



THE ARCHDIOCESE *of* BIRMINGHAM



WALKING TOGETHER

A HANDBOOK FOR THE SYNODAL JOURNEY

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ADSUMUS, SANCTE SPIRITUS

Every session of the Second Vatican Council began with the prayer Adsumus Sancte Spiritus, the first word of the Latin original meaning, "We stand before You, Holy Spirit," which has been historically used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years, being attributed to Saint Isidore of Seville (c. 560 - 4 April 636).

As we are called to embrace this synodal path of the Synod 2021-2023, this prayer invites the Holy Spirit to operate within us so that we may be a community and a people of grace. For the Synod 2021-2023, we propose to use this simplified version, so that any group or liturgical assembly can pray 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.

Please use this prayer before every meeting and at each stage of the journey.

INTRODUCTION

This handbook is offered to assist you, as we begin “Walking Together”. You are encouraged to use the materials and guidance here, but also to adapt it for your own need and the needs of your community. Please remember that this is above all, a spiritual journey. We will be led under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Start every meeting with a time for prayer and discernment. Evoke the Holy Spirit, by praying the ‘*Adsumus Holy Spirit*’ overleaf.

Pope Francis wants to hear from the whole Church about what is happening in local parishes. He and Archbishop Bernard Longley would like to know what individuals think we should all be doing to help make our parishes better. By the end of our time together we aim to capture your answers to the basic question: What is the Holy Spirit saying to our Church today? The way he has proposed doing this is a synodal process. Synod means ‘journeying together’ and it involves listening to the Holy Spirit and to each other in order to discern the path we are called to walk together.

We wish to avoid words and phrases that we have to define or explain – such as Synodality, or Synodal Pathway, the exception is our email: synodalpathway@rcaob.org.uk Therefore, we are going to use two words that explain simply, clearly and aptly what we mean by Synod: **Walking Together**.

Walking together is above all a spiritual journey. We are invited to journey together while always calling upon the Holy Spirit to lead and guide us. We are asked to pray constantly, and at each step to pray to the Holy Spirit. Walking together calls for actions in the short term, but the purpose of the Synod is broader than this: it is an invitation to discern co-responsibly how we are the Church today. This can only happen under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

There are three key concepts that shape walking together:

COMMUNION - These conversations lead to conversion to Christ and commitment to active participation in the life of the Church and the mission given by Christ.

PARTICIPATION - The people of God talk with one another and listen to one another about questions that matter.

MISSION - The communion exists for a common purpose; mission flows naturally from the experience of walking together: ‘listening, discerning, proclaiming’.

Try to make listening your special gift as we grow into the habits of ‘listening, discerning and proclaiming’. There will be much to hear, and much to tell. However, the experience of walking together is just as significant as we seek to become, even more, a Synodal Church.

Canon Paul Fitzpatrick

Synod Diocesan Contact
Chair, Synodal Pathway Committee

TIMELINE

2021

MID SEPTEMBER	Meeting with Deacons
MID OCTOBER	Diocesan Website Synod page goes live
EARLY NOVEMBER	Three Pastoral Area days with the Priests.
MID NOVEMBER	Zoom meetings with the lay faithful
LATE NOVEMBER	Publish Diocesan handbook – Walking Together Participants Guide Questions
ADVENT	Begin parish meetings – Walking Together

2022

JANUARY – FEBRUARY	Parish meetings continue – Walking Together
FEBRUARY	Deanery Walking Together Meetings begin
BEGINNING OF MARCH	Deadline for feedback from Parishes and Deaneries
END OF MARCH	Completion of all responses and feedback. Documents submitted to Archbishop Bernard Longley
APRIL & MAY	Period of Diocesan Discernment
JUNE	Submission of 10-page document to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales.
JUNE	Publication of submission of 10-page document to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales. Publication of all responses and feedback

CLOSE OF DIOCESAN PHASE OF WALKING TOGETHER

BEGINNING OF IMPLEMENTATION OF DIOCESAN VISION IN THE LIGHT OF DIOCESAN RESPONSES AND FEEDBACK

** correct as November 2021, but maybe subject to change.*

WALKING TOGETHER: THE SYNODAL PATHWAY AND OUR DIOCESAN VISION

As an Archdiocese, we have discerned four diocesan priorities and themes.

These are:

EVANGELISATION

FORMATION

LITURGY AND WORSHIP

SOCIAL OUTREACH

with emphasis on **FAMILIES AND YOUNG PEOPLE**
and an emphasis on **SERVING IN A CO-RESPONSIBLE MANNER.**

EVANGELISATION – encouraging others to know God's love for them by inviting them to church, to pray and to encounter Christ, and to groups where they can learn about Him. Forming missionary disciples and missionary parishes.

FORMATION – growing leaders in our churches, schools and parish communities, by providing both spiritual and pastoral formation and support, to help prepare us for new roles. Helping you to understand more about your faith in order to deepen your personal relationship with God.

LITURGY AND WORSHIP – invigorating and deepening our worship and sacramental celebrations so that we share in, and radiate, the divine life of God. Encouraging others to join us in prayer to our Heavenly Father.

SOCIAL OUTREACH – Building up the common good through our charitable outreach in the giving of our time, our resources and our love to those who need it most. Inviting others to join us in our charitable work.

These themes and priorities have helped us as a diocese to shape our vision and understanding of what it means for us to walk together. The questions which will form our listening, our conversations and our discernment process will reflect these priorities. Your response to these questions will aid their implementation throughout our Archdiocese in the coming months.

OUR DIOCESAN VISION

Our vision is to be a Catholic Diocese which is faithful to the mission entrusted to us by Jesus Christ, full of missionary disciples who work together co-responsibly in vibrant communities of faith, joyful in their service of God and neighbour.



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WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN TO YOUR RESPONSES?

Each diocese has been asked to produce a 10-page document which will be submitted to the Bishops' Conference. Following a period of conversation, listening and discernment, the Archdiocese of Birmingham will submit its response to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, which will in turn shape the national response and discernment.

However, walking together is not about producing a document, but rather reflecting upon our experience of the journey. The documentation from the Synod Office in Rome speaks of the Church as being synodal in its very nature. Therefore, this is not a process, nor a tick box exercise or even about producing beautiful documents, but rather experiencing walking together as an Archdiocese at first hand. It requires us to be open to the voice of the Holy Spirit and making listening a norm of pastoral ministry.

Our listening and discernment will feed directly into our Diocesan vision and priorities. Your response will shape our understanding and the implementation of the next stages of our Diocesan vision. The results of this discernment will be available to all, as the responses and findings will be published, alongside the final 10-page document which is the result of the Diocesan discernment. These will be retained by the Diocese and used to implement our Diocesan vision. We hope you will see the fruits of this discernment in action before the Synod of Bishops begins in 2023.



ENABLING THE LISTENING PROCESS AND SERVING THE CONVERSATION

WHO ENABLES THE CONVERSATION?

Good listening and conversation have participants engaging with one another in meaningful dialogue on the given topic or question. The enabler is not the centre of conversation but rather a guide for the conversation. Strong enablers are people who:

- Are at home with their Catholic faith
- Are prayerful and reflective
- Have strong interpersonal skills
- Have effective communication skills
- Are willing participants in the synodal process
- Are able to maintain a "big picture" view without injecting their personal agenda
- Can focus a conversation
- Can connect participants with each other without becoming the centre of the conversation.

It is important to select enablers with the experience and competencies needed, depending on the nature and make-up of the group.

- This can include arranging a date, place, and time.
- Welcoming and enabling hospitality.
- Putting people at ease.
- Several parishes have found that the stewards who welcome, guide people at Mass and clean the Church afterwards – have these skills.
- There are many people across the Archdiocese who have experience of leading small groups such as Alpha or Bible Study group. Catechists would make excellent enablers.

ENABLING PARISH LISTENING AND CONVERSATION MEETINGS

As an enabler you will be asked to:

- Establish clear boundaries of time and topic for speakers
- Gently interrupt a speaker who talks disproportionately more than others
- Gently interrupt and redirect a speaker who gets off topic
- Gently re-focus a speaker who is preoccupied with an issue that is not pertinent to the topic or inhibits the participation of others in the group.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR SUCCESSFUL CONVERSATIONS AND LISTENING

It helps to set ground rules and expectations at the start of the consultation by emphasizing the need for broad participation and safety.

If you have to interrupt a speaker, it helps to acknowledge their contribution by providing a brief summary of what you heard them say and thank them for their contribution.

One person speaks at a time and the others listen attentively.

Discernment means speaking, listening and prayerfully reflecting, so pausing in silence between speakers to consider what is said is a good approach.

Speak when you can add to the conversation, not when you are trying to intentionally end it.

Stay on topic.

Keep your comments reasonably brief so others have time to participate.

If someone offers a comment in the form of a complaint, ask the person to reframe her/his comment in the form of a hope or aspiration.

EXAMPLES OF GROUND RULES FOR PARISH MEETINGS

1. These conversations are a safe place to talk — we will treat each other and what anyone says with reverence and respect.
2. One person speaks at a time.
3. We all will listen with an open mind.
4. We will be stopping the conversation at certain intervals to reflect and pray.
5. Our primary mode is dialogue: When we speak our purpose is to advance the conversation. Please avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda.
6. We limit how long we speak so that everyone has time to share.
7. We only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.
8. We will be reporting the themes and experiences to the Archdiocese and Bishops' Conference as they emerge from the consultation discussions without indicating the names of individual participants.
9. As participants, when we tell others of our experience of the consultation, we will not attribute anything we share to particular people or groups.

DIALOGUE, DISCUSSION AND DISCERNMENT

Dialogue is the foundation of all conversations. Dialogue does not happen when there is arguing or diatribe. However, conflicting perspectives may be presented. We may not all agree upon what is discussed within the parish conversations, but we all acknowledge that what we discern through this process has the potential to be the will of God for the Church in the future.

DIALOGUE, DISCUSSION AND DISCERNMENT FOR ENABLERS

It is helpful to distinguish between the different types of exchanges:

- Dialogue is two-way, cooperative and its purpose is to build relationships and exchange perspectives between participants
- Discussion is a process of talking about something in order to reach a decision or to exchange ideas
- Debate is two-way and competitive, where the purpose is to convince another
- Diatribe is one-way, and its purpose is to browbeat, inspire, shame or emote. Dialogue comes before discussion in our parish conversations.

These two activities can lead to true discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying and leading.

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

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR DIALOGUE, DISCERNMENT AND DISCUSSION

As enabler, you will help the group engage in dialogue on the topic until they make an explicit decision to move into discussion. It is okay for you as an enabler to ask the group to stop talking for a short period of time in order to reflect and pray about the dialogue before moving to discussion.



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DISCERNMENT, CONVERSATION AND LISTENING

DISCERNMENT

Discernment is a vital part of walking together. It is present at every stage of this process. It is a spiritual experience, as we ask the Holy Spirit, in prayer, to grant us his wisdom and grace, that we may be enabled to weigh up what is important for God. Like the two disciples on the road to Emmaus, we may be gradually led to evaluate our experience by the presence of the Holy Spirit, in the light of our faith and hope in the risen Christ.

Personal Discernment

Personal Discernment is important because it is the first step on our journey together. We should think carefully and pray about what we might say at the parish meeting and how we should say it. Are we going to try and use words that build up and will do good to those who hear them? Remember that the Holy Spirit is the source of unity within the Church. If your words will not foster unity, you should make an effort to discern if they are appropriate. When you listen to others, try to discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to you and your parish community, through their words.

An enabler will not only try to ensure that they have recorded the feedback and conversation faithfully; but will discern what was significant; maybe that was the quiet voice during the meeting.

Parish and Deanery Discernment

Discernment takes place at every level of the Church. The more persons who discern, the greater the possibility for effective discernment. Discernment at Parish, Deanery and Diocesan level has a bigger picture and wider focus. It is never used to control or edit a conversation and feedback; but to draw out what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church in that place.

Diocesan Discernment

The same amount of time will be devoted to discernment as to the conversations themselves. This is a measure of the importance of Diocesan discernment. The very many responses and feedback will need to be collated. These will form the basis of discernment. Archbishop Bernard Longley is our primary discerners. We should pray for him as we are walking together and particularly throughout the period of Diocesan discernment. The results of this discernment will be available to all, as the responses and findings will be published, alongside the final 10-page document which is the result of the Diocesan discernment.

CONVERSATIONS

There will be many conversations which may have a different form or dynamic. Charity should be common to all. We are called to speak with charity and receive with charity. Others may feel enabled to speak at a level and from a place they may not always share. These conversations will need to be respected, cherished and heard. Often, it is wise to pause in silence to ensure that what has been said has been heard, before moving on to the next speaker.

Conversations will be focused upon the proposed questions, but they are not limited to these. When we speak our purpose is to advance the conversation. Please avoid arguing or comments that seek to advance a personal agenda. We limit how long we speak so that

everyone has time to share. We only speak once until everyone has had an opportunity to share.

Conversations can take place in many settings: with neighbours and friends; with our work colleagues; with those from other Churches or of other faiths, or no faith. All of these conversations are valuable and offer a possibility to learn and receive. Remember that the Holy Spirit is present with you in every setting.

LISTENING

Already we are finding that good conversations lead to enhanced listening. However, this also requires sensitivity and charity. It can be hard work and tiring. Try to receive every conversation and contribution as a gift – even if this is challenging.

Pope Francis reminds us that listening is the key to walking together. We hope that many of our parishes can foster and create a space where such listening can take place. Enablers could summarise their role in one sentence: *'in my parish, may I help others to create this listening space'*.



PROCESS FOR ENABLING PARISH MEETINGS

It is hoped that each parish may be able to meet on three occasions to discuss different elements of this process: Communion, Participation, Mission. It is envisaged that every parish should meet once with conversations focused on the questions.

An enabler can help stimulate discussion by offering to synthesise the comments made from time to time or when the flow of conversation seems to be stuck.

An enabler helps the group by holding them in discussion until a pattern of recurring themes are emerging and making an explicit decision to move into prayerful discernment.

Discernment begins in prayer: "Your will, not mine".

An enabler can call the group to prayer for guidance by the Spirit, to sharing reflections on what they see as emerging in the dialogue and discussion.

An enabler can call upon the group to share the themes that they hear surfacing and that they believe should persist into the future of the local and universal Church as a result of this consultation.

Likewise, an enabler can call upon the group to name ideas or topics they have heard that they believe should not persist into the future local and universal Church.

An enabler can name any yet unresolved issues or topics that may need to remain unresolved.

An enabler can call upon the participants to detail what sticks out to them as a result of the consultation, ways to be in stronger communion with one another, ways to participate more fully in the life of the Church, or ways to be more missionary.

STRUCTURE OF THE PARISH CONVERSATION AND LISTENING

Most parish meetings will last 90 minutes. Some groups may want to allow a longer time frame so that everyone's voice can be heard and brought into the discussion. The enabler should add time frames to each part of the conversation. As much as possible, the focus should be on smaller, table discussions so that everyone has a chance to be heard.

SAMPLE TEMPLATE FOR A PARISH CONVERSATION AND LISTENING

Gathering Prayer: Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus

Welcome, Explanation of the Purpose and Process

Focus the meeting with Questions

Table Discussions

Large Group Feedback

Thanks. Final Prayer.

OUTLINE FOR PARISH CONVERSATION AND LISTENING

GATHERING PRAYER: ADSUMUS, SANCTE SPIRITUS

It is advisable to begin every Parish meeting with time for prayer and reflection. As well as the Adsumus prayer, reflections from Scripture are recommended.

WELCOME, EXPLANATION OF THE PURPOSE AND PROCESS

Walking Together is a special time of prayer, listening, dialogue and recommendations. This is your opportunity to respond to the request from Pope Francis to dream about the Church we are called to be. By gathering as a people of faith we hope to weave new and deeper relationships, to learn from one another, to build bridges, to enlighten minds, to warm hearts and to restore strength for our common mission. By the end of our time together we aim to capture your answers to the basic question: What is the Holy Spirit saying to our Church today?

EXPLANATION OF PROCESS

Gather in small groups around a table. Appoint a scribe to feed back to the larger group. The enabler will explain that the questions are proposed to focus the discussion, and that it is not necessary to answer all the questions. It is better to focus on three questions in depth, rather than try to answer them all. The ground rules and practical suggestions on page 8 would be useful at this point.

TABLE DISCUSSIONS

We have found it useful to begin the conversation in smaller groups, perhaps splitting the table in half, and then extending the conversation to the whole group at the table. In this way, every effort should be made to ensure that everyone has had an opportunity to speak, and that everyone has been listened too. The table discussion should have a significant amount of the time allocated to the evening.

LARGE GROUP FEEDBACK

The smaller groups should be called back to form a larger group whereby they can report back from their small group discussions. The scribe of each group should be asked to give a summary of the group's conversation. This will be a time for listening and discernment. The feedback should be received charitably, without comment, but with thanks. It is useful to have a pause between each feedback, to allow the comments to be heard and discerned.

Only after all the tables have reported should further discussion or feedback be invited. The enabler can invite individuals to give their personal feedback to the larger group. The main enabler can suggest specific formats for feedback such as

- After listening to my group, I am wondering...
- The question that emerged for me from listening in my group was...
- An interesting range of views that emerged in my group was...

THE QUESTIONS

COMMUNION: THE LIFE OF THE CHURCH. FORMATION.

1. In what ways does the Catholic Church enhance your life?
2. Reflecting on 20 months of the pandemic, how has participation in your parish been affected? Were these issues and/or opportunities there before and how can participation be strengthened moving forward into the future?
3. What are the means by which different voices can be heard in your parish (particularly those on the periphery of parish life)? Which groups and individuals are least included in your parish?
4. How is the Church perceived by members of your family, your friends and work colleagues?
5. How might the Church improve its decision-making processes?
6. Which of your concerns does the Church fail or struggle to respond to?

PARTICIPATION: LITURGY AND WORSHIP. CO-RESPONSIBILITY.

7. How do you believe your presence at Mass makes a difference?
8. Explain what difference does it make in your life to receive the sacraments?
9. What part does prayer play in your life and your relationship with God/the Church?
10. How do you currently participate, personally, in the life of the Church?
How much responsibility do you have as an individual?
11. How do families and young people effectively participate in the life of your parish?
What do you do to support them?
12. How does your parish effectively identify and use the gifts of its people?
How can we better enable full participation and co-responsibility in the life of the Church at the parish and diocesan levels?

MISSION: SOCIAL OUTREACH. EVANGELISATION. OUR DREAM.

13. If you could describe your local parish fulfilling your dreams and concerns for the whole world and the local community, what would it be like?
14. How does your experience of parish life allow you to reflect, develop, act on and speak about your faith?
15. In what ways is the call of Jesus to serve the poor a priority in the Church and especially in our parishes?
16. What more can we do in our parishes to address the needs of the poor (homeless, lonely, the bereaved, prisoner, the sick, people with addictions, refugees, people with disabilities, those suffer in developing countries)?

Unlike an examination you are not asked to answer all the questions. It would be better to focus on three questions in depth, rather than seek to answer them all. You may wish to focus on one particular area if you are having three meetings. Otherwise, try to choose one question from each area.

You are not required to answer these questions in their current order. In this matter, we do not wish to be too prescriptive, but rather encourage you to address those questions which speak best to your parish community, and the situation in which you find yourself.

These questions reflect the three major areas of the Synodal Journey: Communion, Participation, Mission, as well as our Diocesan priorities and themes: Evangelisation, Formation, Liturgy and Worship, Social Outreach, Families, Young People, Co-Responsibility.

GATHERING OF THE FEEDBACK AND SUMMARY

The enabler explains 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.

Try to ensure that all of the feedback is recorded and that every voice and comment is heard and recorded. It is better to have too much information than not enough. Try to ensure that the 'quiet voice' is heard.

Try to ensure that the summary of the evening and your feedback is the fruit of discernment, but not left so long that it is lost. The focus should be on the experience as much as what was said. Try to describe the evening, including the numbers and nature of the conversation.

THANKS. FINAL PRAYER.

Thank all present for their time and contribution. This would be a good time to advertise the next session. Finish with a short prayer.

After the parish meeting

Reporting the fruits of your parish conversation:

Reporting is both horizontal — reporting to the participants and community — and vertical — reporting to the Archdiocese, and through the Archdiocese to the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales, and the Synod of Bishops in Rome.

There is a feedback sheet you should use which will aid the Archdiocese in its collation of all the feedback it receives. Please do add extra pages, if required.

Feedback should be typed and sent to: synodalpathway@rcaob.org.uk

THE FEEDBACK SHEET:

Please write/type your responses in the spaces below. Please use extra sheets if needed

WALKING TOGETHER

Describe what happened in your parish, how you went about the Synodal process?
Approximately how many people were involved in your parish, including those who have stopped coming to church or who never come.

PARTICIPATION

What was your experience of listening and discerning? How did this feel?
Did you have a feeling of participation in this journey?

ENRICHMENT

How did it feel to be a part of this process? What were the joys? What did you find enriching?
Explain how you felt the Holy Spirit was at work in your parish during this time.
What was particularly significant, surprising, or unexpected about this process? What new perspectives emerged from the process?

RESPONSES

In the box below outline which of the questions your parish discussed/dialogued about, the responses made, and issues raised.

DREAMS

If you were asked to "dare to dream" about how you see the Church in the third millennium, what might your dream be?

ENABLING OTHER MEETINGS

Conversations can take place in many settings: with neighbours and friends; with our work colleagues; with those from other Churches or of other faiths, or no faith. All of these conversations are valuable and offer a possibility to learn and receive. Remember that the Holy Spirit is present with you in every setting.

These conversations may well have a very different feel than those situated within a parish setting. The dynamic will be different. With neighbours and friends an unstructured conversation with a cup of tea might work best – but please don't forget to share your findings with us. For other meetings, three focused questions which reflect the individual dynamic will work better.

ECUMENICAL MEETINGS

The Vademecum (the guide) for the Synod affirms: "The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey" (5.3.7). In their letter, the Cardinals write: "Indeed, both synodality and ecumenism are processes of 'walking together'". In fact, "as ecumenism can be understood as an 'exchange of gifts', one of the gifts Catholics can receive from the other Christians is precisely their experience and understanding of synodality".

This understanding of the 'gifts' that other Christians can offer is central to our understanding of Walking Together. Through our conversations we hope to receive the gift of experience and understanding which will aid us moving forward. It will be important to make the distinction between our understanding of Walking Together and the experience of Synod in different Churches. Pope Francis is asking every parish in every Diocese in the world, to walk together and discern what the Holy Spirit is saying to the Church. It is important to stress that this is not a General Synod, for example, as in the Church of England.

How, Where and When?

Conversations could take place between Ministers at a Clergy Fraternal. Where there are strong friendships between Churches Together in your area, there is the possibility of arranging a meeting to discuss walking together. This would be particularly appropriate during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity: Tuesday 18 January – Tuesday 25 January 2022.

You may wish to adapt these questions:

From your perspective:

- How do you view the life of the Roman Catholic Community?
- How do you see and understand Walking Together?
- How do you experience Synodality?
- What advice would you offer from your experience?

Your feedback from these meetings would be appreciated by the Archdiocese.

MEETING WITH YOUNG PEOPLE

Young People 12-16yrs

Young Adults 16-29yrs

Thank you for ensuring the voices of young people and young adults are listened to in your setting (Parish, School, Youth Ministry, Young Adult gatherings etc), where possible have facilitated discussions and opportunities for individuals to have their thoughts and voices heard and captured.

The questions on page 15 can be used as they are or adapted for your setting.

To prepare for the time of listening, may we suggest the following considerations ...

- Prepare an online or in person discussion well and use breakout spaces.
- Introduce the discussion with a short talk focused on the purpose of the listening and the importance of their presence or use clip from Pope Francis inviting young people to get involved.
- Layout the boundaries and purpose of the discussions and explain the feedback will form a report to the Archbishop and Diocesan Vision Team and feed into the next SYNOD with Pope Francis.
- Have 'listeners' where appropriate which could be a priest, priest school chaplain, religious or youth minister. This person is there only to listen to the sharing.
- Have the questions on big sheets of paper or flipchart paper or available online to capture 'voices' with individuals writing their responses on large sheets of paper or post it type note paper- once the listening session is concluded, have the responses typed up and sent to maria.bracken@kenelmyouthtrust.org.uk with details of the approximate age of the participants.
- Some intergenerational discussions will naturally occur, where the feedback from young voices can be captured separately this will be helpful as it's one of the aims of Walking Together.

If you would like the Diocesan Youth Service (Kenelm Youth Trust) to assist you in facilitating discussions with young people or young adults please email maria.bracken@kenelmyouthtrust.org.uk or see the website for details of opportunities across the Archdiocese for Young People and Young Adults to engage.

We also hope that our Lay Chaplains and chaplaincy teams within our schools will take part in this important process. If you would like any help in preparing schools sessions or would like to have team members help to facilitate the session, please contact beccy.roseman@kenelmyouthtrust.org.uk

APPENDIX 1.

RESOURCES FOR PRAYER AND REFLECTION

Opening Prayer

Come Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and kindle in them the fire of your love.
Send forth your Spirit and they shall be created.

And You shall renew the face of the earth.

O, God, who by the light of the Holy Spirit, did instruct the hearts of the faithful,
grant that by the same Holy Spirit we may be truly wise and ever enjoy His consolations,
Through Christ Our Lord, **Amen.**

Reading from Sacred Scripture

Luke 24; 13 -35. The Road to Emmaus.

Two of them were on their way to a village called Emmaus, twelve kilometres from Jerusalem and they were talking together about all that had happened. And it happened that as they were talking together and discussing it, Jesus himself came near and was walking with them; but their eyes were prevented from recognising him.

He said to them, 'What are you discussing as you walk along?

And they stood still, their faces downcast.

Then one of them, called Cleopas, answered him,

'Are you the only stranger in Jerusalem who does not know what has been happening there these last few days'.

He asked, 'what sort of things?'

Intercessions

For Francis, our Pope, as we journey together in synod. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For Francis, our Pope, and Bernard, our Bishop, and all Bishops; that they might have the grace to listen humbly and speak boldly as the Church is Walking Together.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

That the Church, Walking Together, would be open and responsive to the movement of the Spirit.
Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For an outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Church as we are Walking Together.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

That the Holy Spirit may fill the hearts and minds of all the faithful and accompany us as we walk together. Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

For the Church, walking together; that by the outpouring of the Holy Spirit this journey will be marked by humble listening, courageous speech, and lively hope.

Lord in your mercy. **Hear our prayer.**

Hail, Mary, full of grace,
the Lord is with thee.
Blessed art thou amongst women
and blessed is the fruit of thy womb, Jesus.
Holy Mary, Mother of God,
pray for us sinners,
now and at the hour of our death.
Amen.

Prayer for the Synod (Adsumus, Sancte Spiritus)

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

St Chad. **Pray for us.**

St John Henry Newman. **Pray for us.**

Blessed Dominic Barberi. **Pray for us.**

APPENDIX 2.

MANAGING POTENTIALLY DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

As an Enabler you may find some conversations are difficult because of people who have traumatic experience of Church through abuse, people who (often unknowingly) attempt to hijack a consultation for their own agenda or who have few effective filters for what they might say. There are some ways to mitigate or respond to those situations.

1. PREPARATION AND CLARITY OF PURPOSE

Set clear expectations, process and purpose early and keep on topic.

Set the tone as prayerful and reflective.

What may be reported out of the synodal consultation is not what we all agree upon, but what we discern as having potential to be the will of God for the Church in the future. Even conflicting perspectives can be reported.

Be clear that the synodal consultations are not equipped to provide the support that those who suffered abuse need, and at the same time we need to hear those who choose to raise the abuses by the Church as pertinent to our considerations of a future Church.

Be clear that our purpose is to help form a more synodal and listening Church and that means keeping an open mind so the Holy Spirit can work in all of us. Don't let our personal agendas limit our conversations.

2. RESPONDING TO A SPEAKER WHO TALKS OF THE TRAUMA OF ABUSE BY A MINISTER OF THE CHURCH

Tragically, some consultation participants will have had traumatic experiences of Church. Enablers must take into account that those traumas are real and deserve our compassion above all. It is also true that the synodal consultation is not the place for long discourses of those tragedies. It is the place to recall and acknowledge that they happened, that they had a severe negative impact on individuals, families, faith communities, and the Church as a whole, and need to be prevented.

For example, it is appropriate to recall that those tragedies happened and to talk about, for example, how a synodal Church might help prevent them happening again.

What can an enabler do when an abuse survivor speaks?

- a. Acknowledge the trauma is real and deep.
- b. Thank the speaker for their courage, acknowledge the depth of hurt you hear as they speak.
- c. Set a boundary such as "I'm glad you had the courage to bring this tragedy up. While we cannot go deeply into the personal stories in this consultation, we do need to acknowledge the pain caused."

d. Set a direction such as "Those tragedies must be part of our considerations in these synodal consultations, which are forward leaning, looking at a renewed Church where such things cannot happen. As we consider the direction the Church needs to go, please keep the survivors and their families in mind. We do not want that abuse to continue."

Difficult conversations may trigger painful memories for some participants, and this might result in them revealing that they have been or know of someone who has been a victim of some form of abuse in the Church. If during your conversation one of the participants makes a disclosure that indicates there could be a safeguarding issue, you must act. However, you do not act alone you can report any concerns to your parish safeguarding officer and/or the Diocesan safeguarding team via email: safeguarding@rcaob.org.uk or via telephone **0121 230 6240**.

3. RESPONDING TO PEOPLE WITH AGENDAS

It may happen that either individuals or groups attend synodal consultations and come with particular agendas. When an enabler can recognise this, there are approaches that may help keep the conversation on track.

When an individual or group expresses absolute certainty, a facilitator can respond with curiosity: "Help me understand...", "I am wondering whether/if...", or "I have a question..."

When an individual or group blames others, the enabler can respond by inviting other perspectives and developing consensus: "How could any of us make a difference here?" "Are there some steps we would agree together that would be helpful here?" "How could all of us be part of the solution?"

Sometimes it is also necessary to restate the purpose and nature of the synodal consultation. "The synodal consultation is forward looking, envisioning the Church of the future, and we are approaching this in a reflective, prayerful manner, keeping an open mind so the Spirit can surface the direction forward for our Church. Let us all please take a moment to place ourselves in an internal space where we can constructively participate by how we listen and how we speak."

4. RESPONDING TO PEOPLE WITH NO FILTERS

Some people of goodwill speak without awareness of the impact they have on others by how they speak or the words that they say. It is more than just abrupt; it is doing harm to others even if they see it as "just being honest" or something similar. The enabler may need a graduated response to such people:

Gently interrupt the speaker and remind them that we need to be respectful of others.

Gently tell the speaker the impact they are having on some people in the room.

Call upon the group to share how this speaker is impacting them (If you think they will speak up and if they are willing to share that through you as the enabler).

Ask the speaker to change how they are speaking (e.g., softer, more aware of how people are hearing them, focus on the question not the person). Suggest a break or a time for reflection and quietly approach the speaker and ask for a change in delivery or tell the speaker the group will be moving on after the break.

APPENDIX 3. THE SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION?

Spiritual conversation focuses on the quality of one's capacity to listen as well as the quality of the words spoken. This means paying attention to the spiritual movements in oneself and in the other person during the conversation, which requires being attentive to more than simply the words expressed. This quality of attention is an act of respecting, welcoming and being hospitable to others as they are. It is an approach that takes seriously what happens in the hearts of those who are conversing. There are two necessary attitudes that are fundamental to this process: Active listening and speaking from the heart.

WHAT IS THE PRIMARY GOAL OF SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION?

The aim is to create an atmosphere of trust and welcome, so that people can express themselves more freely. This helps them to take seriously what happens within them as they listen to others and speak. Ultimately, this interior attentiveness makes us more aware of the presence and participation of the Holy Spirit in the process of sharing and discernment.

WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION?

The focus is on the person with whom one is speaking and oneself, and what we are experiencing on a spiritual level. The fundamental question is: "What is happening in the other person and in me, and how is the Lord working here?"

a) Active Listening

- The goal is to try and understand others as they are.
- Listening not only to what the other person says, but also to what he or she means and what he or she might be experiencing on a deeper level. This means listening with a heart that is open and receptive.
- This way of listening is "active" because it involves paying attention to more than one level of expression of the other. In order to do so, one must participate actively in the listening process.
- Listen to the other while he or she is speaking and do not focus on what you are going to say afterwards.
- Welcoming, without judgment, what the other person says, no matter what one thinks about the person or what they have said. Each person is an expert on his or her own life. We must listen in a way that is "more disposed to giving a good interpretation to what the other says than condemning it as false" (Spiritual Exercises, no. 22).
- We must believe that the Holy Spirit speaks to us through the other person.
- Welcoming without prejudice is a deep way of welcoming the other in his or her radical uniqueness.
- Active listening is letting oneself be influenced by the other and learn from the other.
- Active listening is demanding because it requires humility, openness, patience, and involvement, but it is an effective way of taking others seriously.

b) Speaking from the Heart

- This means sincerely expressing oneself, one's experience, one's sentiments and thoughts.
- It involves speaking about one's own experience and what one truly thinks and feels.
- We take responsibility not only for what we say, but also for what we feel. We do not blame others for what we feel.
- Share the truth as we see it and as we live it, but do not impose it.
- Speaking from the heart is offering a generous gift to the other, in return for being actively listened to.
- This process is greatly enriched by a regular personal practice of the Examen Prayer. Without a habit of discernment and knowledge of oneself, one cannot actively listen or speak from the heart.

WHAT ARE THE DESIRED ATTITUDES FOR SPIRITUAL CONVERSATION?

- Active and attentive listening.
- Listen to others without judgment.
- Pay attention not only to the words, but also to the tone and feelings of the speaker.
- Avoid the temptation of using the time to prepare what you will say instead of listening.
- Intentional speaking.
- Express your experiences, thoughts, and feelings as clearly as you can.
- Listen actively to yourself, mindful of your own thoughts and feelings as you speak.
- Monitor possible tendencies to be self-centred when speaking.
- What form can spiritual conversation take?

APPENDIX 4. OTHER MEETINGS

Guidance on the following subjects will follow as an appendix.

MEETING WITH THOSE OF OTHER FAITHS

MEETING WITHIN SCHOOLS

The DES (Diocesan Education Service) will prepare the outline and questions and guidance for these meetings.

MEETING WITHIN PRISON CHAPLAINCY

MEETING WITHIN UNIVERSITY CHAPLAINCY

MEETING WITHIN ETHNIC COMMUNITIES

OTHER MEETINGS



THE ARCHDIOCESE
of BIRMINGHAM

FOR MORE INFORMATION PLEASE VISIT THE DIOCESAN WEBSITE:

www.birminghamdiocese.org.uk

or

synodalpathway@rcaob.org.uk

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