRATION**

Prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire the people to live the Christian life, to make good decisions based on the teachings of the Church enhanced by the preaching. They want young people, those on the margins and everyone to feel welcome, especially in ways the laity can participate in the celebration of the liturgy and Sacraments. Responses to this question included and understanding that the celebration of Eucharist is the summit of Catholicism. They stated that faith is personal but is enriched by sharing and celebration at Mass and the other sacraments of the Church.

**PREACHING:** The importance of good preaching during Mass takes the message of the Gospel and makes it practical and real for the people who are gathered. The preaching of the deacon can sometimes be closer to the experience of the people in the pews. The preaching inspires people to go out and do what the Mass is asking of us. They stated the desire to share their faith with others after hearing a good inspiring homily. Homilies can influence decisions for us as individuals and as families and members of the parish community. Well prepared and inclusive homilies help people incorporate the Mass into our own life outside the Church building. Homilies that are well thought out and shared well by our homilist build our faith and desire to fulfill our faith through action.

**COMMUNAL PRAYER:** Liturgical celebrations feed a desire to live in charity. The act of praying together identifies a faith community, not just individuals coming for their own sake, but leading to outreach to the local community. It opens the doors to the Catholic Social teachings as they are preached from the Liturgy of the Word. The prayers of the Faithful inform the community of opportunities for prayer and outreach. Times for Eucharistic devotion outside of Mass are a means to better understand the call from God to bring the Good News to others. The music helps us feel closer to God.

**ON-GOING FORMATION:** many respondents requested information and instruction to assist them in understanding the Mass. Why we do what we do and what does this all mean for our lives. Instruction about the Mass, the Sacraments, devotional life, and Sacred Scripture were among the areas of concern and question. Weekly attendance at Mass is the beginning, but there is a desire to find more ways to bring the community members together. Study, devotionals, and faith sharing are ways to strengthen this desire. We need to have missals and hymnals that help us pray.

**PARTICIPATION IN THE LITURGY:** Parishes can use external events to keep the parish families engaged. They should encourage participation in liturgical ministries through special invitations, preparation classes, and overall encouragement for the youth, young adults, families with young children, and all who can assist in the areas of ministry open to the laity.

**OTHER:** There were specific comments about various forms of the celebration of the Mass. Specific comments included are: *Latin Masses are taking us to the past; don't do them. Make the Mass vibrant so it won't be rote and routine. The liturgy of the Word and liturgy of the Eucharist is food for the journey. We need amazing preaching, making homilies relatable to everyday life.*

#### **TOPIC #4- DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY**

**BARRIERS:** The responses to these questions from those attending listening sessions give us a glimpse into how the laity perceive dialogue in their community. The overwhelming responses indicate that the laity do not feel important to the Church. Many expressed the pain of being overlooked or not listened to at all, especially women. Language barriers between the laity and priests was cited as a roadblock to dialogue. A complaint mentioned in the responses concerned pastors who have an attitude of "it's my way or the highway" (direct quote from a respondent).

**TRUST:** While there was an acknowledgement of parishes resuming normal parish activities with potlucks, retreats, and some Bible studies, many of these activities are often tainted with politics which provoked responses seeking a “politic-free” Sunday. In the responses we heard the need for stronger parish councils and lay leadership. Many of the respondents indicated that their parish no longer had a parish council and felt that was an important area of concern for the laity and parish in general. The need to establish trust between the laity and parish administration was expressed numerous times in the responses. Without this trust, there is little opportunity to address difficult issues that arise within the community. The lack of dealing with these issues was characterized with “avoidance”, “compromise”, and “not rocking the boat”. Without this trust, participation by the laity is weak.

**ADMINISTRATION:** There were particular issues important to the respondents that they felt the Church needs to address. These issues fell into two categories. The first category centers on administrative issues in particular the setting of Mass times and activities when more people could participate, churches being locked during the week prohibiting visits, the lack of youth ministers, and priests being removed from parishes without explanation.

**DOCTRINAL TEACHING:** The second category of issues centers on Church teaching. Responses show a strong desire for clear teaching on the following issues: abortion, homosexuality, the True Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, as well as social justice issues. Along with this is a concern for Catholics knowing so little about the faith, people leaving the church and the young not being listened to. The need for evangelizing within the parish itself was a strong concern for many.

**CATHOLIC SOCIAL TEACHING AND SOCIETY** When it comes to the Church dialoguing with society, there were strong opinions. Many commented with disappointment about the role of the United States Catholic Bishops not providing clear direction on church teaching. One respondent said, “How can we every day Catholics agree on things if our bishops can’t agree?” And “What are we, the Church, supposed to do about politicians who claim to be Catholic yet ignore church teaching?” There was agreement that the Church leaders should focus on core beliefs, teaching those beliefs, and adhering to them rather than getting involved in politics, the environment, and economics. These are spheres in which the laity are more expert, and the Church should not be involved. This last section really speaks, in our opinion, to the lack of understanding of Catholic social teaching and supports the need for more, clear direction from our bishops, more adult faith formation opportunities, and continued dialogue.

#### **TOPIC #5 – DISCERNING AND DECIDING**

In reviewing the responses for this section four common themes from the respondents: decision making is top -down; communication is not transparent and needs improvement; the importance of pastoral councils; connecting the traditions and beliefs of the church to the decision-making process. Below is a summary of the findings after careful review of the respondents’ submitted notes.

**DECISION-MAKING:** The first theme identified that most decisions made in the parish were made from the top-down. Most of the comments about decision making stated that the laity had no role, or a very limited role in parish decisions. Most commented on the authoritarian role that

a Priest plays in the process, “hierarchy speaks and the laity salutes”, “old style of decision making,” and “the Priest decides.” Another concern was echoed about the lack of inclusion in decision making, “consultation with a select group of people only”. There was a big concern regarding the lack of transparency and consensus regarding important decisions in the parish that would impact the entire parish community. The written comments expressed a general concern among the participants that the laity in most parishes were not being listened to or even asked to participate in the process.

**COMMUNICATION:** The second theme identified is the need to improve communication and transparency between the Parish and the Diocese. Specifically, a need to seek local parish input in making Diocesan decisions that will impact the life of the parish. “There was a feeling that informed decisions can only be made through consultation and discussion with and between parishioners and priests.” “There should be increased communication between the Priest and the parish regarding budget decisions that impact the parish.” There was strong sentiment expressed that a formalized process for regular and consistent communication to all parishioners on all issues was not practiced regularly. People are feeling that they are not included in pertinent communications between the Diocese and the parish and are feeling left out.

**PARISH PASTORAL COUNCIL:** In the Third theme the respondents placed a higher value on the establishment and use of organized meetings, specifically Pastoral Councils, as a mechanism to improve communication, transparency and decision making. This was a consistent theme in how to improve the action of deciding and discerning. The participants made specific and consistent statements about the role of the pastoral council and decision making; “every parish should institute and require a Pastoral Council” and the Council “must be representative of the laity in culture, language, skills, and faith formation,” “all people in the parish should be represented on the Pastoral Council.” And that “all should be invited to be stakeholders in the decision-making process.” The opinion is that by doing so would provide unity in the parish, thus providing increased communication and transparency for all. Pastoral Councils should be as open as possible, “avoid placing Father’s friends on the Pastoral Council.” Pastoral Councils should be transparent: “they should be open in dialogue with published agendas and results of votes.” A high number of the comments that were made regarded the importance of Pastoral Councils, implying that many parishes do not have or use them effectively.

**FAITH AND DECISION-MAKING:** Finally, the fourth theme identified the need for connecting the traditions and beliefs of our faith in the process of decision making at all levels of the Church’s life. Statements were very strong in expressing the need for and the importance of prayer and spiritual discernment in the process of addressing issues regarding the life of the parish. One of the comments, “pray to the Holy Spirit for guidance and make God the center of decision making,” truly described how people were feeling. Without God at the center, they stated that nothing else matters: “all of our decisions should begin with the question; “what the Holy Spirit would say to us and the community.” There was an expressed feeling that the clergy: Priests, and Deacons, should be the first teachers of the faith and provide guidance to the community regarding the process of discernment and deciding. The establishment of focus groups such as Pastoral Councils, Finance Councils, and efforts in transparency and improved communications “would deepen the faith of the community and those entrusted for its welfare.”

The common theme of “starting with prayer, and simply, “pray!” and “decisions need to be Christ centered” resonated with the participants.

### **YOUTH COMMENTS**

More than two hundred teens were present for the youth sessions from the six high schools in the diocese and four parish youth groups in different areas of the diocese.

**COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY:** The youth recognize community is important. Family members and teachers are often their closest companions. They recognized that the church is by nature inclusive and welcoming; however, there are reasons why some feel left out. They feel judged, especially when their lives fall off moral standards like not being part of a "traditional" family, not attending church, or disagreeing with specific church teachings. Realities such as poverty, people with mental health issues, or LGBTQ individuals are not well understood and included in the life of the church. Almost unanimously, they said young people (teens) are not listened to. They ask us to be kind to those who have not found Christ and those who have a complicated relationship with the church and its teachings.

**LISTENING:** Being listened to is identified as being able to "get something off the chest;" it means feeling safe and heard, not judged. The church tries to relate, but it comes off as judgmental. The preaching and the actions do not always match, and kindness and acceptance are not perceived in some scenarios. They said God speaks through people's stories, especially the most vulnerable. The church needs to listen to people's lives without judging. Women and youth are the least listened to in the church. They identified themselves as a group not fully included. In the church, "we get answers to questions we never ask, and our questions are never/poorly answered." Because of the situations at home, like divorce, many teens experienced the effects of shaming and exclusion. All teens felt that the synodal session was the best/first time they were listened to. They want more opportunities like that. "God speaks through young people!"

**CELEBRATION:** They expressed appreciation and admiration for the liturgical life of the church and prayer, yet they struggle to feel connected. Monotony and lack of participation make prayer and liturgy rather tedious. Youth lacks representation in liturgical ministries. It is difficult to feel motivated when there are not more people their age around. They would love to be invited to share their gifts. They invite the church to "modernize" the Mass and strongly encourage priests to preach in ways they can relate to. In some cases, "Mass is strict, serious, and robotic," in other instances, Mass is sloppy, to the point that they cannot understand what the priest is doing or saying. They highlighted some experiences, such as the Kairos retreat and Arco Iris (Youth group ministry from Mexico), in which they experience leadership and connection. They identified the Sacrament of Reconciliation as a safe space. "We believe we need to get youth more involved and make it enjoyable."

**DIALOGUE:** Bringing teens together to participate in these synodal sessions was groundbreaking for them. They felt heard. The church has fostered meaningful conversations to address pressing issues. The church usually provides answers; however, they sometimes do not match reality. The church's teachings and the bible itself are often used as weapons. Answers are generalized, and LGBTQ issues seem to be caught in the middle, making them complicated, divisive, and stand out among other issues. Some teens perceive the church as non-safe altogether. They often hear negative things about realities that interest them. Social media is a core reality in their lives, yet many adults criticize it without understanding its importance and influence. There is a longing in teens to dialogue about important issues such as LGBTQ, racism, sexism, women's issues, poverty, abuse, and the environment safely and with non-judgmental

adults. Some are aware of the division inside the church. They see adults and Church leaders taking sides in different matters, including fundamental teachings. "Politics and religion should be separated." Students seem to perceive hypocrisy on the part of adults and church leaders. Nevertheless, there is a great desire and openness to have more sessions mirroring the synodal sessions. A recurrent highlight was the sacrament of reconciliation. Teens identify the sacrament as a "safe space," meaning they can talk and trust.

**DISCERNING AND DECIDING:** In most sessions, we did not get to this point. We noticed they do not know much about how the church discerns and decides.

### **YOUNG ADULT COMMENTS**

**COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY:** Those seen as being left out by the Church are LGBTQ persons, those experiencing faith struggles, those living in poverty, and singles to name a few. While there is an acknowledgment of youth and young adults being left out, there is a feeling of being part of the greater Church, the Church as a whole. There is a disconnect with individual parishes which seem to be more problematic in developing relationships. Factors relating to this disconnect range from parish priests not being welcoming, adult church members being judgmental, gender-exclusive language being used, excluding others such as the LGBTQ community, those who are single, political discussions that lead to isolation, those experiencing divorce, abuse, those living in poverty, and fertility issues. To assist in strengthening relationships within the parish, adult catechesis was mentioned as necessary. One group stated "If the church is stagnant, then the layperson is burdened with starting and providing that community themselves" which speaks to the lack of adult catechesis, communication, and relationship. How can the Church do a better job of accompanying those on the journey? Offering adult catechesis classes is a first step in helping people see that our faith is not just about rules but about the values we live by. Including young adults on parish councils, talking about real-world issues and how our faith intersects with those issues, welcoming young adults to participate in parish ministries, and offering more guidance to young adults at the diocesan level.

**LISTENING:** Young adults acknowledge the importance of listening to broaden their own experiences and understand the viewpoints and experiences of others. God speaks through the younger generation in that there is a deep desire to meet people where they are, to be accepted, and to stand up for others, particularly through social movements. There is a feeling that the listening is a one-way street. The perception is that the church does not listen to young people instead "forced listening" is the norm and the young people see that those being listened to more often are those with experience or money. Listening took on different meanings among those who met. There were questions about how race and ethnicities are represented in church artwork as a means of listening to others, the use of technology that can distract and polarize, yet offers devotions that can strengthen one's prayer life. Young adults are experiencing poverty at high levels due to school debt and stagnant wages and are searching for emotional and spiritual support and not finding it. Finally, one group commented, "the church is seen as sometimes blaming people for leaving the church, instead they need to be asking why they are leaving".

**CELEBRATION:** During the COVID-19 pandemic, online masses were offered as a way to stay connected with the church. Young adults felt disconnected with this type of worship citing it like "going through the motions rather than true worship." There is a preference to attend Mass in person, being able to engage with others, and physically being present to the Eucharist. Return to in-person Mass brought the discussion about the quality of homilies, lack of opportunities for



volunteering at Mass for young adults which speaks to a personal invitation to participate, and a need for catechesis on the Mass itself, particularly on the Real Presence of Christ. What are we doing and why are we doing this? Liturgical Music was another aspect discussed. Music that is prayerful and inviting for congregational singing was noted as a way to be more inclusive and meaningful. Other practical suggestions were to have open access to chapels, access to confession beyond “making an appointment”, scheduling activities outside of the 8-5 workday, and providing a directory of “mentors” (lawyers, electricians, teachers, doctors, etc.) who could lead to a greater sense of community.

**DIALOGUE:** The current state of dialogue within society, in general, exists within the Church as well. Lack of trust, oversimplification of issues – “you’re with God or you’re not”, and judgmental attitudes towards those who think differently are roadblocks to genuine dialogue. Issues such as abortion tend to be the sole focus of life discussions when listening to women and accompanying them through their painful experiences is important. The church needs to be more proactive in promoting a consistent ethic of life. Continuing education for adults is so important to have a congregation who are knowledgeable of the faith. Stories of the saints and their imperfect lives need to be shared as a way to connect everyday life and struggles with those of the saints. Some parishes were identified as being open to good dialogue about issues while others are not. Real-life conversations need to be part of parish life. A simple response of a bible verse and outdated argument does not promote understanding but further alienation. A focus on God’s ever-present love for us should be included in tough discussions on premarital sex, abortion, LGBTQ issues, divorce, and social issues such as the environment.

**DISCERNING AND DECIDING:** Overall there was self-identified ignorance on how the church makes decisions and a sense that the laity are not part of that process. The church hierarchy is seen as missing out on the perspective of the people in the pews. This synod process is encouraging but there is skepticism on how this information will be used and shared. Transparency and trust go hand in hand. Publishing financial reports, openness about abuse issues within the church, openly discussing LGBTQ issues, hearing the voice of women, and using language that does not exclude or isolate particularly unmarried young adults, are ways in which the church can improve discernment and decision-making processes. There is a desire on the part of those responding for more opportunities such as this synod session to having their voices heard and being part of the process.

## **APPENDIX 1 - CONSECRATED RELIGIOUS**

Thirty-five men and women religious gathered for an online meeting.

**Companions on the Journey:** The challenges of the pandemic and the struggle to do ministry were expressed. They named groups that feel isolated, separated or as outsiders as conservatives; Vatican II followers, Native Americans, and LGBTQ, divorced, separated, English/Spanish split, and elder. There is a need to go to the margins, asking how we reach nominal Catholics and offer a better explanation of the meaning of solidarity. Those who feel included are Parish Pastoral Councils, Schools, affiliated groups in parishes. The need for adult faith formation to help us learn is apparent and there are two extremes, namely, the people in the middle that those that don’t seem to fit.

**Listening:** Transparency at the parish level is not obvious when leadership informs the people and/or keeps decisions hidden. Ways are needed to listen to the people, especially the marginal groups. One named the unheard voices as “the women who have had abortions.”

**Celebration:** Comments included feelings of inspiration with good music. Taizé celebrations for example were mentioned. Inspiration is a problem when there is unnecessary repetition or long and meaningless homilies. People are seeking a better understanding of the Mass. Suggestions included: faith formation; keep devotions alive; encourage good homilies; encourage/teach clarity of pronunciation; online liturgies make it hard to return to in person liturgy; children need to be engaged.

**Dialogue in Church and Society:** There is little opportunity for dialogue and discussion. Consider the example of organizations that use the consensus and discernment processes. Political issues are a problem when the focus is only on one prolife issue and the catholic social teaching documents falls on deaf ears of cradle Catholics. Dialogue has not been a key in church actions. Find ways to listen to alternative voices; set ground rules in advance. Good listening takes more collaboration to cooperate, and religious groups have more experience with this process. Dialogue requires participation of all parties involved to avoid the pitfalls using the integrity and subsidiarity of all included. We can get too one-sided on some of the tough issues including the issues of vaccines, racism, and political discord.

## **APPENDIX 2 - ECUMENICAL LISTENING SESSION**

Seven leaders from the Tucson Ecumenical Community were present for the Synod Listening Session. They represented the Baptist, Mormon, Lutheran, Episcopalian and Christian Science Communion. Topics from the *Vademecum* document were submitted to them for their preparation. The conversation was open and welcoming.

The participants were grateful for the invitation for this dialogue and saw it as a sign of journeying together in the efforts to continue learning about the traditions of other churches in service to the people of our region. They commented that this community has come together over various issues as we make efforts to toward peace and positive understanding. Concerns over poverty, racism and exclusion invite us to consider the ways in which we can heal the divides that are visible in the community. They acknowledged our common journey and recognized that we have the same desire for all our people. Examples of on-going collaboration include the annual Thanksgiving prayer services and common responses to local and national tragedies through prayer and outreach. Depending on each other and remaining together in a common concern builds trust and understanding. They acknowledged the efforts to get to know and respect each other in our faith traditions to listen to one another without prejudices and seek opportunities for understanding another's point of view. It is important to hear God in all the messages we received and to be aware of how together we can treat those who are hurting. Community conversations and attention to issues of concern are the starting point for the dialogue needed to be of service to all the people. God is always part of the dialogue, and an attitude of invitation and openness are essential. While there are many examples of commonality, they expressed a common desire to be aware of barriers that inhibit our best efforts to respond to God's call in leading the people we are called to serve.