



St Bernadette's
Motherwell

Compilation of Synod Responses
St Bernadette's Motherwell

- A group of 9 parishioners attended the Diocesan "training" for at least one session. Michelle Oates, Angela Kennedy, Clare and James Mays, Moira and Jim McIntyre, Lawrence Toner, Jacqueline Kane and Jim McDermott. This formed a core group within the parish who then in collaboration with Fr Ricky and Fr Moses engaged with this process having an experience of synodality.

Actions:

- Prayer is central. Make available through prayer cards, the bulletin our website and Facebook the Synodal Prayer. Pray this at daily mass and whenever we meet together. Encourage all parishioners to pray this prayer.
- Sign Up Sunday was planned for the Second Sunday in January: Members of the core group to speak at each mass.
- Original plan was to hold 4 meetings with parishioners on Saturdays/Sundays in the parish hall.
- To encourage engagement all parish groups were requested to produce a poster/display to be mounted in the Church on Sign-Up Sunday and then used in the Hall during meetings.
- The original plan had to be revised due to Covid restrictions. The "core group" met for week 1 and week 2 then week 3 and 4 were opened to the whole parish.
- To allow for engagement in week 1 and week 2 a questionnaire was put together based on the Washington Diocese model. This was adapted to include a scripture reading at the beginning of each week. Parishioners were encouraged to discuss with partners/families/friends before making their response. A member of the core group read each week's questions from the pulpit at each Mass in order to root parishioners' responses in prayer.
- The core group worked in pairs to collate responses from the questionnaires and groups. All responses were viewed by the whole group before being submitted. Factual inaccuracies have been removed although we have endeavoured to respect all responses. It took the core group several meetings to prepare this response.
- We have also attached for your information a list of action points that we will endeavour to take forward as part of a Parish Action Plan which will encourage and support synodality in our parish.

The General Question..

A Synodal Church, in announcing the Gospel “journeys together”

How is this “journeying together” happening today in our local Church?

What steps does the Holy Spirit invite us to take to grow in our “journeying together?”

In answering this fundamental question posed by the Synod, parishioners of St Bernadette’s responded under three main headings:

1. Attendance at Mass.

Attending Mass, particularly Sunday Mass, was where most respondents felt this journeying together. Meeting and conversing with other parishioners, worshipping together, praying and listening to well-prepared homilies, is a key part of this journey of faith. Mention was also made of joint worship with members of our local Church of Scotland, journeying together through contact and sharing time.

On a positive note, it was said that the parish is very welcoming and can almost feel like an extended family. The Clergy are both welcoming and non-judgemental. In attending Mass together we are believers in the Gospel and in Jesus Christ. “A gathering at Mass is a Journeying towards heaven.”

“Journeying together is happening through the Parish Community. The Holy Spirit is inviting me to journey together through attendance at Mass, and participating in Parish activities. I hear the voice of the Holy Spirit at Mass and through the Priests’ homilies.”

At local Parish level it is easy to see how we journey together to worship and actively participate in Parish activities, but there is a perception that only limited numbers do or feel they can participate fully. Reaching out to those who do not is the real challenge here.

2. Influence of the Holy Spirit

Many respondents credited the Holy Spirit’s influence in the way they relate to their faith and how they interact with their Church. “As a practicing Catholic I do feel the Holy Spirit calling me.....to take part in the activities of the Church.....and I understand the role of the Holy Spirit in this.” And another respondent “did feel that the Holy Spirit was calling me to do anything I could to help with the reopening of the Church,” after the Covid lockdown. And another “through my prayer life I hear the calling of the Holy Spirit to develop a closeness with God and my faith”

3. Active Involvement in Parish Life

Our parish has always had a fairly vibrant community, and numerous parish groups, but parishioners’ reaction to the reopening of the Church following Covid has resulted in new volunteers coming forward. One respondent sums this up neatly:

“I offered my services to the Parish and joined two different groups assisting with vital work which I have continued to date. I feel our Parish has a strong communitybut I am aware that others may not feel this way so we need to think about how to bring others on this journey together”

Week 1

Q1 COMPANIONS ON THE JOURNEY:

In the Church and society, we are on the same road.

1. In our Church

We have regular attendees, who on most occasions walk together. Those of us who walk together are often coming together to worship at Mass and other Church services. When we attend Mass together we are all one in God's house, on the same road, walking together, a people of faith with similar moralistic views. Despite Covid many parishioners have returned to Sunday Mass and some to Morning Mass, but some have stopped attending.

We "walk together" with people of a like mind in our Church and Church organisations. However we also walk together with our families, friends, colleagues and community, in the support, love and example we try to show in our daily lives.

Those who walk together, out with Sunday worship, are often those who are involved in Parish Groups. We have a core of volunteers who are more active, many having come forward following lockdown, to ensure the Church reopens safely, Pass keepers, Cleaners, Readers and Extraordinary Ministers of the Eucharist. Other Groups who "walk" together have restarted such as SSVF, Legion of Mary and our Foodbank, serving the needs of the poor and more vulnerable in society.

2. Who are those who seem further apart?

There are parishioners who regularly attend Sunday worship, who perhaps could or would do more given the right encouragement to become involved. We should think of ways to include youth, teens and early twenties who will have valuable talents which could enhance our Sunday Mass experience and benefit our Parish community.

Some who seem further apart may be the elderly and disabled who cannot participate. Others are unable to participate in the Sacraments, because of Church rules e.g. with regard to marriage.

One respondent suggested that communication within the Church is woeful. Whether that is true or not it needs to be addressed. Pass keepers could be better informed, safety practices could be better enforced.

Those who seem further apart are Catholics who are baptised but refrain from participating in opportunities to worship in our Parish family. Those who are of other Christian traditions or are not of our faith can be further apart, but we can share and be friends together, and ultimately share views on life, spirituality and the world. A good example of this is our partnership with North Motherwell Church of Scotland Parish.

3. How are we called to grow as companions?

We are called to grow as companions in the love and service we can show and give to others, and by not being judgemental, but looking out for each other, supporting and helping those in need. We should consider our social responsibility and increase the number of people involved; we do not know enough about the skill set we have in the Parish.

4. What groups or individuals are left on the margins?

The Church can come across as judgemental and punitive. There is no space for the marginalised, divorced, gay, lesbian, poor and disadvantaged. We should be welcoming to all. Those who feel left out are less inclined to participate. A change in Church laws would allow some to be full members of the Church and receive the Sacraments. Let God do the judging.

Q2 LISTENING: *Listening is the first step, but it requires an open mind and heart, without prejudice.*

1. How is God speaking to us through voices we sometimes ignore?

I enjoy quiet time in front of the Holy Eucharist and feel that God speaks to me through my thoughts at this time. Another says that God is speaking to us through our conscience reminding us of our calling in our daily lives. By having faith and listening to the word of God we are open to hearing God's voice and seeing God's work in our lives. God speaks to us through prayer, signs, and comments from others.

God is speaking to us through prayer and the Gospel readings, as well as through our encounters with people in need. Perhaps also we fail to heed God speaking through the voices of the poor both here and across the world.

2. How are the laity listened to, especially women and young people?

The laity are not always listened to unless they are actively involved in Parish groups. It is strongly felt that young people do not have a voice in our Parish. Very few secondary pupils in our Parish even attend Mass. We need to find a way to encourage their participation, and listen to them so that the Church can respond to their needs going forward. Involving Caritas pupils in the work of the Parish could be a first step.

Women and young people are not listened to. One respondent suggests that the Church's man made rules inhibit our listening and need to be reviewed in light of today's world. Some examples were given: Mandatory Sunday Mass, unmarried living together, same sex relationships, divorce and remarriage outside Church. A consequence is a denial of the Sacraments leading to non-attendance at Mass.

3. What facilitates or inhibits our listening?

Being listened to creates a responsibility on both sides towards taking action. We are at risk of not taking on the views of others because "it is always done this way". It is suggested that the Synodal process facilitates listening, but needs to be followed by action. Listening demands perception and discernment. Is what is being said to us reasonable, or must we be prepared to reject as well as accept? Patience and taking time to listen with an open heart and mind facilitates listening.

4/5/6/7. How well do we listen to those on the peripheries and what space is there for voice of minorities?

Not well enough or often enough, sadly sometimes not at all. Only a limited amount of emphasis is placed on the voice of minorities, which is not enough as there are challenges to include voices on the periphery. Even the "little people" have an opinion. Some people are afraid to speak up for fear of condemnation or being made to look stupid. Groups such as the Legion of Mary, SSVP, Food Banks, and Wednesday Club are all platforms to listen to the voice of our minorities. Social media used wisely has created a vehicle for minorities or those who feel marginalised to express their opinions and views openly. Is the Church open to listen to them and just as important respond to them?

Week 2 **'SPEAKING OUT'; 'SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION' and 'DIALOGUE IN OUR CHURCH AND SOCIETY'**

Q3. SPEAKING OUT All are invited to speak with courage and parrhesia, that is, in freedom, truth, and charity.

1a. What enables us speaking up?

Participation is our mission as baptised.

Finding opportunities to develop our knowledge and understanding of our religion.

Perceived that joining parish organisations gives validity and confidence to speak out.

Our Priests encourage and value our views.

Feel much easier to speak up in church than workplaces

Inter-parish events provide a platform for sharing views.

Opportunities for one-to-one dialogue, meetings of organised groups/social events.

Questionnaire is the first opportunity to have our voices heard instead of just the bishops.

Personal approach to people to welcome them back to church services after lockdown.

Priest accessible at back of church/grounds.

Say 'don't agree' rather than a war of words.

1b. What hinders us speaking up?

Historically it was felt that laypeople were not expected to speak.

Lack of confidence, willingness, fear of criticism, perception that others are more knowledgeable. It takes courage to speak out to defend our faith.

Generation gap can be a communication barrier to listening and respecting views of others. How can we involve young people and value their skills/talents, contribution, and role in the church?

Perception of Church's role in supporting those with mental health issues, addictions or other social issues and the marginalised in society can be challenging. Need for clergy to communicate with groups to understand the many challenges of life in North Motherwell. Irresponsible use of social media. Fear of hostility from others who do not share same views. Lack of respect for others or fear of being judged. Opportunity to speak and be heard in church.

2. Do we manage to say what is important to us?

Authentic actions can speak louder than words.

Being in a non-judgemental environment and having courage to speak honestly. Increasing our knowledge to give us courage to speak out. After time of reflection and praying to the Holy Spirit for guidance. Social media has helped.

During gatherings or meetings in our parish or wider Christian/non-Christian groups.

Writing a letter about an issue to MPs etc. There are always ways to speak out when we need to.

Local charities/organisations are given opportunity to speak in church.

3. How does the relationship with the local media work?

There are feelings that local media is not used to full benefit, that it does not give Christianity enough prominence, although another did feel that, in their experience, they found local media to be accommodating.

Although there was an awareness of the connection between the parish communications team and the local press this was not known by all, and those who were aware were not sure of how this worked.

Need for linked up and national communication teams with other Christians. There is a new publication, 'The Scottish Catholic' and also groups like SPUC, but these do not reach mainstream audiences.

Facebook can be a positive social media sharing faith and events in other parishes.

Social media with streaming of services, World Day of Prayer, Christian Aid, Fairtrade (Sancta Familia Media: can they assist at parish level?)

4. Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community and how are they chosen?

We each speak on behalf of the Christian community. We all have a responsibility as children of God.

One response commented that we have good leaders who can speak out if allowed by media broadcasting companies.

One person commented that as far as they were aware there is no regular "joined up" Christian Voice locally or nationally speaking on behalf of Christianity. Although there was awareness of a Catholic Media Officer, who was thought to be appointed by the Bishops' Conference, there was some who thought that clergy and those most active in parish work spoke for the church and were chosen by the clergy/parish priest. One commented that they were unaware how people were chosen.

Q4. SHARING RESPONSIBILITY FOR OUR COMMON MISSION: Synodality is at the service of the mission of the Church, in which all members are called to participate.

1. Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptised person called to participate in the mission of the Church?

Evangelising is the mission of all baptised. Authentic Christian lives followed by open and honest discussion give witness. Working together for Christ is not a new mantra. Some comments still place the emphasis on the clergy to lead by example. Practical involvement in actions e.g. pro-life or supporting those facing poverty or are marginalised help us to participate in the mission of the church.

2. What hinders the baptised from being active in mission?

Many issues seem to be given mainly related to time and commitments e.g. work, family, busy lives, stress e.g. education/exams, study and leisure activities. Others said that they “were afraid or embarrassed, thinking they will be laughed at by their peers. There was a point made that as attendance at mass was an obligation and so they did that. Embarking on missionary activity was not an obligation so was not necessarily for everyone. Others mention personality/confidence and a lack of preparedness. Not having the skills to communicate their experience in a way that would also motivate others. Not really understanding “mission”.

3. What areas of mission are we neglecting?

Our local area is blighted by both drug and alcohol addiction in an area where poverty is a reality. As a church we seem to ‘shy’ away from those with addictions offering little to those who see no other choice. Those who are homeless and those who are trapped in poverty have some support from SSVP and the foodbank both of which are fairly widely supported in the parish.

Young people and families are two groups who were mentioned, the numbers who attend regularly is a fraction of those who attend our primary and secondary school and who are presented to receive the sacraments. The Caritas programme comes at the end of secondary school. We have some connection for a brief period before many go off to college, university or work, not to be seen again until they want to be married. What can we do for our teenagers in the 5 years between confirmation and CARITAS? What about after CARITAS?

4. How does the community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)?

The community does not have any mechanisms set up specifically for this however through societies – SSVP support parishioners practically and spiritually. The Society of the Innocents (to support parents of unplanned pregnancies) was based in our parish and supported financially and practically. The Malawi partnership supports educational opportunities through sponsorship and spiritually. A fair trade group helped to bring about social change. Mary’s Meals backpack project and a range of charity fundraisers helped to support various projects. Before Covid and hopefully again soon we had the Wednesday Club which supported a group of young people with additional Support needs.

5. How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way?

Religion can be viewed as a private business, whereas the Church has responsibility to stand up for Christian principles and guide the faithful to support quality and value of life. Literature from the Christian Institute pointing us to what is going on with legislation etc. write to our MP’s to voice our views on these matters.

Scotland has a lot of issues with religion, our government of today does not help this. Can the Bishops of Scotland work with the government to address the issues. I personally think that Catholic schools in Scotland are seen as second to non-denominational schools, can the Bishops address this?

The church provides the word of God and the Eucharist – to go out and spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Think the church needs to listen more to people who have political involvement as they have more influence in the political world and can help out in Parish life.

Are our children educated in all the basics of their religion? Is the partnership between home – as the first educators, school and the parish working? Do our young and older people know that the Church does not do partners or condoms? It does Spouses and Billings. No point in doing mission if you don’t know.

The church teachings help us to be trustworthy, honest and a good example. It encourages us to stand up for Christian principles e.g. against abortion and euthanasia.

6. How is discernment about missionary choices made and by whom?

As above we must take personal responsibility realising that pro-life issues ,chronic poverty, ecumenism are all our responsibility and making those directly involved know they are supported both materially and spiritually.

Q5. DIALOGUE IN CHURCH AND SOCIETY Dialogue requires perseverance and patience, but it also enables mutual understanding.

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

North Motherwell Churches Together

Several respondents commented that “We have been fortunate to have good connections with North Motherwell Parish Church and have participated in various events and projects, both spiritually and socially. Practical projects bring us together.”

2. What are the places and means of dialogue within our local Church?

Most people who responded recognised the role that Church groups have in facilitating and promoting dialogue. Dialogue can be present in various forms – some groups are practical e.g. cleaners, or social, others more educational/ formative and others around prayer. Each has a role in developing dialogue.

Some mentioned that groups need to be more open and welcoming – the groups need to dialogue and become more aware of what each other do. It was noted that some groups involve people from other parishes and churches and can reach people who do not attend the church, e.g. Holey Soles Rambling Group.

3. How do we promote collaboration with neighbouring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.?

Create opportunities to come together for social gatherings and opportunities to talk about shared common issues. e.g. through participation in above groups.

4. How are divergences of vision, or conflicts and difficulties addressed?

Offering opportunities for parishioners to see that Catholic Education goes beyond school with there being a wealth of Catholic Social Teaching materials available. Often divergent opinions are not expressed.

On a personal level by prayer for those needing support e.g. single parenthood/addiction/mental health etc.

5. What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?

We need to be aware of current political/ social agenda and the issues that are being dealt with in our schools and work places – wider society. (LGBT, all lives matter etc.) Marriage and relationships, Lone parenthood/addiction/mental health etc. - not excluding/ supporting.

Be more attentive to/active in politics raise awareness of new legislation that is contrary to our beliefs e.g. “Assisted Suicide Bill”, abortion etc. Promote positive actions.

We need to pay particular attention to the needs of the marginalised whose lives may improve by a change in church rules. The hierarchy, ‘all old men’, can have little or no understanding of family problems, never having experienced poverty, deprivation and unemployment. The pandemic hopefully has made us more aware of isolation, vulnerability, mental health issues and the common need for each other.

6. What experiences of dialogue and collaboration do we have with believers of other denominations and other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation?

Dialogue with other denominations was discussed above.

It was noted that “Through friendship with those of other faiths, we can learn about their faiths/beliefs.” “Embracing of other religions is enlightening”

Most respondents noted that our parish has strong links with the local community. The work done by SSVP and our Foodbank is an opportunity to dialogue with many in the parish area who do not attend church and who are experiencing a range of challenges (poverty/addiction/mental health) and are marginalised. The Christmas appeal reaches an increasing number of people and is widely supported. We need to find more ways to reach out to all.

Some felt that “We are doing a lot of good things within our parish, but are not encouraging enough people that they are valued and wanted.”

The direction the church is going in now is to have a voice in all that impacts people’s lives which is a great step forward.

However, it carries risks. Maybe we need to think of other ways of helping and being more involved in the community at other times of the year.

7. How does the Church dialogue with and learn from other sectors of society: the spheres of politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

We need to tap into the specialist knowledge of people we have within the church.

We all learn through contact and involvement with each other in the Church but also by taking courage from doing things together in parish and inter-parish and with common issues that bring people together.....not to convert but to share time and space to listen first and then to enquire. Working together (with everyone in the local area) to support and care for our community. Finding opportunities to come together to share dialogue and be represented on local issues as a joint community. Can a more joint approach be made to try to tackle addiction and poverty issues? With cost of living and a squeeze on earnings and benefits, crime and addictions go hand in hand.

Practical Christianity and ‘walking together’ is what will bring people to God. Generosity, caring, kind words, giving your time to listen and visit those who are alone or at risk.

I believe the Catholic Church is at the forefront in many of the sectors of society today political/health/culture. It is just not seen.

Week 3 'CELEBRATION' 'ECUMENISM' and 'AUTHORITY & PARTICIPATION'

Q6. CELEBRATION "Walking together" is only possible if it is based on communal listening to the Word and the celebration of the Eucharist.

1. How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission in our community?

One person commented that "Mass is celebrated better on Sundays than weekdays. Hymns are difficult, unfamiliar, or sombre on weekdays. People should be comfortable taking part in Mass. Children should be encouraged to sing, read, and be interested and inspired to take on more roles." Prayer and liturgical celebrations provide opportunities for us to come together physically as a community. They are a vital part of many milestones on our faith journey, Baptism, Reconciliation, First Communion, Confirmation, Marriage and Death.

2. How do they inspire the most important decisions?

The Gospel helps to concentrate minds. But young families do not take sufficient part in Mass. On a daily and weekly basis they allow us to fulfil our commitment to our faith. Those who attend, do actively join in prayer responses but there is a real absence of our young people. We need to find a way to engage our young people. We need to reach out to them in school and encourage them and to offer opportunities to actively participate but more importantly to take a leading role. We need to recognise that for this to happen, their approach might be challenging for many of us because if we simply expect them to do the same as before we are unlikely to attract them and make them feel their youth and energy are vital to the future of our parish community.

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

Wider participation by schools, at one Sunday or First Friday Mass could involve children and parents. Older altar servers could encourage younger children – including boys! - to serve Mass. Why so few boys? Prayer and knowledge help to face the world and proclaim the Good News as best and truthfully as we can. Participating in the liturgy would inspire some to actively assist the clergy. Faith sharing groups meet at Lent and Advent.

People understand the present English language Mass, where both clergy and laity are actively involved. Most would not understand the Latin 'Traditional' Mass where only the priest and altar boys are fully active, but some actively seek the Latin version.

In the short term – post Covid – effort is needed to return able parishioners to the Sacraments in the Church rather than via TV – or not at all; and to re-energise with special Masses, events, new housing visits and so on.

"Recognising the Host does make hearts burn. Open eyes and ears. Listen. Believe. Encourage."

Does parish connect with high school and its chaplain?

One person commented that the Liturgy is dry. Sing, clap hands. Music! We are programmed for rituals. (Only) those with faith continue. Children's hymns used to be uplifting. Present hymns are flat, monotone and only one verse is sung. Like the first apostles, we must motivate.

Incentives: Caritas, Pope Francis Award, Wednesday Club, Junior Choir, Football team, Disco.

At Mass people do join in with prayer responses and there is an active prayer group held in someone's home. Perhaps the power of prayer is less understood these days. Young people, especially teenagers are not present at many celebrations.

4. What space is given to participating in the ministries of lector and acolyte?

The office of Reader is very important. Necessary are thorough training, voice projection, and preparation of passage, appropriate silence, and motivation.

It is pleasing that women and girls read and serve Mass. Constant prayer help to make right decisions.

The local church is well served by adult Lectors at morning mass. There are now few children and mainly girls for Sunday mass. More should be done to encourage young people to become Lectors and for High School pupils to be and remain Lectors.

Q7. ECUMENISM The dialogue between Christians of different confessions, united by one baptism, has a special place in the synodal journey.

1. What relationships does our Church community have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations?

Many people noted the good/strong/excellent relationship that we have with North Motherwell Church of Scotland but it was noted that it could always be better. We each share the knowledge and belief there is a higher presence than ourselves.

There is now a strong bond. Prime Movers: good rapport between parish priest and minister, supported by committed lay persons. Activities: Fairtrade, Youth Club, Café, Advent Service, film shows, discussions, choir, Motherwell Churches together banner and website, foodbank

Proposed: prayer handouts, Lent liturgy, Procession (if approved), joint voice on behalf of Christian community e.g. re marriage, gender change etc,

We share the Creed. The journey together becomes easier once respect of each other flourishes. Other than our local Church of Scotland, we have no relationship with other denominations, individuals, perhaps through family, may have knowledge of other congregations. The minister Rev Pope is an exceptional man who lives out his vocation to the full – a shared sermon or two could be good and a recognition of what unites rather than divides us.

2. What do we share and how do we journey together? What fruits have we drawn from walking together?

As previous, we are fortunate to have a great relationship with our friends in North Motherwell Parish Church.

We share a number of social and spiritual events and groups, eg advent service, community choir, film nights. We have joint religious services and embrace each other's community projects when opportunities arise. We come together at Advent in each Church in alternate years for a service and then light refreshments in the Church hall allowing time for chat.

The priest/minister and congregations share aspects of the service with the host Church choosing hymns/readings.

We also work together with the Food Bank. Consider a joint service e.g. meditational stations of the cross.

This has been very fruitful and has promoted a mutual understanding of each denomination.

We need to find opportunities to start up these pre-covid film nights, ecumenical services to enable us to share our common journey as Christians.

This has been a very successful relationship for the whole of north Motherwell community and has been a very friendly relationship. This was especially evident in the video made by the minister's wife featuring members of both parishes and members of the local community all singing about North Motherwell, this was premiered at a social event in our church hall and was very well attended. Ecumenical engagement with local church with shared events.

Friendships made in local community

3. What are the difficulties? How can we take the next step in walking forward with each other?

Two parishioners are members of an inter-denominational group and experience over the years indicated that the one sticking point is Transubstantiation.

Problems: mainly older people committed. Communication (e.g., Motherwell Times) limited

I am unaware of any difficulties, as I always feel there is mutual respect between the 2 parishes, this is shown through the liturgy and prayers chosen for the various services.

Post -covid restrictions, I would hope that we could build on what we had prior to covid.

Once COVID is over link with North Motherwell Parish church can be rekindled.

"I have been a member of a multi-church group for several years. (I was recruited by an Episcopalian). The one major sticking point, given all the debates, prayer sessions etc. is the Eucharist – as I discussed with one old Methodist a few months before God took him. We cannot compromise on transubstantiation. If we do, the ball's up on the slates."

Difficulties of interpretation of the 'one true faith' will always remain difficult to bridge, however mutual respect of our diverse belief goes a long

Q8. AUTHORITY AND PARTICIPATION A synodal church is a participatory and co-responsible Church.

1. How does our Church community identify the goals to be pursued, the way to reach them, and the steps to be taken?

The Parish Council was established to advise the Parish Priest on setting goals and how best to achieve them. Leadership and authority rests with the Parish Priest who brings others on board to both influence the setting of goals and their delivery. Covid lockdown disrupted this process, no meetings, resulting in individual or groups taking on specific tasks. All laity within our church should be encouraged to identify what they think their goals for the church are and how they want to reach them. All laity should feel able to speak up, as it is our Church and without the people there would not be a church. I think one of the strengths of our church community is the ability to identify the goals to be pursued and how to reach them.

2. How is authority or governance exercised within our local Church?

Parish Priest is the authority, but can and does influence others to participate. PP can then delegate authority to Parishioners to perform certain roles and function. This can be seen as another level of authority but effective if parishioner has confidence of the PP. This is a participative form of authority rather than top down.

The parish priest has an important role from the aspect of the Eucharist, but also to ensure that he is in a position to enable his parishioners to participate fully in the decision making of how we run the parish to inspire all.

Our Bishop has overall responsibility for the local church i.e. the diocese, at parish level the Parish Priest is in charge and could say no to a parish initiative.

3. How are teamwork and co-responsibility put into practice?

The reality is through established groups and when required creating new. Those in existence for some time are Finance Council, Fabric Committee, SSVP, Legion of Mary, Communication Group, RCIA, etc. A good example of new would be our response to the pandemic, e.g. Cleaning Team, Pass keeper/Welcoming Teams, all responsible for certain activities but accountable to PP. I think it would be beneficial to have discussions within the different groups so that everyone is aware of what goes on in the parish and we are all aware of the jobs requiring to be done and what help or assistance is required.

The organisations, prayer meetings, RCIA etc. are promoted through personal invitations to others to come along and join/participate. Notices in the bulletin, announcements by priest and lay people at mass. Lots of our organisations have the same people participating, this is not a criticism. Sadly, if others do not come forward we feel a responsibility to participate. Challenges exist for people to be over committed especially when we all have wider responsibilities to our family, work/running a home to attend to.

4. How are evaluations conducted and by whom? Not aware of any evaluations

The Parish Council would be the natural place for this to happen, but the reality is that no formal evaluation has taken place recently. Action notes from this process and how we deal with them will be a good starting point.

5. How are lay ministries and the responsibility of lay people promoted?

Most parishioners who attend Mass fulfil their obligation, pay tithes, but do not participate further. The Priest administers the Sacraments and the laity assist the priest particularly through lay ministries, Readers, Ministers of Communion, Alter Servers, Sacristan, and Pass Keepers. These are filled often by direct invite, with individuals playing a lead role, but not all parishioner able or willing to make that commitment. Posters/displays set up within the church building; talk and appeals from lectern Action plans and timescales as well as areas of responsibility can at times give ownership to all branches of our universal church with realistic targets.

6. Have we had fruitful experiences of synodality on a local level? Don't know. Probably this process.

In terms of spirituality and organisation we all need to take responsibility. The priest is there not only to say Mass, but to encourage the laity to participate, and engage in the synodal journey. However it is the Eucharist that makes the Church, if there is no Mass there would be no Church. The Priest's primary responsibility is to say Mass, preach the word of God, and administer the Sacraments. Perhaps we can move to a place where the laity encourage the laity to participate that the parish priest does not carry this burden.

7. How do synodal bodies function at the level of the local Church (Pastoral Councils in parishes and dioceses, Presbyteral Council, etc.)?

I think our parish could be seen as a group of small "cliques". How do we change this to show others that they are welcome? The same group of people have been part of the finance committee/parish council etc for a long time, do we have others in the parish with skills that these groups could benefit from? Can we invite others to join, not replace as the groups do good work but we need to be mindful that we are not asking the same people to perform too many roles in the parish. Some felt that Synodal function needs to start with the hierarchy, they need to consult with priests and laity who know about or have experienced the problems of living in today's world. All people need to feel that they belong and are welcome in church and that whatever skills they have are valued.

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

See previous responses - the whole congregation matter and everyone should be respected irrespective of the ministry/role they take. Invite more people to join more parish groups. There is no overall plan or set of objectives – beyond the theologically obvious about spreading God's love and message for mankind. I am unaware how we link with wider networks.

Q9. DISCERNING AND DECIDING In a Synodal style we make decisions through discernment of what the Holy Spirit is saying through our whole community.

1. *What methods and processes do we use in decision-making? How can they be improved?*

The Parish is seen as providing a good platform for promoting shared decision making but there is a need to be seen to encourage and improve wider participation and transparency. Aim to increase awareness that commitment is more than Sunday Mass and that people should express their views and participate as they are able. Use the expertise of those attending: lawyers, teachers, accountants, joiners, electricians etc.

It was suggested by more than one respondent that there is a continued need for prayer to the Holy Spirit for ongoing Discernment in Decision Making ...The Synod Prayer.

2. *How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures?*

One respondent felt that "we are told what to do" and felt that decisions could be better if the hierarchy included parish clergy and lay people who have experience in all walks of life.

3. *Do our decision making methods help us to listen to the whole people of God? What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice?*

Some respondents felt that the church needs to be more inclusive of the "whole community" including those who are unable to participate fully in the life of the church due to church rules e.g. those not able to participate in the sacraments. Include these parishioners in future decision making, reflecting on their life experience.

Consultation on decisions in both formal and informal settings is needed with an expectation that people will respond and responses will be acknowledged.

Recognising that Discernment is a gift of the Holy Spirit.

4. *What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability?*

Confirmation regularly what confidentiality, accountability and transparency really mean is required.

5. *How can we grow in communal spiritual discernment?*

We should tap into successful experiences of other parishes, Catholic and others. Let people know that their life experiences are valued and required.

Q10. FORMING OURSELVES IN SYNODALITY Synodality entails receptivity to change, formation and on-going learning.

1. *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?*

We need to recognise that Synodality is a process rather than an event.

Build on existing positive ecumenical links locally where parties share and listen, person to person supported by clergy from each denomination. "Don't do apart what we can do together!" was the mission of the North Motherwell Churches Together Group.

There was an acknowledge from a number of respondents that we need to engage with those who feel excluded such as those in irregular relationships, at a person-to-person level using existing parish groups to network.

Unlike Synod documents consult in plain terms in written form.

A number of respondents wanted to give younger people a voice. What do they want from their church, school and each other and how can the parish help them on their journey?

Build on the good work that was taking place pre-covid. Relaunch groups and invite new members through individual approaches as well as "all welcome message".

There should be a non-judgemental environment where individuals feel they can speak their truth without judgement from others.

Where change is difficult then give explanation...what, why and how! Listening and promoting concentric rather than pyramid parish. Provide support and appreciation to those already committed to parish and especially our priests.

2. *What formation is offered to foster discernment and the exercise of authority in a synodal way?*

Formation seen as based on prayer together as well as action together. Faith Sharing Groups and Joint Worship seen as contributing to this within our Parish. Build on contact points in schools; sacramental preparation in primary and caritas in secondary with the help of the new school Chaplin.

A small number of those who responded stated that they hope the church laity would welcome change, this is the 21st century! The suggestion that regularly inviting visitors and speakers from other churches might make us more aware and understand other Christians better and assist in their understanding of us. Jesus came to earth for all sinners. We need to remember that only God can judge.

"PLANT THE SEED AND LET IT GROW".