

Walk together as a Church with the Holy Spirit

The purpose of the Synod is
"to plant dreams", to "journey together"
following the course of the Church in
the third millennium with a truly
synodal mentality.

Join us!



Our Church: Journeying Together

Parish Handbook: Prince Albert Diocese

10/30/2021

This document contains excerpts from the “Preparatory Document” and “Vademecum” (Handbook) developed by the Synod of Bishops – September 2021 to assist with our synodal experience October 2021- March 2022. To view the complete documents please visit: www.synod.va or visit the diocese website at: <https://www.padiocese.ca/>

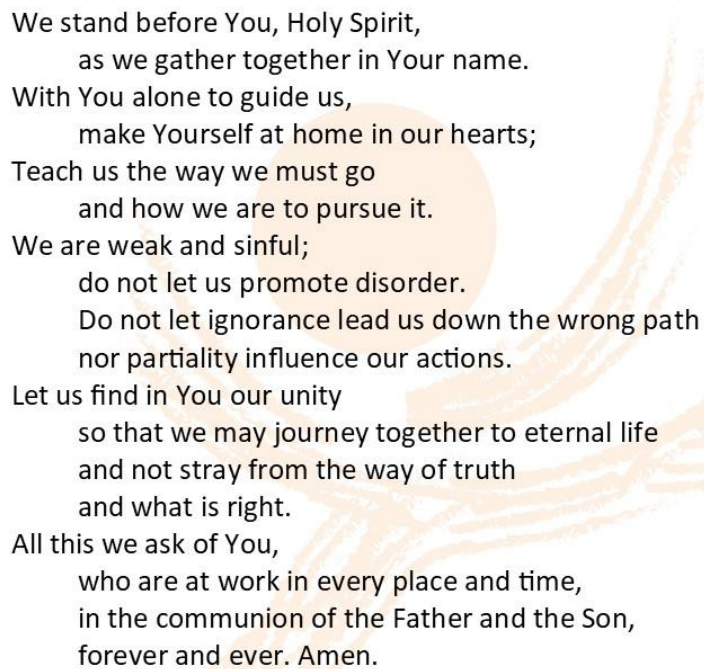
Have Questions? Please contact one of the following....

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Prayer for the Synod: *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus*,¹ the first word of the original Latin, meaning, "We stand before You, Holy Spirit," which has been historically used at Councils, Synods, and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, and is attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636). As we embrace this Synodal Process, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to be at work in us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synodal journey from 2021 to 2023, we propose to the following simplified version,¹ so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray it more easily.



We stand before You, Holy Spirit,
as we gather together in Your name.
With You alone to guide us,
make Yourself at home in our hearts;
Teach us the way we must go
and how we are to pursue it.
We are weak and sinful;
do not let us promote disorder.
Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path
nor partiality influence our actions.
Let us find in You our unity
so that we may journey together to eternal life
and not stray from the way of truth
and what is right.
All this we ask of You,
who are at work in every place and time,
in the communion of the Father and the Son,
forever and ever. Amen.

¹ The original version of the *Adsumus Sancte Spiritus* can be found on the Synod website www.synod.va.

What is Pope Francis Asking of Us?

Pope Francis is asking each of our parishes to **engage in an exercise of listening** to the Holy Spirit and listening to each other “and to ask ourselves what it is that God wants to say to us in this time – and the direction in which He wants to lead us.” (Pope Francis, October 10, 2021, Opening Mass for the Synod).

Pope Francis also encourages us to have “a willingness to allow ourselves to be challenged by the presence and the stories of others.” As church we are called to journey together. We are not just individuals. We are each called to be a vital component of the Body of Christ.

What Question(s) Are We Going to Pray, Listen and Share About in the Prince Albert Diocese?

1. Do I feel I belong in my faith community/parish/church and that I have a role in the Church’s mission? Which situations have made me feel I belong? Which situations have made me feel unwelcome or unheard? Are there those that my faith community excludes, values less or values more? Share your stories.
2. Is my faith community/parish/diocese a safe place for me to speak courageously, candidly, and responsibly about the church and about society? Do I feel heard? Share your stories.

The questions above are only a small portion of the questions that could be used in your family/parish/community experience. If these questions do not resonate with you, you may wish to choose others from Appendix A of this document. You are encouraged to limit your listening and sharing to one or two questions/areas so that you can explore them more deeply.

Key Words for the Synodal Process

Communion

Your experience matters. We ALL have a role to play in discerning and living out God's call for his people.

Participation

We are ALL called to engage in the exercise of deep and respectful listening that at times may be unsettling. ALL the faithful are qualified and are called to serve one another through the gifts they have each received from the Holy Spirit.

Mission

Our mission is to witness to the love of God in the midst of the whole human family. Where is God leading us? How can we better accomplish our mission?



Synod and Synodality Explained

‘Synod’ is an ancient and venerable word in the Tradition of the Church, whose meaning draws on the deepest themes of Revelation (...). It indicates the path along which the People of God walk together.

Synodality enables the entire People of God to walk forward together, listening to the Holy Spirit and the Word of God, to participate in the mission of the Church in the communion that Christ establishes between us. Ultimately, this path of walking together is the most effective way of manifesting and putting into practice the nature of the Church as the pilgrim and missionary People of God.

What is the Aim of this Synod?

The objective of the current Synod is to listen, as the entire People of God, to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. We do so by listening together to the Word of God in Scripture and the living Tradition of the Church, and then by listening to one another, and especially to those at the margins, discerning the signs of the times.

It is especially important that this listening process happen in a spiritual setting that supports openness in sharing as well as hearing. For this reason, you are encouraged to root the local experience of the Synodal Process in meditation on Scripture, the liturgy and prayer. In this way, our journey of listening to one another can be an authentic experience of discerning the voice of the Holy Spirit. Authentic discernment is made possible where there is time for deep reflection and a spirit of mutual trust, common faith, and a shared purpose.

The 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 in Christ, 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. To grow in holiness as disciples of the Risen Lord.

Important Attitudes

- Being synodal requires **time for sharing**: We are invited to speak with authentic courage and honesty. Everyone can grow in understanding through dialogue.
- **Humility in listening** must correspond to **courage in speaking**; Everyone has the right to be heard, just as everyone has the right to speak. Synodal dialogue depends on courage both in speaking and in listening. It is not about engaging in a debate to convince others. Rather, it is welcoming what others say as a way by which the Holy Spirit can speak for the good of all (1 Corinthians 12:7).
- **Openness to conversion and change**: We can often be resistant to what the Holy Spirit is trying to inspire us to undertake. We are called to abandon attitudes of complacency and comfort that lead us to make decision purely on the basis of how things have been done in the past.
- **Being inclusive**: It is important for the baptised to hear the voices of other people in their local context, including people who have left the practice of the faith, people of other faith traditions, people of no religious belief, and those who are often on the periphery and who are often excluded and forgotten (the elderly, the poor, the homeless, the imprisoned, etc.)

The hope is that the experience of the Synodal Process will bring about a new springtime for listening, discernment, dialogue, and decision-making, so that the whole People of God can better journey together with one another and the entire human family, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Who should we be listening to?

All members of your parish and community, those fully engaged, those less so, from the very young to our seniors. Care should be taken to include as diverse a group as possible and to include those often excluded or ignored.

Each parish is invited to create a list of all the different groupings of people in their parish /community and a plan to invite them to participate.



Where will these Listening Opportunities occur?

- **Launch and Mini-Experience at the DPC, October 30, 2021**
- **Live Streamed Mass to Open Synod, November 8, 2021**
- **November & December 2021 – Prayer & Preparation**
 - Pray the Synod Prayer in Churches & Families
 - Pastoral Zones & Large Parishes Form their Planning Committee, discern groups to be consulted and methods to be used.
- **January 1st – March 31st, 2022 – Time for Listening**
 - Groups Gather In Parishes/Pastoral Zones/Communities/Ministries for in-person and on-line encounters. (See page 9)
 - If parishioners are unable to attend a meeting in person or online, efforts could be made to reach out to them through text messaging, phone calls, or other appropriate means. Families can also be encouraged to engage in the process as a family.
 - Diocesan Hosted On-Line Forums – To Be Announced
 - Family or Individual Paper Based Submissions
 - On-Line Survey on the Diocese Website
- **March 31st – April 29th, 2022 – Synthesis of Results in Pastoral Zone or Large Parish** and document sent to Diocese by May 1st, 2022.
- **End of May - Diocesan Hosted Event (To Be Announced)**
 - Share our Synthesis of Results from the Diocese, Celebrate Our Experience Thus Far and Consider Next Steps
- **June 17th, 2022**
 - Our Finalized Document is Sent to the Western Canadian Bishops

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Process for Conversations with Groups



Prior to the Event:

- Gather a small group to plan your event(s) venue (in person or on-line), small group facilitators, who does what, etc.
- A meeting could be arranged with those who will be small group facilitators to prepare their role in the process.
- Advertise the event in your parish and/or community.
- Have people register for the event so that you know how many people to expect. You may wish to collect email addresses in order to contact people with zoom links or print material.

The questions you will be discerning along with the synod prayer could be circulated one to two weeks beforehand to encourage prayerful reflection.

Sample Agenda: (approximately 2 hours total)

1. Welcome & Introduction of Participants
2. Synod Prayer
3. What is a Synod? Important Attitudes. Process. (see pages 6-8,10)
4. Song or Scripture Reading
5. Break into small groups
 - a. Follow the Spiritual Conversation Method (page 10) or another method more suitable to the group(s) - See Appendix B
 - b. Provide copies of the question(s) and Spiritual Conversation Method (or other method being used)
 - c. Everyone could have paper/pen to record the highlights of the exchange/experience.
6. Regather everyone together to share their experiences.
7. Have the groups hand in their summaries so that your parish planning committee can synthesis the feedback and provide it to the diocese. (see page 13)

After the Event(s)

8. Begin to explore the question of "Where does our parish go from here?"
What are we being called to do?

The Spiritual Conversation Method

Ideal Group Size: 6-7 people of diverse backgrounds.

Question(s) and Prayer are Circulated Beforehand If Possible.

Appoint a facilitator to manage time and help guide the group through the process. (See Appendix C)

Appoint a recorder to capture highlights from the groups sharing.

Round One

Each person shares the fruit of his or her prayer, in relation to the reflection questions. There is **no discussion** in this round. All participants simply **listen deeply to each person and attend to how the Holy Spirit is moving within oneself, within the person speaking, and in the group as a whole.** Encourage those listening to write a few notes, a word/phrase etc. to help them remember. (see page 12)

.....Followed By A Few Minutes of Silence

Round Two

Participants share what struck them most in the first round and what moved them during the time of silence. Some dialogue can also occur. Remember we are not here to bring people over to our way of thinking. **We strive for deep listening and understanding of the others' point of view.**

..... Followed By A Few Minutes of Silence

Round Three

Participants reflect upon what seems to be resonating in the conversation and what moved them most deeply. New insights and even unresolved questions are also noted.

Conclusion:

- Invite each person to share how the experience was for them.
- Review/Decide on the feedback they wish to communicate with the larger group.

Upon returning to the Large Group

- One representative from each small group can briefly share about the experience of the group.
- Be sure to have each group recorder leave their notes with the organizing team.
- Determine if the group would like to meet again to look at additional questions.
- Provide an opportunity for socializing during and after the event(s) if safe to do so.

Preparing the Synthesis

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- After completing all the events planned, the organizing team members should meet to review the whole experience and to prepare the synthesis based on the feedback submitted by each of the small groups and others consulted. Be sure to not lose unique points of view. (see page 13)
- If people are unable to attend a meeting in person or online, efforts could be made to reach out to them through text messaging, phone calls, or other appropriate means. It is important that we try our best to listen to the voices of everyone, especially those who are marginalized.
- At the end of this piece of the synodal journey, the people of the diocese will be invited to a gathering to share the information gathered, to celebrate the experience and to look at what this experience is calling our dioceses/parishes to work towards.

Look for additional information on the website: www.synod.va as well as our diocese website: <https://www.padiocese.ca/>

Group Sharing

Number of People in Group: ___

Parish: _____

Participants included (circle ALL that apply): Women- Men-Youth-Young Adults-Seniors

First Nations-Immigrants-Religious-Clergy -- Others: _____ (please specify)

Round One – Ideas, Topics, Stories Shared (use back if needed)

Round Two – What struck/moved participants?

Round Three – What is the Spirit Asking of Us? – Unresolved Questions

How was this experience for your group? High points/Low points

Synthesis Outline:

1. Who participated? How large and diverse was the group or groups? Were there any groups whose participation was especially noteworthy? Were there specific groups who did not participate for any reason? What efforts were made to reach out to the peripheries?
2. What was most significant about the whole experience of the listening? What were the high and low points, or the consolations and desolations? What dispositions, attitudes, or feelings were notable? What tensions or disagreements emerged? What topics gave rise to diverse points of view? Overall, what were the fruits that the Holy Spirit has brought about through this listening experience?
3. Among the feedback from the local meetings, what was particularly significant, surprising, or unexpected? What new perspectives or new horizons opened up? Which particular stories or real-life experiences were especially moving and why? Which points of view seem to have strong resonance? Which points of view were mentioned less but are interesting and noteworthy?
4. Overall, what has the Holy Spirit inspired the community to see regarding the current reality of synodality in the local church, including the present lights and shadows? What did participants have to say about areas where the church needs healing and conversion, in its spiritual life, culture, attitudes, structures, pastoral practices, relationships, and missionary outreach?
5. In what ways is the Holy Spirit inviting the local church to grow in synodality? What dreams, desires, and aspirations for the church were expressed by participants? Based on their feedback, what steps does the diocese feel called to take in becoming more synodal? What are the next steps forward for our diocese on the path of synodality, in communion with the whole Church?
6. Is there an image that articulates our experience?

Appendix A

Questions For Discernment

Fundamental Question:

A synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel, “journeys together”. How is this ‘journeying together’ happening today in your local Church? What steps does the Spirit invite us to take in order to grow in our “journeying together”?

- Recall our Experiences: What experiences of our local Church does this question call to mind?
- Re-read these experiences in greater depth:
 - What joys did they bring?
 - What difficulties and obstacles have they encountered? What wounds did they reveal?
 - What insights have they elicited?
- Gather the fruits to share: Where in these experiences does the voice of the Holy Spirit resound? What is the Spirit asking of us? What are the points to be confirmed, the prospects for change, the steps to be taken? Where do we register a consensus? What paths are opening up for our local Church?

Supplementary Questions to Enrich Reflection – Your conversation and dialogue do not need to be limited to the following questions.

1. Companions on the Journey

In our local Church, who are those who “walk together”? Who are those who seem further apart? What groups or individuals are left on the margins? How are we called to grow as companions?

2. Listening

How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore? How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? How well do we listen to those on the peripheries? How is the contribution of consecrated men and women integrated? What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own? What space

is there for the voice of minorities, especially people who experience poverty, marginalization, or social exclusion.

3. Speaking Out

What enables or hinders speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our local Church and in society? When and how do we manage to say what is important to us? How does the relationship with the local media work (not only Catholic media)? Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community, and how are they chosen?

4. Celebration

How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community? How do they inspire the most important decisions? How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy? What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

5. Sharing Responsibility For Our Common Mission

Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church? What hinders the baptised from being active in mission? What areas of mission are we neglecting? How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)? How does the church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way? How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

6. Dialogue in Church and Society

To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue? What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church? How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc? How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed? What particular issues in the church and society do we need to pay more attention to? What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation? How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

7. Ecumenism

What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations? What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together? What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

8. Authority and Participation

How does our church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken? How is authority or governance exercised within our local church? How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice? How are evaluations conducted and by whom? How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted? Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)? How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

9. Discerning and Deciding

What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved? How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures? Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice? What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability? How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?

10. Forming Ourselves in Synodality

How does our church community form people to be more capable of 'walking together,' listening to one another, participating in mission, and engaging in dialogue? What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?

Appendix B



General Secretariat for the Synod of the Bishops



Suggested tools for reflecting, sharing, and responding to the questions of the Synod

The following are some tools for reflecting, sharing, and responding to the questions of the Synod. Some of these tools are particularly suitable for children, youth, and people who prefer approaches that are simple and easy to relate to.

Narrative approach: Telling or writing one's own faith story and journey with the Church

One's life story. People can be invited to tell their story, their view of faith, the way they have sought to take their place in the Church. During the diocesan or national synthesis, care should be taken not to read these stories as simple testimonies, but to hear what paths they open up for the local churches.

A text that drives exchanges. We can invite a small group of people to write a joint text; then other groups of people react to this text and comment on it from their own daily lives. This way of doing things can be applied to hearing one another's life stories, which can be shared with groups of other people. All these words can also open the eyes of other Christians on the mission of the Church and its capacity to "reach everyone."

Finding the right words. Participants can be invited to say what the Church evokes in them, or to name the words that designate what it takes to "walk together with Jesus" (a possible translation of synodality), and then which words are opposed to "walking together"; they can then be invited to explain why they evoked this or that word. The participants can then choose which words are the most significant and the most apt to convey the group's message.

Using images and artistic creation

Communicating through images. Presented with various images, people are invited to find those that best capture what walking together in the Church means to them. Participants can then share why they chose that particular image. On the basis of these exchanges, a joint text can be written.

An individual or shared artistic creation. People are invited to draw an image of the Church in which they walk together, and they are asked to comment on their drawing. People can also make an artistic creation together, as a way of visually representing the Church or their place in it. In any case, once the work has been created, participants are invited to share about what they have created; their comments can then be transmitted as well as their creative works.

Writing together. Participants are invited to write a story, a poem, a prayer, a psalm, or a song on the theme of “walking together with Jesus” or “walking together in the Church.” This piece of writing may be intended to update selected passages from the Gospels or the Acts of the Apostles. What they write can be passed on as it is. It can also be proclaimed during synodal celebrations (for example, if it is a song, it can become a dance for the synodal celebration).

Acting it out. A group of participants can write a short play that expresses what it means to “walk together” in the Church, why it is important, why it is difficult, etc. This story can then be acted out and performed at a Synodal assembly.

Scriptural approach

Gospel sharing. The Word of God inspires and enlightens our journey together, giving us food to share with one another on the way. Participants are invited to comment on the attitudes of the characters and to react to them; they may be asked if a particular gesture or word of Jesus reminds them of, or sheds light on, something in their daily lives. We can then look for how a particular Gospel passage renews our way of living in the Church. For example, we can read Mk 10:46-52, observing the attitude of the different characters, what it evokes of the Church as we know it, and then how Jesus allows the excluded Bartimaeus to walk forward with everyone. We can likewise pray over Luke 24:13-35, seeing Jesus transform the disciples’ disappointment into missionary joy and dynamism on the road to Emmaus, as he made their hearts burn within them, walking with them on the way.

(Cf. Note of the Centre Sèvres on the Voice of the Poor)

Appendix C – Facilitating Small Group Sharing

The greatest challenge for the small group facilitator is thinking that they must have all the answers and be ready to answer any question thrown their way. Your purpose is to solely to facilitate respectful sharing.

Do's of good small group facilitation:

- Do create a safe place for sharing...everyone given the chance to speak, everyone's sharing respected and valued.
- Do ask open ended questions (i.e., 'What stories/ideas did you find most moving and why?' As opposed to a yes/no question, 'Did you find the presentation helpful?' (adding 'and why' would make this question open-ended))
- Do keep the conversation on track.
- Do hold people to speaking for themselves **only** and to being specific when they refer to others (i.e., discourage comments like "some people say" or "we all know")
- Do encourage everyone to participate.
- Do lead by example. (i.e., listen attentively as others are sharing)
- Do model a depth of sharing. (i.e., by personally opening-up when answering the questions and sharing intimately...perhaps by sharing first)
- Do allow differences of opinion.
- Do watch for non-verbal behaviour...90% of communication is non-verbal.
- Do focus on facilitating the sharing.
- Do thank people for their participation and sharing.
- Do appoint a separate recorder, if a group report will be required at the end of the session.
- Do be attentive to the time allowed for the facilitation so that everyone has a turn to speak (appointing a timekeeper from the small group to help with this task can be very effective)

Don'ts of good small group facilitation:

- Don't lecture.
- Don't dominate the sharing yourself or allow another person to dominate.
- Don't let a conversation between 2 people dominate; seek comments from everyone.
- Don't answer all of the questions yourself or over commentate question responses
- Don't discourage a person from sharing by criticizing or challenging.
- Don't allow judgement of others or unsolicited advice.
- Don't lead the facilitation to the end result you wish to obtain.

Ground rules for a good facilitation:

- Maintain confidentiality
- Participate as much as possible
- Remember that a person is allowed to pass on any question
- Turn off cell phones and pagers
- Respect other opinions...this is not the time to give advice or comment on other peoples' sharing (if you truly have a need to speak with someone about what they have shared please do so at the break or use the chat option and initiate a one-to-one dialogue)
- Don't interrupt; let others finish speaking before you begin

Facilitating the Spiritual Conversation Method

Materials Needed:

- *Copy of Questions (page 4)
- *Group Sharing Sheet (page 12) – copied single sided – one for each Participant.
- * Copies of Appendix C (pages 19 & 20) for the Facilitator

General Process:

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Share the ground rules with the group (page 19). Are there any others people would like to add?
3. Pause for silence and/or prayer
4. Read the questions (page 4)
5. Ask people to begin sharing their stories/experience. Encourage them to jot down notes/words/phrases as needed to remember the sharing.
 - Remind people if needed that there is no discussion just deep listening
 - After all are finished say something like, **“Now let us sit in silence and listen to the Holy Spirit moving in this time and place.”**
 - Silence may be uncomfortable for people. Try to sustain the silence until people seem ready to move on.
6. Ask participants to share what struck them or moved them during the time of silence.
 - We are striving for listening and understanding of the other’s point of view – not trying to impose our interpretation or point of view on their experience.
 - After all are finished say something like, **“Now let us sit in silence and listen to the Holy Spirit moving in this time and place.”**
7. Share new insights, opportunities for change in the church, unresolved questions etc.
8. Ask the recorder to share his/her notes and decide what high points and/or low points of the experience that the group wishes to share with the larger group.