

## Synod Snippet #2

### Lay Delegates to Synod: Why You Are Important!

Synods are different from other Church gatherings in that Synods can – and do – enact canons (Church laws) which are binding within all of the parishes in the diocesan Synod’s jurisdiction. You have a voice in important decisions made during our Synods. These decisions could be financial, ethical, and/or practical matters in the day-to-day operations of our parishes together as the diocese. The topics and/or issues covered at Synod can range from local diocesan concerns to those impacting the national church. We are a big diocesan family working together to discern – to the best of our ability – how to move forward in fulfillment of God’s purpose for all of creation. It sounds like a weighty responsibility – and it is – but, it is also fun, interesting, enlightening, and inspiring to be a part of this decision-making body.

Our Synods gather as a three-party partnership: the bishop, the clergy, and the non-clergy representatives of the people. Each act of Synod is passed through the votes of lay and clergy voting members together and then, additionally, requires the concurrence of the bishop. Any motion put forward during Synod can be put to a “vote by orders”. This means that, rather than one majority of all voting members, the lay and the clergy votes are counted separately and there must be a majority of lay votes and a majority of clergy votes in order for the motion to succeed. This type of voting still requires the concurrence of the bishop as well.



**Do Lay Delegates have to vote at Synod according to the wishes of their parish?** In a nutshell, no. Knowledge of your parish’s views on various issues is, of course, something you bring with you (or it should be, anyway) but we gather to discuss, reach consensus, and maintain mutual responsibility to each other present at Synod. You hear information and opinions of which others in your parish may be unaware. You vote at Synod according to your informed thinking of what will best reveal the kingdom of God and build up the body of Christ throughout our diocese. Those gathered at Synod are, in that time, *the diocese* making decisions *for the diocese*.



Now for some nitty-gritty details. **Who is able to be a Lay Delegate to Synod?** Lay Delegates are elected at their parish’s annual general vestry meeting held in the year of the Synod gathering. There may also be a special vestry meeting called only for the purpose of electing Lay Delegates. People eligible are those who 1) have the status of communicant at that time, and 2) are at least

18 years of age, and 3) do not hold a Bishop's licence as a deacon or a priest. Oh...and the elected delegate must also signify that he/she is willing to go. (Constitution Article 3)



**How many Lay Delegates go to Synod?** Each parish – *regardless of the number of congregations* – is entitled to elect *one* Lay Delegate and one alternate. If your parish has more than 100 canonical voters, you can elect two Lay Delegates. If your parish has more than 200 canonical voters, you can elect three Lay Delegates. **Very Important: Canonical voters are NOT simply the number of people on your parish list.** Canonical voters are 1) baptized, and are 2) at least 16 years of age, and 3) are habitual attenders of worship services in your parish/congregation and 4) have contributed during the year immediately preceding [the current annual general vestry meeting] to the working expenses of the parish/congregation. (Canon J-1, 1.)



**A Prayer for our Synod:** Almighty and ever-living God, source of all wisdom and understanding, be present with those who will take counsel in Sault Ste Marie for the renewal and mission of your Church. Teach us in all things to seek first your honour and glory. Guide us to perceive what is right, and grant us both the courage to pursue it and the grace to accomplish it; through Jesus Christ our Lord.

