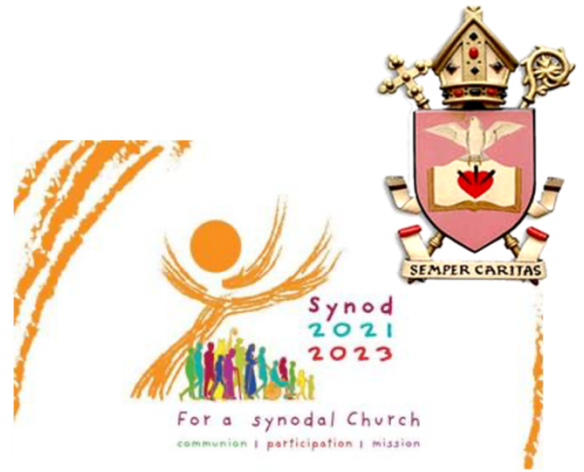


Come,
let us walk
together



PARISH LISTENING SESSION

Booklet for Facilitators

Please use as a guide and make changes to suit your own parish groups

Welcome

GATHERING THOUGHTS IN STILLNESS AND SILENCE

Table with lit candle

Suggested Song of Invocation

Spirit of the living God fall afresh on us.
Spirit of the living God fall afresh on us.
Melt us, mould us, fill us, use us.
Spirit of the living God fall afresh on us.

Gathering Prayer by All

**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.**

Hymn

Longing for light, we wait in darkness. Longing for truth, we turn to you.
Make us your own, your holy people, light for the world to see.

Chorus:

**Christ, be our light! Shine in our hearts. Shine through the darkness.
Christ be our light, shine in your Church, gathered today.**

Longing for peace our world is troubled. Longing for hope, many despair.
Your word alone has pow'r to save us. Make us your living voice.

Many the gifts, many the people, many the hearts that yearn to belong.
Let us be servants to one another, making your Kingdom come.

Overview of the Synod

What is a Synod?

(Synod is derived from the Greek words: sun= together and hodus= the way)

Synodality simply means journeying together or walking together. Church.

Since Vatican II popes have convoked synods every few years. A synod is a spiritual process in the form of a council where the Holy Father invites a number of bishops to Rome to consult with each other, listen to each other, try to discern where the Spirit is leading them before reaching consensus about important church issues with the Pope.

The next Synod of Bishops will take place in 2023, but Pope Francis wants the whole of the People of God to be involved in the preparation for that Synod. So, on October 9th 2021, Pope Francis convoked a Global Synod: a two year process, unprecedented in the history of the Catholic Church.

Synod on Synodality 2023

The theme of the synod is **Synodality** which simply means that we are invited to look at how we, as the Church of Christ, travel in communion with each other, where all the faithful have a part to play in how the Church carries out its mission in the world of today.

The Pope sees this as a 'Conversion Process', way of consulting all baptised Christians about how the Church needs to reform and make changes to meet the spiritual needs of the People of God in the 3rd millennium.

'There is no need to create a new Church but to create a different Church.' *Pope Francis*
It is a great moment for us to embrace reform in the Church.

We need to draw on our past, learn from it, dialogue about our present situation in 2022 and shape our future.

The faithful of every diocese across the world, those who may be 'resting' from practices of faith, those who feel let down, left out, upset or angry, people of other faiths and no faith, are being given a voice and are being asked to embrace this once in a lifetime opportunity and take part, in whatever way they can, in the preparation for the Bishop's Synod in 2023.

We cannot do it alone.

'If the Spirit is not present there will be no synod'

Why Synod?

The pandemic has drawn us all up to realise more fully than ever our mutual need of each other. Pope Francis recognises that it is now time to consult us all, to take advice and build consensus so that the Church goes back to the original way of being Church where all members were consulted about its future.

He reminds us of the gifts and responsibilities given to us at our Baptism when we were called to be active participants in the life of the Church. All are invited to listen to each other, learn from each other, reflect on the contributions of others and discern what the Holy Spirit is saying about how a synodal Church needs to be.

And so, every baptised member of the Catholic Church throughout the world, is being asked to take part in a unique opportunity, to have a stake in the future of the Church we love, and to dream about the kind of Church we want to have.

The ‘Synodal Process is not to provide a temporary or one-time experience of synodality, but rather to provide an opportunity for the entire People of God to discern together’ V1:3 and call upon the Holy Spirit to accompany them on a journey to a synodal future for their own parish communities.

The Holy Father asks us to honour what is holy and enduring in our Church, build on the values of what is good and think deeply about what the Church needs to be in our time. It is a challenge to us all and we cannot do it alone so we ask Holy Spirit to open our minds and hearts and to guide us to see the path we must follow to help reform the Church we love.

Synod on Synodality Themes

Communion: Walking together as the Body of Christ, a sacramental people, listening to each other and to what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church.

Participation: Encouraging all members to fulfil their baptismal role as best they can through participation in parish and diocesan projects and plans, religious activities and outreach to the world around us.

Mission: Bringing the Gospel message of Christ to others through our diversity of gifts, skills and talents.

The pandemic has taught us that we cannot stand alone. We need each other. On our own we have little power. We all must stand together in solidarity and reach out to those who are hurting or feel excluded.

‘We need to rebuild an attractive community that draws people in to hear the message of Jesus.’

Adapted from a talk given at Learning to be Missionary Disciples, a Churches Together England conference, on 17 November, 2021. Jenny Sinclair founder director of Together for the Common

Guidelines for a Parish Listening Session

Encounter through Listening

The synodal process must begin by deep attentive listening. It's a reciprocal listening where everyone has something to learn.

It's also a mutual way of listening where every person is given time, space, and the respect to be listened to intently without comment or interruption.

What is being said may be coming from a whole different perspective than yours.

Keep an open mind and try not to judge. Good listening comes when we try to understand what is being said

Listen as you would want to be listened to

Our responses will be shared with the diocesan core group and the bishop without indicating the names of individual participants.

As participants, when we tell others of our experience of the consultation, we will not attribute anything we share to particular people or groups.

"If you say something I do not like, I have to listen even more, because everyone has the right to be heard, just as everyone has the right to speak".

Pope Francis at the Opening of the Synod of Bishops

A Safe Place to Speak Out

It is important to speak from the heart.

We all have our own thoughts and opinions and must feel free to express them without being concerned with how we are being judged.

Treat others with reverence and respect

This can be very difficult especially when we totally disagree with what we hear but it's vital that we are listened to in an atmosphere of mutual love and respect.

We may not like what others say and they in turn may not agree with us but we must respect the right to voice opinion and be honest without the fear of being judged.

Allow others to speak one at a time and without interruption and respect the time so that everyone has time to share.

Avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda.

Stick to the topic of the question.

Quiet Reflection

After each person in the group has spoken take quiet time to think over what you have heard and jot down anything that comes to mind that spoke to you in a particular way.

This is a very important part of the synodal process. It's in the silence of our hearts that we give time and space to call on the Holy Spirit to help us discern what we have listened to.

There is not always an easy solution. Everything is not right or wrong
We need a good deal of patience to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying.

Give the Holy Spirit the mic. Listen to the whisper in our heart. Allow the Holy Spirit to give us the nudge we need to speak heart to heart.

Fr Brian Grogan: Scottish Laity Network Webinar November 2021

'The Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans.' Romans 8:26-27

Dialogue - Discussion - Discernment

Dialogue is the foundation of all synodal consultations. Dialogue does not happen when there is arguing or criticism. Dialogue is a two-way process of mutual listening and building relationships where people are open to possibilities other than their own ideas.

Discussion holds those possibilities against one another, helping to reflect upon them, and narrowing toward realistic, doable solutions, and steps forward.

Discussion comes after dialogue and these two activities can lead to true discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying and leading.

There may be conflicting perspectives because may not all agree upon what is discussed but remember that what we discern through this process has the potential to be the will of God for the Church in the future.

We need patience to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to me.

Feedback

The scribe of each group should be asked to give a summary of the group's conversation. After this is done, and depending on the time remaining, the main facilitator

Explain that the information from the groups will be combined into a report that will be sent to the diocese. Every effort will be made to faithfully report what was expressed (including any contentious or complex issues) so as to respect the trust and communion experienced during the time together.

Engaging with Scripture

Preparing to hear the Word

READ:

*The WORD is Jesus Christ, with the Father before time began.
The WORD was made flesh, born of Mary and lived among us.*

Invite everyone to listen so as to hear the Word. Use either the following reading or a reading from the suggested list at the end of the booklet. Ask the group to consider what the Gospel passage means for us as missionary disciples today. The reader should read very slowly whilst the participants listen carefully. Closing eyes can help to create awareness. Ask everyone to imagine themselves in the story.

ASK:

Who might you be in the story?

What is the main theme of the passage?

What might this passage be saying to you at this moment in your life?



Luke 4: 14-21

Jesus, with the power of the Spirit in him, returned to Galilee; and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him.

He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the book of the Prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll, he found the place where it is written:

The spirit of the Lord has been given to me,
for he has anointed me.

He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor,
to proclaim liberty to captives,
and to the blind new sight,
to set the downtrodden free,
to proclaim the Lord's year of favour.

He then rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogue were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, "This text is being fulfilled today, even as you listen".

**A Year of
favour**

LISTENING SESSION

In this part, everyone is invited to take part in a parish listening session.

Invite everyone to break into groups of about **5** people, each group having a facilitator chosen in advance.

The facilitator will invite the group to begin with a communal silence – i.e. silence throughout the whole room; this silence is to allow time for each person to savour in silence the scripture text(s).

The leader of the session will announce the end of the silent period and invite the next stage of the reflection to proceed.

The facilitator of each group will introduce themselves and invite each person to say who they are. A **scribe** will be part of the group; the scribe is not taking a minute, nor attributing opinions or writing down detailed sharings; the scribe is there to record the **flavour** of the group, a delicate task!

Round one

Choose a key question to be posed to the group in the light of the scriptural text and the content of the diocesan questionnaire.

Choose from suggested questions at the end of the booklet.

After a time of silent reflection on the question, which will be wide and open-ended, each person in the group will be invited to give their initial response to it; there is always an opportunity to pass and the chance to respond later will be available. No one should feel pressured to speak.

As each person speaks there is to be no interruption and when each person is finished, there is to be no comment at this stage.

Participants to jot down anything that comes to them – not recording of other people's sharing/thoughts. (*Have paper and pens available*)

Round two

With reference to the scripture theme and questions from the Diocesan Questionnaire in mind:

What steps might the Holy Spirit be asking us to take in order to grow in our journeying together?

Round three

The facilitator invites group members to contribute to a gentle and respectful discussion of what has been heard.

After this, the scribe feeds back to the group what has been heard.

Sharing of responses

**Invite someone from each group to give a flavour of the group session responses.
Not a detailed report of everything that was said in the group session**

**Thank all the groups for their response to the whole experience
and hopefully highlight some issues reported back.
Explain that their responses will feed into the Bishop's report to Rome in August**

Draw to a close

Concluding Prayer

Father, we thank you
for bringing us together as a Church in communion this day.
in the name of your Son, Messiah and Lord,
and in the power of the Holy Spirit, our Counsellor and Comforter.

Renew within us the gifts of that Spirit, as we go from this place;
Make us ready to serve, eager to witness and willing to *go the extra mile*.
Keep us fervent in faith, expectant in hope, and constant in love.

We entrust the future of this synodal journey to the intercession of Mary, Mother of the Church. May always follow her words at Cana, and each day *do whatever he tells us*.
We ask this through our Lord Jesus Christ your Son, who lives and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen.

Closing Hymn

Holy Virgin, by God's decree, you were called eternally,
That he could give his son to our race.
Mary we praise you, hail full of grace. *Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!*

By your faith and loving accord, as the handmaid of the Lord,
you undertook God's plan to embrace,
Mary we thank you, hail full of grace. *Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!*

Joy to God you gave and expressed, of all women, none more blest,
when in mankind your Son took his place.
Mary we love you hail full of grace. *Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!*

Refuge for your children so weak, sure protection all can seek,
Problems of life you help us to face.
Mary we trust you, hail full of grace! *Ave, Ave, Ave Maria!*

To our needy world of today, love and beauty you portray,
Showing the path to Christ we must trace,
Mary our mother hail full of grace! *Ave, Ave, Ave Maria*



Main question

The Synod poses the following 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”? (PD, 26)

In responding to this question, we are invited to:

- *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?

It is often very fruitful for participants to reflect on the journey of their local community up until now. What has been the history of the faith life of the community? How has the community travelled to where they are now? How has God been present? Recollecting the past together often helps to build up the community and guide its path forward.

Questions for deeper reflection

In our local church, who are those who walk together and who are those who seem further apart/marginalised.

Listening with an open heart and mind, without prejudice, is the first step.

How is God speaking to us through voices we both hear and ignore? What facilitates or inhibits our listening? Who do we choose to or not to listen to?

We are all invited to speak out in freedom, truth and charity. What enables/ hinders our speaking out courageously, candidly and responsibly against injustice, and for those who have no voice in our Church and society?

How do prayer and liturgical celebrations inspire and guide our common life and mission?

How do promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy?

As missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church ?

What hinders/helps the baptised in being active in service to the Good News?

To what extent do diverse peoples in our community come together for dialogue?

What do we share with other Christian traditions and how do we journey together?

How does our church community identify the goals to be pursued and the way to reach them?

How can we foster a more synodal approach in our participation and leadership?

What methods and process do we use in our decision making? Does it help us listen to the whole People of God?

Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation and ongoing learning, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. 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?

SCRIPTURAL REFLECTION PASSAGES

Journeying

The Journey to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-35)

Listening

Hearing Gods call (John 1:35-39):

The Story of Bartimeus (Mark 10:46-52)

Discernment

Discerning Christ's call (Mark 1:21-39)

Communion

Living as one (Acts 2:42-47)

The Journey of the Synodal Community (Ephesians 4:1-16, 5:2)

The First Council (Acts 15:1-35)

Mission

Spiritual Gifts (1 Corinthians 12:1-15,22,25-31):

Gifts at the Service of Community

Go out to the whole World (Mark 16:13-19)

Sharing the Good News

Feed and Tend Others (John 21:1-19)

Sent to Bring the Good News (Luke 4: 14-21)