

Parish & Community Synthesis Form

How to use this form

Thank you for your generosity in taking part in the Synodal Pathway in the Diocese of Westminster. Please use this form to tell us the story of the process in your parish or community. This will ensure we can include your experience within the diocesan synthesis that we'll prepare for our Pre-synod Diocesan Gathering on 19th February. We hope to be able to tell the story of the synodal pathway across the diocese, so that together we can discern what the Holy Spirit might be saying to the Church in Westminster. It will also help us make our formal submission to the Bishops' Conference, for the national and international stages of the synod process. Please note, we will not be identifying any particular parishes or communities. Reference to anything within your synthesis will be anonymised.

Including extra information:

- As well as completing this form, you are welcome to send any notable examples of the 'Group Session Record Form', 'Share your thoughts Form' or 'Simple one-to-one / group conversation form'. These can be included to emphasise particular experiences or insights which enriched your synodal pathway. However, please ensure that you also synthesise these experiences using this Synthesis Form.
- You are also welcome to include a small number of high resolution photographs of any walls of post-its / flip charts, which help illustrate your synthesis. Please ensure that the writing is 'in focus'.

Deadline: Please return by **21 January 2022** to Deacon Adrian: adriancullen@rcdow.org.uk
If you are able, we welcome your Synthesis to be returned earlier.

Name of Parish or Community St. Theodore of Canterbury, Hampton-upon-Thames

Name(s) of who compiled the synthesis Jim McLean

Email address jimmclean@rcdow.org.uk

Date of Submission 20/01/2022

How many people took part in your synodal process (please estimate if necessary)

35

How do you think the participant(s) in your synodal pathway would describe themselves – tick all that apply:

1. Committed to Faith, Regular attendance at Mass and participates in community life e.g. Member of pastoral council/ attends prayer group/reader/volunteer
2. Committed to Faith, Regular attendance at Mass
3. Faith & Church have some relevance. E.g. Occasional Attendance at Mass
4. Culturally Catholic but Church has little relevance
5. From a different Christian tradition
6. From a different faith community
7. Person of no faith

There are five sections – please try to complete them all.

1) What was the story of your synodal pathway in your parish/community?

- What were the main steps you took?
- What was done to engage as participants and to reach out to the peripheries?
- Approximately what proportion of people in your active parish/Church community participated in one way or other?
- Were there any groups of people whose participation was especially noteworthy?
- Were there specific groups of people who did not participate for any reason?

News of the Synodal Pathway process was communicated via announcement at Mass, via the newsletter and on our parish website, with links to the Diocesan webpages.

Two main listening events were held where people discussed the questions in the “Share your Thoughts” (6 questions) paper. These events were facilitated by two or three people who explained each question, reassured people that it was about reflecting and listening, and that there were no wrong answers. Facilitators also helped keep people focused on the questions and maintained timekeeping.

In addition, the same 6 questions were posted on our parish website, with opportunity for anyone to complete. Through Google Forms, responses were able to be downloaded by the website administrator. Finally, paper forms were made available for those unable to attend listening events or unable to use a computer. These forms were then handed in to church.

No group was particularly noteworthy or stood out, and no one formally or informally indicated that they would be actively not participating.

2) What experiences of ‘journeying together’ were shared?

- What experiences of ‘journeying’ during the pandemic were shared? What insights did this reveal?
- What experiences were shared more generally of the Church ‘journeying together’? What had brought joy? What had caused pain or sadness?
- Who did people feel were missing from the Church community? Did participants share anything about the Church’s experience of journeying with and including others beyond the visible Church community?
- Was anything shared about how the parish/community works together or how co-responsibility is put into practice?

Common or popular responses: During Pandemic

Great sadness that the churches closed with such speed.

Sadness that there were no Confessions or communion visits to the sick

Isolation and disorientation set in quite quickly

Gratitude for online masses.

Feeling united with each other in prayer helped people to cope and feel strong.

A greater sense of appreciation for what was lost – Mass, Confession, Adoration/Exposition, the Sacraments.

Examples of specific comments regarding the Pandemic:

“The Church should have been more courageous in insisting it is a Front Line Service”

“It seems the churches were only too happy to close, and just close down all communication”

“It was good that we had Zoom lessons”

Journeying together – more generally (Not pandemic related)

Common or popular responses to how people experienced their church.:

Positive

A sense of belonging and connectedness

A sense of community (socials, Tea, Coffee together)

Joy that we share a common belief

Joy that we share the Eucharist together

The familiarity of faces at Mass

Community events.

Negative:

People felt that the attitude of the Church during the pandemic was very poor and people basically left to themselves.

People feel that not enough is done to keep our youth interested in their Faith.

Single parents and divorced people are not told enough that they are welcome in Church.

We only really know the few people we regularly come into contact with – lots of people in Church we don't even know by name.

Very sad that the parish pastoral council was scrapped unilaterally.

Specific comments:

“Our young people are missing from our church and parish”

“No spirit of evangelism in the Church”

“Our church is the congregation, not just the priest and we all need to be active”

“We are all part our church but many are missing. I would like to see a team take responsibility for calling those who are no longer attending mass as before to kindly invite them back”

3) What experiences were shared about the Church's priorities for mission?

- What did people wish to celebrate about how your parish/community lives its mission?
- How did people feel included in the way the parish/community decides priorities for mission?
- What areas of mission did people say were being neglected within the Church?
- In what ways did they see partnerships with people beyond the Church developing?

Responses were mixed. Those who already had an active role in the Church or parish (volunteers, readers, choir members, eucharistic ministers, etc) felt positive about the Church and how it lives its mission. However, these groups also had strong views on how the sense of mission should be expanded.

Those who did not have any active role also had strong views on how to expand mission, but were also concerned that as a local parish church, some areas could be improved to make local people feel more involved.

For example, there was a strong view that the following areas needed to be strengthened at local Parish level:

Re-instigation of Partrish Council

Working with young people, including developing "Alpha"-like courses for them.

Bringing back the Women's Fellowship

Catachesis for people and chidrens liturgy.

More support for local families who are struggling, housebound.

On a wider level, both groups shared the following as examples of where our sense of mission could be developed:

The homeless

Helping overseas Charities

Helping single parents and divorced people.

Some strong views that the Church is neglecting:

People in care homes

Those who drifted away from Church during the pandemic and haven't returned

Singl;e parents and divorced people

4) What was most significant about the whole experience?

- What did you notice about how people participated? What attitudes or feelings stood out?
- What was particularly significant, surprising or unexpected?
- What topics or issues gave rise to diverse points of view?
- Which stories or real-life experiences were especially moving and why? (Please anonymise – we only need a sense of the experiences shared.)
- Which experiences seemed to have strong resonance? Which experiences were mentioned less but are significant?

People were generally very positive about the experience. One example of a comment was, “We should be having these kind of discussions and conversations as a matter of course, not just as a one-off. That’sd why we need things like diverse groups, including the young, and a parish council”

Some people stood out by suggesting we follow in the footsteps of the CofE with regard to the role of women in the church, including clergy.

Real life experiences which stood out particularly were experiences of people who found genuine solace in finding online Mass and being able to participate in zoom sessions with friends to avoid isolation.

In contrast to this, there were the real life stories of those who had relatives in care homes whom they could not see, and they felt enormous disappointment at the Church that they wouldn’t visit to give communion. A strong sense that the church did not do enough.

5) Overall, what were the fruits that the Holy Spirit has brought about through this experience?

- What dreams, desires, and aspirations for the Church were expressed by participants?
- Were there any particular issues that the people felt the Spirit was inviting the Church to pay more attention to?
- In what ways did you sense the Holy Spirit inviting your parish/community to grow in synodality?
- Based on what was shared, what steps might your parish/community feel called to take in their journeying together?

The strongest responses regarding dreams and aspirations were twofold:

That, especially in light of the pandemic experience, churches in general increases its presence in the wider community by outreach work and being a more “social” church (better at social media, more activities for youth, whether catholic or not).

That our local church be more visibly welcoming to people by having:

More opening times

More social events

More services available such as devotional services or exposition

Just getting to know each other better

Showing an interest in newcomers.

One comment was,

“I think making clear that it's ok to come in if you don't understand what's going on would help some people who feel hesitant. I know I did when I first came to Mass back in Easter, but I soon picked it up.”

Most of the areas discussed could be achieved with good leadership, delegation and interaction with the parish.

Optional: Is there anything else you'd like to share?

Nothing extra to share.

Including extra information:

- You are welcome to send a few notable examples of the 'Group Session Record Form', 'Share your thoughts Form' or 'Simple one-to-one / group conversation form'.
- You are also welcome to include a small number of high resolution photographs of any walls of post-its / flip charts, which help illustrate your synthesis.