



Hosting a Parish synod meeting

Synod 2021 - 2023: For a synodal Church: communion, participation and mission.

Guide for parishes in the Archdiocese of St Andrews & Edinburgh



Archdiocese of
St Andrews
& Edinburgh



Welcome

The synodal journey involves dioceses around the world in a phase of listening. In our Archdiocese, to ensure we hear everyone's voice, we are asking parishes to consider holding meetings to encourage spiritual conversations to take place.

Using this booklet

This booklet is a simple guide on helping your parish make the most of the diocesan stage by hosting a synod meeting. It includes:

- Questions to be discussed in meetings
- Suggested meeting format
- Gathering information
- Feedback to Archdiocese

Parish synod meetings are optional but we encourage all parishes to consider hosting one. We hope you find this document helpful. Please do not hesitate to get in touch should you require any further information.

Sr Anna Marie McGuan
Diocesan Synod Delegate

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SYNOD SUMMARY

This diocesan phase will allow parishes in our Archdiocese to live out our synodal journey together. To do that effectively, parishes are encouraged to host meetings to encourage spiritual conversations.



Preparing your synod meeting

Set a date

If you want to host a meeting set a date. Plan your meeting so that you can submit feedback to us by 31 January 2022. This is to ensure your contribution is incorporated into the diocesan synthesis.

Get help

Ask parishioners to help prepare the meeting. They will be required to help facilitate the meeting as well as summarise feedback and offer hospitality.

Communicate

Tell people about your meeting. Once you have a location/date/time please ensure details are in the parish newsletter (and website/social media). Highlight it to parishioners at Sunday Mass.

Register

Know how many people are coming. Ask parishioners to either register online or to email the parish to confirm attendance. Invite some of them to lead and summarise spiritual conversations.

Location

Meetings should take place in parish halls (following usual Covid guidelines). If you know the turnout will be small, a room in the parish house may be more suitable.

Online

An online meeting may be preferable for your parish. Using Zoom, breakout rooms can be used for discussion depending on turnout. Need advice? Email matthew.meade@stanned.org.uk

A warm welcome

Please ensure someone is at the entrance to the meeting to give a warm welcome to everyone who comes. Consider arranging teas/coffees at the break or after the meeting.

Print

Print the group feedback form on page 8. This will be completed by groups at the meeting and will form the basis of your feedback to the Archdiocese. You might also wish to print copies of the prayer on **page 3** so people can say it together at the beginning of your meeting.

Watch

Meetings involve group discussions, or 'spiritual conversations'. Watch our 60 sec video guide on hosting spiritual conversations at bit.ly/SpiritualConversations

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Please note

Parish synod meetings are optional. If you can't host a meeting keep in mind that you will be asked to send delegates from your parish to synod deanery meetings so you can still contribute.



Synodal meeting- prayer

You can begin your parish meeting with this prayer of invocation to the Holy Spirit.

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.



Parish Synodal meeting - suggested format

7:00pm - Synod prayer (see page 3)

Scripture reading (recommendation: *Luke 17:20-21 'The Kingdom of God is among you'*)
Short time of silence | Our Father | Welcome and introduction From priest/leader.

7:10pm - Guidance on how to have a spiritual conversation.

Led by priest/leader. ▶ See our 60 sec guide video at bit.ly/SpiritualConversations

7:15pm - THEME 1: COMMUNION & PARTICIPATION

Priest/leader summarises theme and what questions will be discussed (*page 3*).
Quiet time for personal thought and reflection.

7:20pm - Spiritual conversations on Theme 1

Meeting breaks up into groups of four to six people to discuss the questions.
One person in each group writes down main themes discussed to feedback to meeting.

7:40pm - Feedback of Groups

Each group gives feedback to the meeting to summarise what they discussed.

7:50pm - Break

8:10pm - THEME 2: MISSION

Priest/leader summarises theme and what questions will be discussed (*overleaf*).
Quiet time for personal thought and reflection.

8:15pm - Spiritual conversations on Theme 2

Meeting breaks up into groups of around five people to discuss the questions.
One person in each group writes down main themes discussed to feedback to meeting.

8:35pm - Feedback of groups

Each group gives feedback to the meeting to summarise what they discussed.

8:50pm - Closing prayer.

Suggested length of meeting: Two hours max, with break, or 90 minutes without break.



Questions for discussion

These questions are a suggested guide to aid *spiritual conversations* in parishes for synod discussions.

What to do

With your parish council, select some of the below questions for groups to discuss in their *spiritual conversation*. Discussions should be fairly focused so we recommend no more than three. These discussions should be pertinent to the life of your parish.

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These questions focus on our **communion** and **participation** within the Church.

Theme 1: Communion and Participation

- What does participation in the life of the parish mean?
- How can we foster a culture of participation that encourages a true gift of each person to the Lord Jesus?
- What would my meaningful participation in the parish look like?
- How can we, as a parish, reach out to those who don't feel welcome or are no longer interested in Jesus Christ?
- How can we support and encourage parents whose children are leaving the faith?
- How can we support and encourage couples, both engaged and married, to build and renew their marriages on Jesus Christ?
- How can we support and encourage vocations to the priesthood and religious life?



Questions for discussion (cont'd)

The second set of questions reflect on **mission**. We must first bring awareness of what being a Church *in mission* means. Then we can ask if we are a church in mission, and if not, how we can be so more intentionally. Discussions should be focused so we recommend selecting no more than three questions.

Theme 2: Mission

- What is the work of a missionary disciple? Do I believe that God has called me to follow Him as a disciple? If so, have I responded to this call?
- How have I been prepared to live my faith at home, in the workplace, and in my social life?
- Am I comfortable talking about Jesus to others? If not, what would make me be more confident and able to do this?
- What can my parish do to prepare me and others to be a committed disciple of Jesus?
- What does my parish need in order to become an evangelizing community?
- How can I respond to those needs? What can I realistically give?
- How can our parish be a light for our community, to share with others the love of Jesus and his saving truth?

These questions are a suggested guide to aid parish discussions, but can be adapted to suit the context of individual parishes as appropriate. Adaptations according to each parish's situation should be made in consultation with the parish council.



Summarising spiritual conversations

It is important that the main themes that came out of discussions are summarised then recorded (written).

How to do this

- Print the page overleaf (page 8) to give to each group. 
- The group leader (previously selected) presents the questions to the group.
- Each question is discussed.
- Once complete, the group leader summarises the main points of their discussion by writing on the sheet (see below example).
- The summary sheet is handed to the priest/leader.

Example



You can print this sheet so groups can write down the main points of their discussion.

Find it on the next page.



Group Spiritual conversations

Question(s) for discussion

What does my parish need in order to become an evangelizing community?

What is the work of a missionary disciple?

Summary of feedback*

- *Write down the main themes you discussed using the bullet points. Try and keep it succinct if you can. You don't need to use all the bulletpoints, but try and have no more than five.*
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*What themes emerged strongly?
What was there agreement on? What was their split opinion on?
Try and summarise your discussion in no more than five points (use the bullet points in the box). This will help keep your conversation focused.

Group Spiritual conversations



Theme: communion/participation mission

(tick one box)

Question(s) for discussion

Summary of feedback*

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*What themes emerged strongly? What do you think the Holy Spirit is saying?

What was there agreement on? What was there split opinion on?

Try and summarise your discussion in no more than five points (use the bullet points in the box). This will help keep your conversation focused.



Feedback to the Archdiocese

The written feedback from group discussions at your parish meeting should be summarised and sent to Sr Anna Marie McGuan, the Synod Delegate for our Archdiocese.

The parish priest/leader should select an assistant who attended the parish meeting to help him or her do this.

What we need

- A summary of your parish meeting on a Word document. Please download the editable template at bit.ly/ParishFeedbackForm

Where to send your summary document

- Email it to sranna.marie@staned.org.uk

Contacts and Support

Sr Anna Marie McGuan

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Matthew Meade

Communication support
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Synod website

www.synod.va



This is the feedback form to summarise your parish meeting. Please use the editable Word version so you can type your responses. Download it at bit.ly/ParishFeedbackForm Once complete, email it to sranna.marie@stanned.org.uk

Parish synod meeting - summary

Name of Parish: _____

Date/location of meeting: _____

Meeting leader and number of attendees _____

Discussion 1: Communion and Participation

What questions were discussed?

Please summarise three main themes that came out of your parish discussion.

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-
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What do you want us to know about your meeting(s)?

Please use this space to make any other comments about the meeting that you wish to highlight.



This is the feedback form to summarise your parish meeting. Please use the editable Word version so you can type your responses. Download it at bit.ly/ParishFeedbackForm. Once complete, email it to [sranna.marie@stated.org.uk](mailto:srana.marie@stated.org.uk)

Parish synod meeting - summary

Discussion 2: Mission

What questions were discussed?

Please summarise three main themes that came out of your parish discussion

-
-
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What do you want us to know about your meeting(s)?

Please use this space to make any other comments about the meeting that you wish to highlight

For a Synodal Church:
communion | participation | mission

"...Let us therefore pray for God's Holy Spirit and his enlightenment. But, before we go out to convert society, let us put our own house in order first. Let us form ourselves through prayer and penance, and let us train ourselves to be authentic missionary disciples."

Archbishop Leo Cushley

Homily for the opening Mass of the Synodal Way

