

April 15, 2026

LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

FAITH • MINISTRY • SERVICE • SUPPORT

Shared Governance, Functional Excellence:

Two Pillars of Diocesan Transformation

Ms. Kathleen Porter Magee and Rev. Kevin C. Kennedy

Speakers



Kathleen Porter-Magee
Managing Partner
Leadership Roundtable



Rev. Kevin C. Kennedy
Senior Leadership Director
Leadership Roundtable

Objectives

1. Identify behaviors effective in **developing trust**
2. Explore how diocesan leaders can bolster trust in the local church
3. Analyze examples with a common thread: **listening and responding** to the needs of the people they serve
 - Departmental assessment and **renewal**
 - Shifting diocesan culture towards **co-responsible leadership**

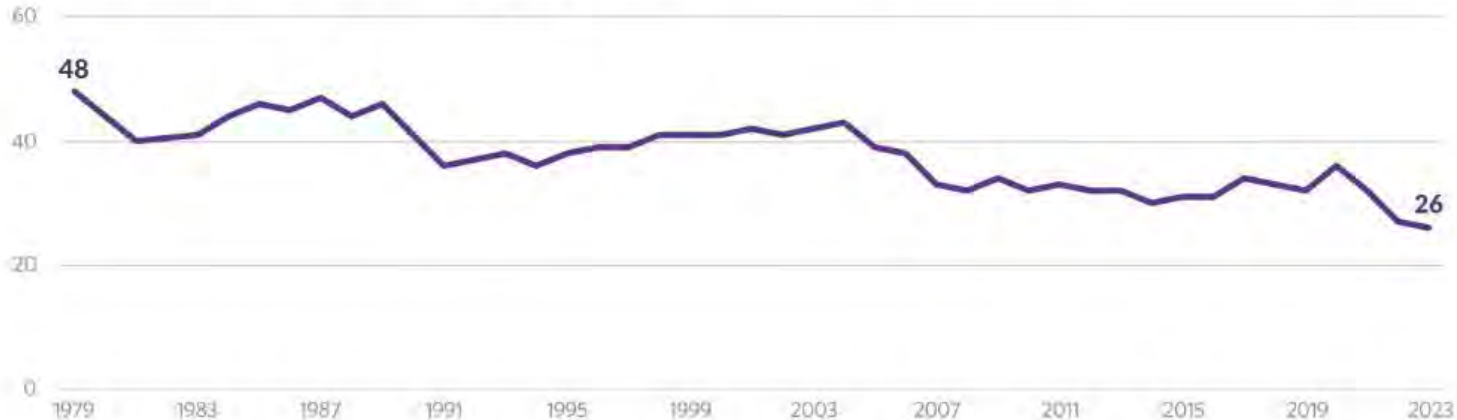
Trust Today



Decline in Institutional Trust

AVERAGE CONFIDENCE IN MAJOR U.S. INSTITUTIONS, 1979-2023

Average percentage of U.S. adults who have a great deal or quite a lot of confidence in 9 institutions measured consistently by Gallup



A DECLINE IN TRUST ACROSS AN ARRAY OF INSTITUTIONS

Church or organized religion



Banks



Public schools



Medical system



Trust Insights by Gallup

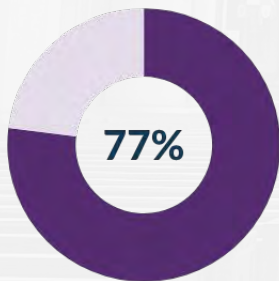
- **Relationships** are the catalyst for restoring institutional trust.
- **Relational trust** grows through authenticity and transparency;
 - **Authenticity:** Being genuine, honest, consistent
 - **Transparency:** Openly sharing reasoning behind decisions



The Trust Gap

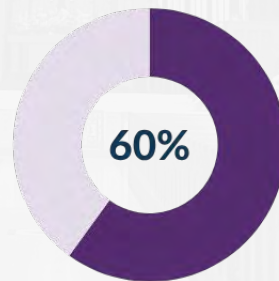
LOCAL

Trust pastor/clergy
to protect children

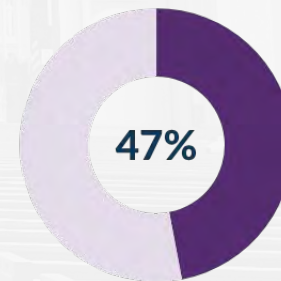


INSTITUTIONAL

Diocese communicates
transparently on abuse



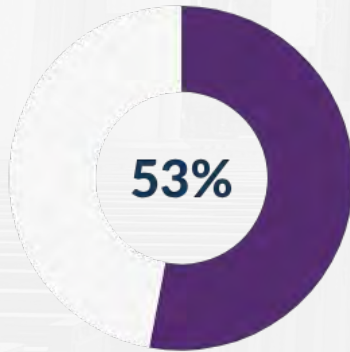
U.S. Bishops lead with
financial transparency



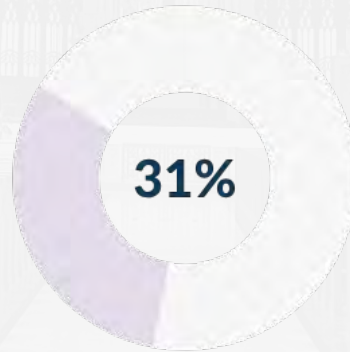
Ongoing Distrust in the Church

I believe abusers are still active *and protected* within the clergy.

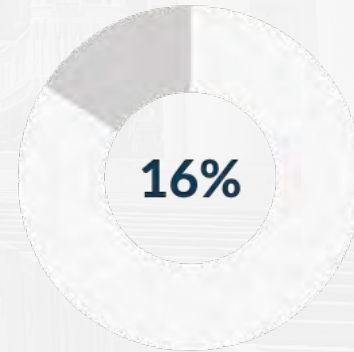
Agree



Disagree



Not Sure





Seven Key Competencies to Foster Trust

1. **Communication** — clear, open, transparent dialogue
2. **Relationship-building** — connections that transmit ideas and accomplish work
3. **Development** — focused on people's needs and aspirations
4. **Comfort leading change** — in alignment with the vision
5. **Inspiration** — encouraging effort and celebrating success
6. **Critical thinking** — seek input, invite dissent, and stimulate debate
7. **Accountability** — holding self/ others responsible for performance



Diocesan Leaders Build Trust Through Relational Assessment

First Example





STANDARDS

RELATIONSHIPS

Finance Department Assessment

- Evaluation of accounting functions, legal and canonical obligations, financial management, and reporting.
- Examination of fiscal stewardship, organizational culture, office morale, and professional development.
- 360° assessment with internal and external raters and professional development planning for all department staff members.



Assessment Benchmarks

Best practices drawn from:

- Canon Law
- USCCB Diocesan Financial Management Guide
- Catholic Standards of Excellence
- Leadership Roundtable expertise
- Research on organizational culture





TRUST

Listening Methods

- **Surveys** to all pastors and bookkeepers
- **Interviews** with senior diocesan leaders: bishop, vicar general, department directors
- **Listening sessions** with Diocesan Finance Council and Finance Department personnel
- Organizational **culture assessment**
- **360° assessment** for staff members with internal and external feedback



External Results (Parishes/Schools)

You may not be listening for opinions on GAAP or Canon Law — but you'll hear **what people need** to follow them.

- Stronger relationship with parishes and schools
 - From compliance → supporting the mission
 - From “*you tell me*” → “*you listen to me and tell me*”
 - From “*we are here to mandate*” → “*we are here to accompany and help*”
- Clarity on unspoken perceptions
- Services delivered in a more accessible manner (Buy In)

Internal Results (Departmental)

- Service delivery improvements
- Greater adherence to best practices
- Renewed focus on mission
- Responsibility for relational office culture



You may not be able to offer impressive material rewards for performance, but when leaders express a **keen interest** in the development of their team, **results follow.**

Rules and policies alone only get compliance.



Section 1 - Build Trust Through Relational Assessment **Pausing Point**



Diocesan Leaders Build Trust Through Pastoral Planning

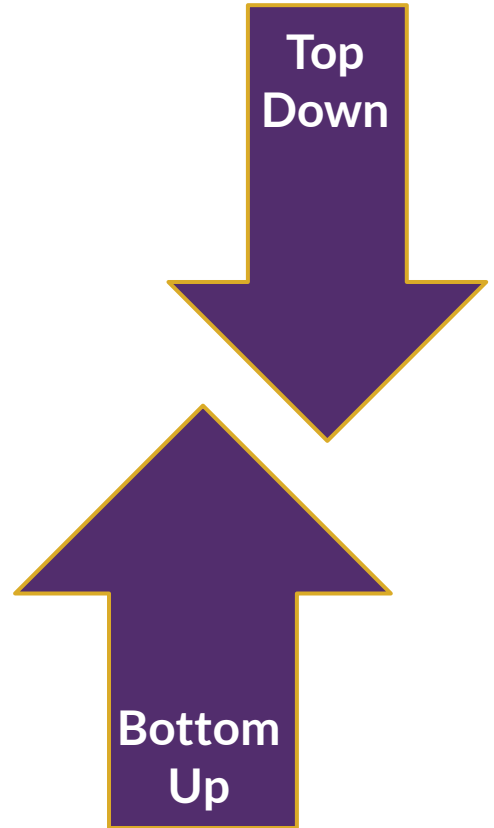
Second Example



Two Approaches to Pastoral Planning

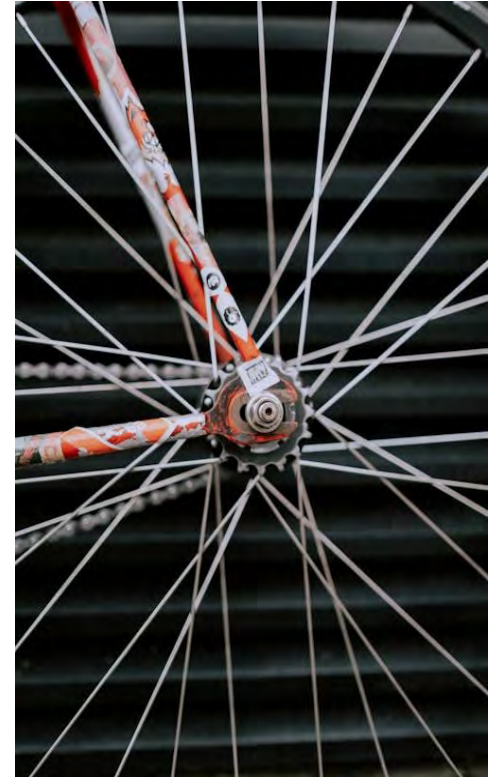
- Top-Down: The typical Diocesan pastoral planning process
- Bottom-Up: A Deanery-led alternative

What *shift* occurs in the Diocesan offices as a result of engaging at the Deanery level?



Typical Diocesan Pastoral Planning Process

1. Senior leadership perceives need for long-term planning
2. Form a **central committee** with diverse diocesan representation
3. Conduct listening and **collect data**
4. **Synthesize into pastoral goals, objectives, and action plan**
5. **Promulgate a pastoral plan** for parishes and diocesan organizations





Steps of the Deanery Process

1. Deans receive **formation and training** for new role
2. Each dean forms a **Deanery Leadership Team (DLT)**, recruiting lay representatives and pastors
3. Provide DLT with **formation** and training for tactics, communication, and spirituality of the process.
4. Each deanery conducts needs assessment and synthesize **feedback**
5. Discern themes, goals, and objectives
6. Draft a **Deanery Pastoral Plan** and submit to bishop for approval
7. Create deanery **working groups** for each goal and plan of action for each objective



Why Deaneries?

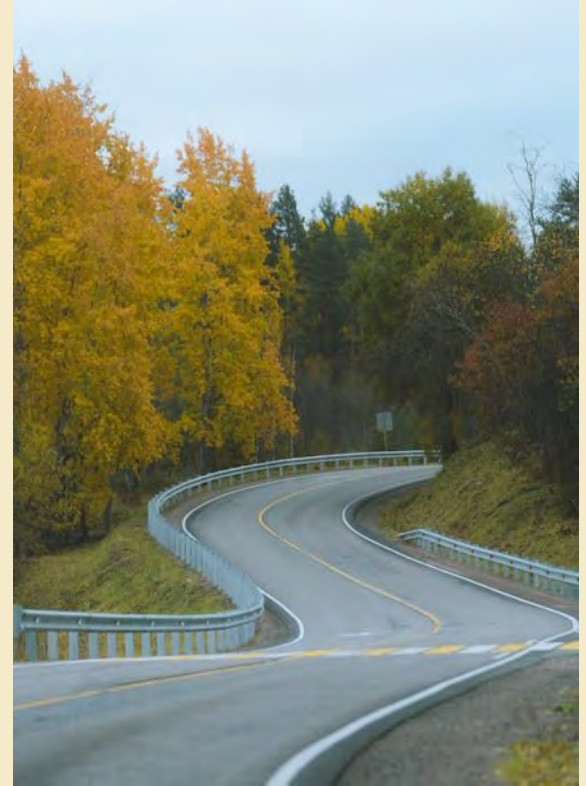
- Needs **vary greatly** from one deanery to another.
- **Subsidiarity** is practiced when each deanery assesses its needs and responds appropriately.
- Better **stewardship** of shared resources in service of sacramental, catechetical, and social needs.
- Recognition of shared mission, challenges, and **collective strengths**.

Pastoral Center Involvement

1. Provide formation and **training for deans**
2. Convene periodic meetings with Deanery Leadership Teams representatives for **networking, formation, and training**
3. Provide online formation and training for tactics, communication, and **spirituality** for each step
4. Review all Deanery Pastoral Plans and reflect on how the **diocesan offices may need to adapt**
5. Bishop and staff create an **umbrella pastoral plan** incorporating all Deanery Pastoral Plans

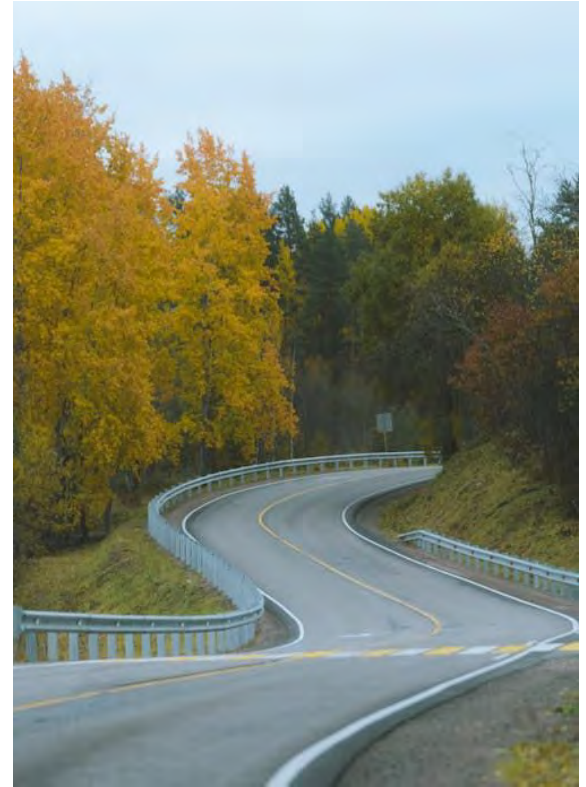


How do you avoid wildly different plans unmoored from a **central vision**?



Guardrails - Clarify Scope

- The bishop **grounds** the planning process in **vision** and **values**
- **Define the parameters** that shape each deanery's discussions
- **Provide freedom** to explore creative ideas within the defined scope
- **Unify deaneries** around the local church mission and the broader diocesan vision




Samples

- *Adhere to Catholic teaching, local law, and Canon Law*
- *Use the Diocese Synod Report as a basis for planning*
- *Each deanery attends to the well-being of all its parishes*
- *Each parish actively engages in the initiative*
- *Maximize evangelization and formation opportunities for all – churched and unchurched, with focus on youth and young adults*
- *Prioritize intra-deanery collaboration; allowing for geographic exceptions*

Challenges

- Culture of parochial autonomy
- Pastors' fear of loss of authority
- Parish status as a public juridic person
- Selection and formation of Deans/Vicars for their new role
- Establishing supporting structures
- Clarifying the roles of Deanery Leadership Team and Parish Pastoral Councils





Why do this? What's the **value add**?
Couldn't a centralized process be
more "*efficient*"?



Diocesan-wide Impact

- Greater inter-parish **collaboration** and deanery *esprit de corps*.
- Deanery Leadership Teams form a **network** and share best practices.
- Resources **leveraged (stewardship)** so parishes can focus more on **mission** than maintenance.
- Quality and availability of **pastoral services** increase.
- Each parish community maintains its own **identity**.
- Shared facilities and maintenance among nearby parishes.
- Pastoral Center shifts to **supporting** Deanery Pastoral Plans.

Pastoral Planning is *Relational*

with God

Prayer, openness to participative decision-making, and discernment help envision and actualize God's calling to the community

within communities

Seeking wide input and feedback engages more people in fulfilling pastoral goals

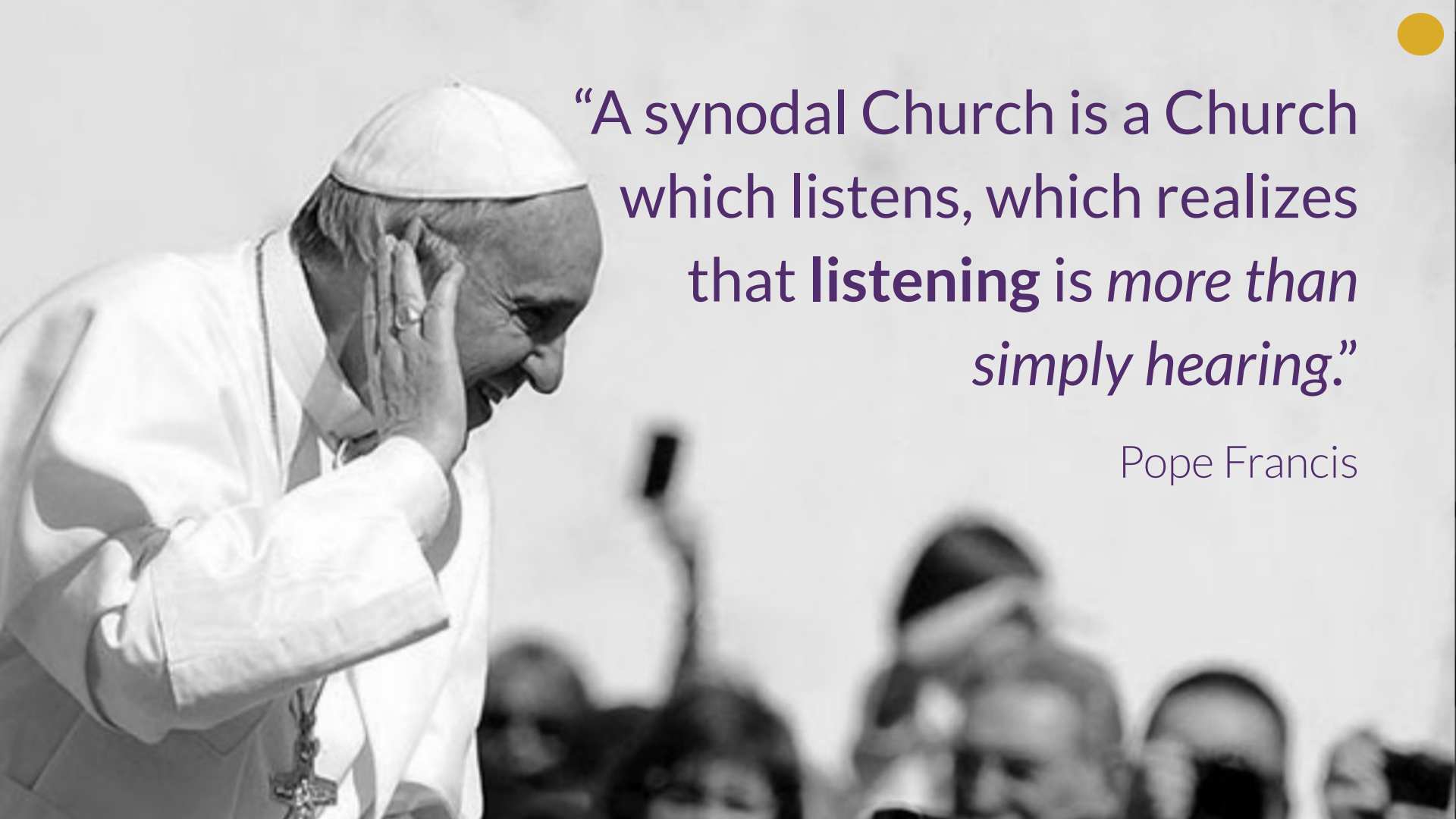
with the diocese

Diocesan pastoral plan *emerges from* deanery plans – elevating collaboration over top-down mandates



Key Takeaways

1. Policies and procedures designed for compliance and **connection**.
2. Effective diocesan administration begins with **listening**: *seeking to understand before seeking to instruct*.
3. Being **disciples of Jesus Christ** forms our administrative practice.
4. Rebuilding **trust** depends on **co-responsible relationships** and a **standards of excellence**.



“A synodal Church is a Church
which listens, which realizes
that **listening** is *more than
simply hearing.*”

Pope Francis



LEADERSHIP ROUNDTABLE

Supporting the institutions
that serve

our faith.

our leaders.

our ministry.

our communities.