

Parish Synod Listening Session

Parish Tool Kit



The following material offers parishes **TOOLS** for preparing, hosting and reporting back from a **Listening Lent: Parish Synod Listening Session**.

This two hour session might take place on an evening or Saturday morning/afternoon. It may include people from the parish or extend to include people from neighbouring parishes.

Also included is an alternative format consisting of **three stand-alone one hour parish synod listening sessions**.

These three sessions might work very well for a group that gather regularly after weekday Mass or after Sunday Mass. While ideally people will attend all three, people can choose to attend any session. As a less formal session than a single event the facilitation and recording may well be managed by participants themselves with good guidance from the host/facilitator.

Produced by the Kildare and Leighlin Diocesan Synod Committee, February 2022



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The Purpose of the Parish Synod Listening Session

Pope Francis wants to hear from the whole Church about the reality of being part of the People of God right now. He wants us to have a conversation about how we are journeying together and with God in our local parishes. He wants us to dream dreams together about our future. And he wants everyone's voice to count.

At the heart of this consultation across the world is the call to be a Church whose members walk together, listen to one another and listen to God who always leads us to where we need to go. While many people will participate through online questionnaires, and this type of participation is very welcome, this process is about even more than that. It is about mutual listening and communal discernment. The goal of our journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and God's Church.

This parish synod listening session is about creating a space in the parish for people to come and share their experience, to listen to one another and to listen to God's Spirit speaking to us through our shared stories.

A recorder at each table conversation will help ensure that the parish can report back to the diocese the key points that arise for the participants through their sharing and listening to one another. A facilitator at each table will help the conversation to be a dialogue rather than debate.

What happens in a parish listening session – A General Description

In practice, each session is guided by three sets of questions that help facilitate rounds of table conversations.

As people arrive they should be individually welcomed and guided to a table. At each table it will be helpful to have a note taker and a facilitator. Their particular role is set out below. Tables of 5-6 people, along with note taker and facilitator are ideal.

The session begins with a formal welcome, introduction and opening prayer. Then the main facilitator introduces the first series of questions and highlights the need for people to listen to one another and to give every person who wants to, a chance to speak. A simple set of guidance for listening and speaking within the conversations are provided below.

After the first round of questions each table agrees and shares a common point/insight with the rest of the room before moving onto the next question that is introduced once more by the main facilitator.

The above is repeated for the second and third round of conversations. At the end of the session each table is given some time to make final comments within the table before the main facilitator thanks people. She/he lets people know that what has been recorded will be returned to the diocese by the time of the Chrism Mass. This record (which will not identify anybody) will be drawn upon in discerning the diocesan submission to the Irish Bishops' Conference.

Outline of the Single Two Hour Parish Synod Listening Session

- Welcome and introducing one another
- Introduction to the meeting
- Prayer & Scripture
- Guidelines for table conversation
- Table Conversation 1
- A comment from each table
- Table Conversation 2
- A comment from each table
- Table Conversation 3
- A comment from each table
- Moment of Discernment/comment at each table
- Thanking participants & letting them know what will happen to what is recorded
- Closing prayer

A NOTE ABOUT THE MAIN FACILITATOR/HOST

- The main facilitator or host is responsible for welcoming people at the start of the session.
- He/she introduces the purpose of the session.
- Invites someone to lead the prepared prayer at the beginning and end.
- Let's people know the procedure for the table conversations.
- Introduces each round of questions.
- Takes the table comments at the end of each round.
- Is responsible for time keeping.
- Thanks people at the end and lets people know what will happen with the recorded material.
- *Note: Both the procedure and the questions are found on single sheets at the end of this resource. These can be copied and left on tables and/or the procedure and questions can be displayed on a PowerPoint or on flipcharts.*

A NOTE ABOUT TABLE FACILITATORS

- The role of the table facilitator is to keep the conversation on topic.
- To ensure that every one who wishes to has the opportunity to speak and share his/her response to the question.
- To avoid one person dominating the conversation.
- To remind people, as necessary, that we are about listening to one another with an open mind and heart and without the need to debate, change or challenge anybody else's opinion or perspective.
- To keep a careful eye to time.
- In the last five minutes of each round, to help the people at the table to gather the sharing into one key comment for the record keeper to share with the main room.

In practice:

- The table facilitator tries to ensure that only one person speaks at a time and that they don't speak for a second time unless everyone who wishes to has had a chance to speak.

A NOTE ON DIALOGUE, DISCUSSION AND DISCERNMENT (taken from *Process for Facilitating Synodal Consultations, Leadership Roundtable*)

Dialogue is the foundation of all synodal consultations. Dialogue does not happen when there is arguing or diatribe. However, conflicting perspectives may be presented. We may not all agree on what is discussed in the synodal consultation, 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 – is two way, cooperative, and its purpose is to build relationship and exchange perspectives between participants

Discussion – is a process of talking about something in order to reach a decision or to exchange ideas

Discernment – is an attitude of people who believe that God is always present and active in the details of our lives and that God’s plans are revealed to us if we are attentive to God’s presence with us.

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 synodal exchanges. 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.

(Note regarding Listening Lent Parish Session: The realistic focus in the parish session is on the first step of dialogue. The fruits of this dialogue will provide a rich grounding for discussion through to discernment for the diocesan submission. Some parish groups may wish to continue their conversation towards discussion and discernment for themselves locally beyond this single session.)

A NOTE ABOUT NOTETAKERS

- A notetaker does not need to write down every word that is said in the conversation.
- He/she is responsible for capturing the main themes and ideas that arise.
- The note taker makes a particular record of the group comment at the end of each round of conversation and share it with the rest of the room when asked by the main host/facilitator.
- It is helpful for she/he to be aware that an idea or comment might only have come from one person but this one person might have offered a fresh or particular experience that shouldn't be lost and should be recorded.
- ***It will help locally if notetakers can type up their notes under each question heading and email this to the person responsible for submitting the parish roundtable conversation response and/or parish response. Each parish should decide their own arrangement for how best to do this.***
- ***A template is provided for the record taker to record the table conversation.***

Gathering the recorded material for submission

The recorded material from each table should ultimately be collated into one report and included in the parish submission which is to be returned electronically to synod@kandle.ie using the template provided. Ideally this submission will also include responses from any other parish listening exercises that took place in the parish (for example, focus groups, youth conversations or one to one informal conversations).

PARISHES ARE ASKED TO RETURN THEIR SUBMISSIONS BY **WEDNESDAY, APRIL 6, 2022** TO
SYNOD@KANDLE.IE

A NOTE ABOUT HOSPITALITY

When preparing the session it will be helpful to think of hospitality in terms of the welcome people receive as they come through the door and the welcome given by have a room that has been prepared. Who will greet people? Who will help prepare the room with tables and chairs, pens and paper as needed at tables, and a sacred space for the prayer (perhaps a candle, bible, Cross and purple cloth)? Who will make sure the room is left tidy afterwards?

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS

As they take part in the table conversations, participants can be invited to keep hold of the following guidelines:

When listening

- Allow one person to speak at a time
- Be fully present to the person speaking rather than thinking about what you are going to say
- Treat one another and what anyone says with reverence and respect
- Respect everyone's right to an opinion – even if you strongly disagree
- Choose not to make judgements about others and listen with an open mind
- Respect the confidentiality of the group - any recording of key points and experiences will not indicate the names of individual participants
- Be open to the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the stories/experiences shared

When speaking

- Speak about your own experience as you see it and live it, but do not impose your views or judgements on others, or speak for others
- Don't speak for too long - so that everyone has time to share
- Only speak for a second time once everyone has had an opportunity to share
- When speaking, the purpose is to advance the conversation rather than argue or debate a point



DETAILED TEMPLATE OF THE LISTENING LENT PARISH SYNOD LISTENING SESSION

WELCOME/CONNECTING (5 MINS)



The host/facilitator begins by warmly welcoming everyone and introducing her/himself.

Let people know that as the host/facilitator you are there to keep us all to the shared task and to ensure that we keep to time so that people will be leaving in two hours' time, having achieved what we set out to do together. You'll say a bit more about that task in a moment.

For now, invite everyone in the small groups to take a minute to introduce themselves in 2/3's at the table with these two questions, before everyone at each table introduces themselves to the rest of the table by name:

- Who are you and where you are from?
- How are you as we begin this conversation?

At this time you can also invite the recorder and facilitator at each table to identify themselves to the table.

INTRODUCTION (5 MINS) *A Model*

Our conversation in this session is in response to the invitation from Pope Francis to all people to take part in the synod process ahead of the meeting of Bishops in Rome in October 2023.

Pope Francis wants to hear from the whole Church about the reality of being part of the People of God right now. He wants us to have a conversation about how we are journeying together and with God in our local parishes. He wants us to dream dreams together about our future. And he wants everyone's voice to count.

At the heart of this consultation across the world is the call to be a Church whose members walk together, listen to one another and listen to God who always leads us to where we need to go. The goal of our walking or journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and God's Church.

This parish synod listening session is about creating a space in our parish for you to come and share out of your experience, to listen to one another and to listen to God's Spirit speaking to us through our shared stories.

So this session will be very much about listening to one another. And from the beginning we are inviting you to listen from your heart and to listen deeply to one another. We are not here to debate or to develop strategies but simply to listen and share experiences, and to listen out for the voice of God through these shared experiences.

The recorders at each table are there to make sure that the fruits of the table conversation will be brought to the diocese for inclusion in the discernment of a diocesan submission to the Irish Bishops' Conference. They won't be recording any names but hopefully they will be capturing the richness of what is shared at your table.

So we are here to listen to one another and to listen to God. Let us begin by listening to God - opening ourselves up to the presence of God with us in prayer and to God's word to us in Scripture.

Prayer and Scripture (10 mins)

Prayer leader: As we move through this synod journey we have been invited to use a prayer that was used at every session of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's. It has been used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years and has been adapted for this synod.



You'll see the Synod prayer on your table so now, let us pray this prayer together and ready ourselves to listen to the word of God:

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.

The healing of blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52)

Have someone prepared to read this text from a copy of the bible.

A reading from the Holy Gospel according to St Mark

They came to Jericho. As he and his disciples and a large crowd were leaving Jericho, Bartimaeus son of Timaeus, a blind beggar, was sitting by the roadside. When he heard that it was Jesus of Nazareth, he began to shout out and say, "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me!" Many sternly ordered him to be quiet, but he cried out even more loudly, "Son of David, have mercy on me!" Jesus stood still and said, "Call him here." And they called the blind man, saying to him, "Take heart; get up, he is calling you." So throwing off his cloak, he sprang up and came to Jesus. Then Jesus said to him, "What do you want me to do for you?" The blind man said to him, "My teacher, let me see again." Jesus said to him, "Go; your faith has made you well." Immediately he regained his sight and followed him on the way.

The Gospel of the Lord.

Prayer leader: As we gather for this time together we take a moment to think about this story of Bartimaeus and his encounter with Jesus on the way out of Jericho. He calls out to Jesus for mercy but is rebuked by those around him and told to be quiet. Yet with courage and boldness he persists and continues to call out to Jesus until Jesus hears him, sends for him and says to him: 'What do you want me to do for you?'

Bartimaeus, addressing and recognising Jesus as his teacher, asks to see again. In response Jesus recognises his faith and Bartimaeus' sight is restored and he continues to follow Jesus on the way – the way being the path that Jesus sets out for us, the path on which we journey with, we walk with Jesus.

Prayer Leader: We listen to this story once more: (*Have the reader, read the Gospel passage once more.*)

Prayer leader: Take moment of silence to individually reflect on what strikes you about the different characters in the story and how they respond to the situation?

What do their attitude and reactions evoke for you about your experience of the Church today?

(Pause)

Let us pray for the guidance of the Holy Spirit:

**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.

Introducing the task (5 mins)

Facilitator / Host: Let the people know that for the next hour and a half or so (at a max) we are going to have three rounds of table conversations. Each round will explore a particular group of questions. At the end of each round, every table will have an opportunity to share just a couple of key points that emerged in the conversation.

Let them know that it will be really important that everyone at the table is given an opportunity to share if they want to and it is equally important that we each do our level best to come to the conversation with a willingness to listen to others in a spirit of respect and openness.

Pope Francis is asking us to do two things:

- 1) – to speak graciously with courage and boldness
- 2) – to listen graciously with respect to another person and with an openness to hear God speaking to us through the story and experience of another person.

To help this, as you take part in your table conversation you might keep hold of the following :

When listening

- Allow one person to speak at a time
- Be fully present to the person speaking rather than thinking about what you are going to say
- Treat one another and what anyone says with reverence and respect
- Respect everyone's right to an opinion – even if you strongly disagree
- Choose not to make judgements about others and listen with an open mind
- Respect the confidentiality of the group - any recording of key points and experiences will not indicate the names of individual participants
- Be open to the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the stories/experiences shared

When speaking

- Speak about your own experience as you see it and live it, but do not impose your views or judgements on others, or speak for others
- Don't speak for too long - so that everyone has time to share
- Only speak for a second time once everyone has had an opportunity to share
- When speaking, the purpose is to advance the conversation rather than argue or debate a point

As you think about these guidelines, note which one's come naturally to you and which one's you might struggle with?

Note: these guidelines can be copied ahead of time together with the prayer and placed on tables before for the session begins.

Introducing the table questions (5 Mins)

Facilitator/ Host: (A model introduction)

The questions we are going to explore arise from the theme of the Synod. This theme is about exploring how we as the people of God are journeying together as a people faith. Under this theme three key words are highlighted. They are *communion*, *participation* and *mission*. Each round of questions in this session will draw from those headings in turn. I'll say a bit more about each of the key words at the beginning of each round.

Pattern of each conversation:

Each time we look to a set of questions you are invited to follow these four steps:

1. Take a moment of silence to reflect on the question and jot down any word/phrase that comes to mind for you on the sheet provided.
2. Share without comment – Each person is invited to simply respond to the question without any discussion or feedback from others
3. After another moment of silence, people are invited to share on: What struck you / moved you in what you heard being said by others?
4. After a further moment of silence, the table together considers: What seems to be resonating in our conversation and what moved you most deeply? **From this final step the table decides a key point/comment to be brought back to the large group**

Conversation One: Communion (30 mins – 5 mins intro, 20 mins conversation, 5 mins feedback)



The **Host /facilitator** introduces the first conversation topic, reminding people that it is around that theme of communion – this is about recognising how through our baptism we share God's life with God and with each other. How do we experience sharing this life, how do we experience the Church and being a part of the church?

So the questions for tables in Conversation One are: ***Thinking about the Church and our parish, how and when do I find being part of it a source of joy or nourishment for me in my faith? When might it bring disappointment or pain?***

The host alerts people to the individual sheet which has the questions and the four steps. Remind people to think about the guidance for listening and speaking.

Let people know that they have 20 mins for this conversation. Invite them to begin and to follow the four steps so that by the end of 20 mins the table has a key point or comment that it wants to say back to the large group.

After 15 mins the host invites tables to move to step four.

At the end of the 20 mins the host hears back from tables before introducing Conversation Two.

Conversation Two: Participation (30 mins – 2 mins intro, 20 mins conversation, 5 mins feedback)



Again the *host/facilitator* reminds participants that in this round we are focusing on the theme of participation – this is about how we take and are invited to take our part in the life of the church/faith community.

The questions for response in this round are: ***When I hear the word ‘Church’ who do I think of? Who is missing? Whom do we need to listen to? How can we be more inclusive?***

The host alerts people to the individual sheet which has the questions and the four steps. Remind people to think about the guidance for listening and speaking.

Let people know that they have 20 mins for this conversation. Invite them to begin and to follow the four steps so that by the end of 20 mins the table has a key point or comment that it wants to say back to the large group.

After 15 mins the host invites tables to move to step four.

At the end of the 20 mins the host hears back from tables before introducing Conversation Three.

Conversation Three: Mission (30 mins – 2 mins intro, 20 mins conversation, 5 mins feedback)



Again the *host/facilitator* reminds participants that this round is looking to mission – which is about how we are sent out into the everyday stuff of our lives to tell others about the Good News of our faith by what we do as well as by what we say.

The questions to consider now are: ***Thinking about how we as a parish community bring the love of Christ into the world, what one thing does our local parish do really well? What one thing could it do better? What one thing could I do? What specific hope or dream do I have for the Church moving forward?***

The host alerts people to the individual sheet which has the questions and the four steps. Remind people to think about the guidance for listening and speaking.

Let people know that they have 20 mins for this conversation. Invite them to begin and to follow the four steps so that by the end of 20 mins the table has a key point or comment that it wants to say back to the large group.

After 15 mins the host invites tables to move to step four.

At the end of the 20 mins the host hears back from tables before introducing the final short conversation.

Closing comment: (5-10 mins as time allows)

Before we finish the session, the host/ facilitator invites the groups to conclude their conversation by gathering their thoughts, without giving feedback this time to the large group but still recording key things said, with the following questions:

Having heard all that you have heard and shared in this session... where in these shared experiences do you think we are being led by the Spirit? How might the Spirit of God be calling us to change?

What happens next and thanks:

The host/facilitator thanks everyone for their generous participation and lets them know that the fruits of the conversations will be gathered into the parish submission that will be sent to the diocese electronically and will also be presented at the Chrism Mass.

Remind people that outside of this meeting people are still welcome to fill out the online survey and/or to send individual submissions to synod@kandle.ie

You can also invite people to spread the word and encourage other people to complete the survey and/or take part in any other listening sessions.

Note: Parishes are free to share their individual submissions with their Parish Pastoral Council and parishioners as they wish.

Closing prayer

As we began in prayer, we conclude in prayer. The host invites the prayer leader to pray the closing prayer:

Closing Prayer

Lord Jesus
I give you my hands to do your work
I give you my feet to go your way
I give you my eyes to see as you do
I give you my tongue to speak your words
I give you my mind that you may think in me
I give you my spirit that you may pray in me
Above all,
I give you my heart that you may love in me
your Father and all humankind
I give you my whole self that you may grow in me
so that it is you Lord Jesus
who live and work and pray in me. Amen.

(Grail Prayer)



Synod Prayer

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.



Group Guidance for Listening and Speaking

As you take part in your table conversation you might keep hold of the following :

When listening

- Allow one person to speak at a time
- Be fully present to the person speaking rather than thinking about what you are going to say
- Treat one another and what anyone says with reverence and respect
- Respect everyone's right to an opinion – even if you strongly disagree
- Choose not to make judgements about others and listen with an open mind
- Respect the confidentiality of the group - any recording of key points and experiences will not indicate the names of individual participants
- Being open to the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the stories/experiences shared

When speaking

- Speak about your own experience as you see it and live it, but do not impose your views or judgements on others, or speak for others
- Don't speak for too long - so that everyone has time to share
- Only speak for a second time once everyone has had an opportunity to share
- When speaking, the purpose is to advance the conversation rather than argue or debate a point



Conversation One: Communion

This is about recognising how through our baptism we share God's life with God and with each other. How do we experience sharing this life, how do we experience the Church and being a part of the church?

Steps in the conversation

1. Take a moment of silence to reflect on the question and jot down any word/phrase that comes to mind for you on this sheet.
2. Share without comment – Each person is invited to simply respond to the question without any discussion or feedback from others.
3. After another moment of silence, people are invited to share on: What struck you / moved you in what you heard being said by others?
4. After a further moment of silence, the table together considers: What seems to be resonating in our conversation and what moved you most deeply? **From this final step the table decides a key point/comment to be brought back to the large group**

The Questions

Thinking about the Church and about my local parish, how and when do I find being part of it a source of joy or nourishment for me in my faith? When might it bring disappointment or pain?



Conversation Two: Participation

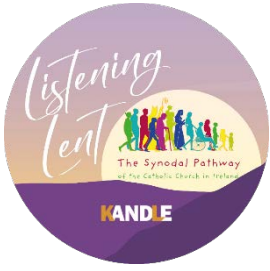
This is about how we take, and are invited to take, our part in the life of the church/faith community.

Steps in the conversation

1. Take a moment of silence to reflect on the question and jot down any word/phrase that comes to mind for you on this sheet.
2. Share without comment – Each person is invited to simply respond to the question without any discussion or feedback from others.
3. After another moment of silence, people are invited to share on: What struck you / moved you in what you heard being said by others?
4. After a further moment of silence, the table together considers: What seems to be resonating in our conversation and what moved you most deeply? **From this final step the table decides a key point/comment to be brought back to the large group**

The Questions

When I hear the word 'Church' who do I think of? Who is missing on this journey? Whom do we need to listen to? How can we be more inclusive?



Conversation Three: Mission

This is about how we are sent out into the everyday stuff of our lives to tell others about the Good News of our faith by what we do as well as by what we say.

Steps in the conversation

1. Take a moment of silence to reflect on the question and jot down any word/phrase that comes to mind for you on this sheet.
2. Share without comment – Each person is invited to simply respond to the question without any discussion or feedback from others.
3. After another moment of silence, people are invited to share on: What struck you / moved you in what you heard being said by others?
4. After a further moment of silence, the table together considers: What seems to be resonating in our conversation and what moved you most deeply? **From this final step the table decides a key point/comment to be brought back to the large group**

The Questions

Thinking about how we as a parish community bring the love of Christ into the world, what one thing does our local parish do really well? What one thing could it do better? What one thing could I do? What specific hope or dream do I have for the Church moving forward?

1. Take a moment of silence to reflect on the question and jot down any word/phrase that comes to mind for you on this sheet.
 2. Share without comment – Each person is invited to simply respond to the question without any discussion or feedback from others.
 3. After another moment of silence, people are invited to share on: What struck you / moved you in what you heard being said by others?
 4. After a further moment of silence, the table together considers: What seems to be resonating in our conversation and what moved you most deeply? **From this final step the table decides a key point/comment to be brought back to the large group.** (Note: The table recorder also takes note of key things said in each round of conversation for submission along with the key table comment)
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Conversation One: Communion

This is about recognising how through our baptism we share God's life with God and with each other. How do we experience sharing this life, how do we experience the Church and being a part of the church?

The Questions

Thinking about the Church and about my local parish, how and when do I find being part of it a source of joy or nourishment for me in my faith? When might it bring disappointment or pain?



Conversation Two: Participation

This is about how we take, and are invited to take, our part in the life of the church/faith community.

The Questions

When I hear the word 'Church' who do I think of? Who is missing? Whom do we need to listen to? How can we be more inclusive?



Conversation Three: Mission

This is about how we are sent out into the everyday stuff of our lives to tell others about the Good News of our faith by what we do as well as by what we say.

The Questions

Thinking about how we as a parish community bring the love of Christ into the world, what one thing does our local parish do really well? What one thing could it do better? What one thing could I do? What specific hope or dream do I have for the Church moving forward?



TABLE RECORDER TEMPLATE

Conversation One: Communion

This is about recognising how through our baptism we share God's life with God and with each other. How do we experience sharing this life, how do we experience the Church and being a part of the church?

Please use this sheet, (and other as needed) to record responses given at your table to the following questions:

The Questions

Thinking about the Church and about my local parish:

- **How and when do I find being part of it a source of joy or nourishment for me in my faith?**
- **When might it bring disappointment or pain?**

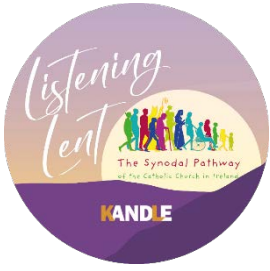


TABLE RECORDER TEMPLATE Conversation Two: Participation

This is about how we take, and are invited to take, our part in the life of the church /faith community.

Please use this sheet (and other as needed) to record responses given at your table to the following questions:

The Questions

When I hear the word 'Church' who do I think of?

Who is missing on this journey?

Whom do we need to listen to?

How can we be more inclusive?



TABLE RECORDER TEMPLATE Conversation Three: Mission

This is about how we are sent out into the everyday stuff of our lives to tell others about the Good News of our faith by what we do as well as by what we say.

Please use this sheet (and other as needed) to record responses given at your table to the following questions:

The Questions

Thinking about how we as a parish community bring the love of Christ into the world, what one thing does our local parish do really well?

What one thing could it do better?

What one thing could I do?

What specific hope or dream do I have for the Church moving forward?



TABLE RECORDER TEMPLATE

Closing table comment

***Having heard all that you have heard and shared in this session... where in these shared experiences do you think we are being led by the Spirit?
How might the Spirit of God be callings us to change?***

This final comment is formulated by the people at the table for the parish written submission.



An alternative format: Three one-hour Listening Lent Parish Synod Listening Sessions

Outline of Three One Hour Parish Synod Listening Session

- Welcome and introducing one another
- Introduction to meeting
- Synod prayer
- Guidelines for table conversation
- Table conversation with questions for session 1, 2 or 3 as appropriate
- Comment from each table
- Thanking participants and closing prayer and thanking participants

Note:

- These sessions need a facilitator and recorder at each table. If not already preassigned, these people may need to be identified at the beginning of the session and given the guidance as found in the opening section of this tool kit.
- The conversation and recorder templates used in the two hour session can be individually used in each session as appropriate.

Template for Each Session

WELCOME/CONNECTING (5 MINS)



The host/facilitator begins by warmly welcoming everyone and introducing her/himself.

Let people know that as the host/facilitator you are there to keep us all to the shared task for this hour and to ensure that we keep to time and achieve what we set out to do together. You'll say a bit more about that task in a moment.

For now, invite everyone in the small groups to take a minute to introduce themselves in 2/3's at the table with these two questions, before everyone at each table introduces themselves to the rest of the table by name:

- Who are you and where you are from?
- How are you as we begin this conversation?

At this time you can also invite the recorder and facilitator at each table to identify themselves to the table or ask the table to appoint a recorder and facilitator for itself, if needed.

INTRODUCTION (5 MINS) *A Model*

Our conversation in this session is in response to the invitation from Pope Francis to all people to take part in the synod process ahead of the meeting of Bishops in Rome in October 2023. Pope Francis wants to hear from the whole Church about the reality of being part of the People of God right now. He wants us to have a conversation about how we are journeying together and with God in our local parishes. He wants us to dream dreams together about our future. And he wants everyone's voice to count.

At the heart of this consultation across the world is the call to be a Church whose members walk together, listen to one another and listen to God who always leads us to where we need to go. The goal of our walking or journeying together is to be present with one another, to listen and learn with each other, and to grow closer to the Lord and God's Church.

This parish conversation session is about creating a space in our parish for you to come and share out of your experience, to listen to one another and to listen to God's Spirit speaking to us through our shared stories.

So this session will be very much about listening to one another. And from the beginning we are inviting you to listen from your heart and to listen deeply to one another. We are not here to debate or to develop strategies but simply to listen and share experiences, and to listen out for the voice of God through these shared experiences.

We will record take a record of what is said at each table to make sure that the fruits of the table conversation will be brought to the diocese for inclusion in the discernment of a diocesan submission to the Irish Bishops' Conference. We won't be recording any names but hopefully we'll capture the richness of what is shared at your table.

So we are here to listen to one another and to listen to God. Let us begin by listening to God - opening ourselves up to the presence of God with us in prayer.

Opening Prayer

As we move through this synod journey we have been invited to use a prayer that was used at every session of the Second Vatican Council in the 1960's. It has been used at Councils, Synods and other Church gatherings for hundreds of years and has been adapted for this synod.

You'll see the Synod prayer on your table so now, let us pray this prayer together:

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.

Introducing the task (5 mins)

Facilitator / Host: (as relevant) Let the people know that for the next 30 minutes or so (at a max) we are going to explore a particular set of questions – we'll say a bit more about the questions in a moment. At the end of this every table will have an opportunity to share just a couple of key points that emerged in the conversation.

Let them know that it will be really important that everyone at the table is given an opportunity to share if they want to and it is equally important that we each do our level best to come to the conversation with a willingness to listen to others in a spirit of respect and openness.

Pope Francis is asking us to do two things:

- 3) – to speak graciously with courage and boldness
- 4) – to listen graciously with respect to another person and with an openness to hear God speaking to us through the story and experience of another person.

To help this, as you take part in your table conversation you might keep hold of the following :

When listening

- Allow one person to speak at a time
- Be fully present to the person speaking rather than thinking about what you are going to say
- Treat one another and what anyone says with reverence and respect
- Respect everyone's right to an opinion – even if you strongly disagree
- Choose not to make judgements about others and listen with an open mind
- Respect the confidentiality of the group - any recording of key points and experiences will not indicate the names of individual participants
- Be open to the Holy Spirit speaking to us through the stories/experiences shared

When speaking

- Speak about your own experience as you see it and live it, but do not impose your views or judgements on others, or speak for others
- Don't speak for too long - so that everyone has time to share
- Only speak for a second time once everyone has had an opportunity to share
- When speaking, the purpose is to advance the conversation rather than argue or debate a point

As you think about these guidelines, note which one's come naturally to you and which ones you might struggle with?

Note: these guidelines can be copied ahead of time together with the prayer and placed on tables before for the session begins.

Introducing the table questions (5 Mins)

Facilitator/ Host: (A model introduction)

The questions we are going to explore arise from the theme of the Synod. This theme is about exploring how we as the people of God are journeying together as a people faith. Under this theme three key words are highlighted. They are *communion*, *participation* and *mission*.

This session we are looking to communion (session one) / participation (session two) / mission (session three). I'll say a bit more about that that word, (communion /participation/mission) before you start your conversation.

Pattern of the conversation:

As you reflect on the questions I'm going to ask you to follow these four steps at your table. And don't worry - these steps, along with the questions, will be on a sheet that you can jot down notes on for yourself as you wish. Here are the steps:

1. Take a moment of silence to reflect on the question and jot down any word/phrase that comes to mind for you on the sheet provided.
2. Share without comment – Each person is invited to simply respond to the question without any discussion or feedback from others
3. After another moment of silence, people are invited to share on: What struck you / moved you in what you heard being said by others?
4. After a further moment of silence, the table together considers: What seems to be resonating in our conversation and what moved you most deeply? **From this final step the table decides a key point/comment to be brought back to the large group**

At this point, move to conversation session one, two or three as appropriate

Conversation Session One: Communion (35 mins – 5 mins intro, 25 mins conversation, 5 mins feedback)



The theme for our conversation this week is about Communion. Communion is about recognising how through our baptism we share God's life with God and with each other. How do we experience sharing this life, how do we experience the Church and being a part of the church?

So the questions for tables in our conversation now are: ***Thinking about the Church and our parish, how and when do I find being part of it a source of joy or nourishment for me in my faith? When might it bring disappointment or pain?***

The host alerts people to the individual sheet which has the questions and the four steps. Remind people to think about the guidance for listening and speaking.

Let people know that they have 25 mins for this conversation. Invite them to begin and to follow the four steps so that by the end of 25 mins the table has a key point or comment that it wants to say back to the large group.

After 20 mins the host invites tables to move to step four. At the end of the 25 mins the host hears back from tables before moving on to the end of the session.

Conversation session Two: Participation (35 mins – 5 mins intro, 25 mins conversation, 5 mins feedback)



Again the *host/facilitator* reminds participants that in this session we are focusing on the theme of participation – this is about how we take and are invited to take our part in the life of the church/faith community.

The questions for response in this round are: ***When I hear the word ‘Church’ who do I think of? Who is missing on this journey? Whom do we need to listen to? How can we be more inclusive?***

The host alerts people to the individual sheet which has the questions and the four steps. Remind people to think about the guidance for listening and speaking.

Let people know that they have 25 mins for this conversation. Invite them to begin and to follow the four steps so that by the end of 25 mins the table has a key point or comment that it wants to say back to the large group.

After 20 mins the host invites tables to move to step four.

At the end of the 25 mins the host hears back from tables before moving on to the end of the session.

Conversation session Three: Mission (30 mins – 5 mins intro, 25 mins conversation, 5 mins feedback)



Again the host/facilitator reminds participants that this session is looking to mission – which is about how we are sent out into the everyday stuff of our lives to tell others about the Good News of our faith by what we do as well as by what we say.

The questions to consider now are: ***Thinking about how we as a parish community bring the love of Christ into the world, what one thing does our local parish do really well? What one thing could it do better? What one thing could I do? What specific hope or dream do I have for the Church moving forward?***

The host alerts people to the individual sheet which has the questions and the four steps. Remind people to think about the guidance for listening and speaking.

Let people know that they have 25 mins for this conversation. Invite them to begin and to follow the four steps so that by the end of 25 mins the table has a key point or comment that it wants to say back to the large group.

After 20 mins the host invites tables to move to step four.

At the end of the 25 mins the host hears back from tables before concluding the session by thanking people and praying a closing prayer.

Thanks

Thank people for their participation. If relevant, encourage them to come back to the next session and to bring others with them. Invite them to let others know that if they can't make the next session they can always complete the online survey that can be accessed at www.kandle.ie/synod/

Closing Prayer

As we leave here let us recognise that God walks with us always. Let us pray that we will welcome the Spirit of God into our lives:

**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.**



Parish group and individual submissions can be returned to synod@kandle.ie by Wednesday, April 6, 2022

See www.Kandle.ie/synod/ for our online survey during Lent and to keep up to date with synod news

Other helpful websites: www.synod.ie www.synod.va