



GREAT ENDEAVORS MINED & SHARED

from an International Adult Faith Formation Best Practices Study

#273 - November 2026

A Best Practice: A Synodal Community of Listening

Since the beginning of **GEMS** (September 2010), we have looked at the importance of welcome and hospitality within our parishes and within every adult faith formation process:

- **GEMS #3-9:** A Royal Welcome: Some Secrets of Belonging
- **GEMS #15-18:** Hospitality in Adult Faith Formation
- **GEMS #46-48:** A Royal Welcome: Some Secrets of Belonging (Some Updates)
- **GEMS #56-58:** A Royal Welcome: Some Secrets of Belonging (Some Updates)

This article from the Episcopal Church Foundation, [Going a Little Deeper Into Community Life](#), reawakened for me the necessity – and some ways – of fostering and strengthening community.

It seems so pertinent now as we, the Catholic Church, strive to be a more synodal church – where we, as parishes (and dioceses) intentionally create opportunities to listen:

- to God through prayer and Scripture,
- to one another,
- to those on the margins,
- and to the needs of the wider community.

This article suggests ways of listening to each other in the parish. A church and parish where people feel known, heard, valued, and respected. The other three listenings of a synodal church are crucial; but perhaps it all begins with – and builds upon – listening well to each other.

Two thought-provoking lines from Lisa G. Fischbeck's article:

- “Truth be told, it's possible to participate in the Sunday morning exchange of greetings and coffee hour fellowship, even the

occasional potluck suppers, without ever going deep enough into a conversation with someone to know if they are struggling...”

- “In these days of full schedules and the lure of rare evenings at home, the church has to be more intentional about deepening the connections between us and among us, expanding our circle of trusted people with whom we can be a little more vulnerable and self-revealing, people whom we know and who know us.”

As you read the article, you will find that Lisa suggests several prompts/questions that might be used at parish gatherings to enable people to share their lives – supported by compassionate listening.

Some additional prompts that might work in various gatherings at your parish:

Prompts About Life Right Now

- What has been bringing you joy lately?
- What is giving you hope these days?
- What has been weighing on your heart?
- What challenge are you carrying right now?
- Where are you finding strength in this season of life?
- What is something you wish others understood about your current situation?

Prompts About Faith and Spirituality

- Where have you experienced God's presence recently?
- Where have you struggled to see God at work?
- What prayer has been on your heart lately?
- What is one faith question you are living with these days?
- When has your faith sustained you through a difficult time?
- What aspect of your relationship with God is growing right now?

Prompts About Relationships and Community

- Who has been a blessing to you recently, and why?
- What relationship is bringing you joy?

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- What relationship is challenging you at the moment?
- When have you felt truly seen, heard, or understood?
- What kind of support do you need from others right now?

Prompts for Reflection on Life's Journey

- What is something life is teaching you these days?
- What has been a recent disappointment, and what are you learning from it?
- What are you grateful for today?
- What is one burden you would like to place in God's hands?
- What dream or hope are you nurturing?
- What is helping you keep going when things are difficult?

Deeper Sharing Prompts

- Tell us about a recent moment that touched your heart.
- What is a struggle you are learning to live with rather than solve?
- What gives you peace when life feels uncertain?
- What has surprised you about yourself recently?
- What invitation do you sense God extending to you at this time?

Some GEMS Wonderings and Suggestions

- In what types of gatherings at your parish, could you devote time to this type of story-telling and listening?
- What questions might you use?
- What other staff members and leadership groups within your parish would benefit from your sharing of this article?



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Additional ideas for Adult Faith Formation Planning and Best Practices can be found in:

- *Deepening Faith: Adult Faith Formation in the Parish*
<https://www.litpress.org/Products/4652/Deepening-Faith>
- *Guided by the Directory for Catechesis: Transforming the Vision and Practice of Parish Catechesis*
<https://twentythirdpublications.com/products/guided-by-the-directory-for-catechesis>
- Lifelong Faith Training: <https://www.lifelongfaithtraining.com/>
- Lifelong Faith: <https://www.lifelongfaith.com/>
- Seasons of Adult Faith website: <http://adultfaith.weebly.com/>
- The Seasons of Adult Faith Formation:
https://www.lifelongfaith.com/uploads/5/1/6/4/5164069/seasons_of_aff_-_journal_special_issue.pdf