



DIOCESE OF **Hexham & Newcastle**

Synod Parish Meeting Suggestions

The following list highlights a number of different ways to approach the Synod in your parish. It may be that you are only able to adopt one of these methods and in a simplified way or you may take a few and build on them within your parish community. Every parish is different so it stands to reason that every approach to the Synod and the questions will be different.

Through small group discussions:

1. **After Mass:** Gather parishioners together after Mass for a short time, 30 minutes, using the main body of the Church if no appropriate side rooms are available. This could be done a number of times throughout October, November and December. Encourage small group discussions on one or more questions from the provided documents.
2. **On a Saturday morning:** Host a Saturday morning gathering, if resources allow this could be run two or three times between November and December. This extended time together will be especially suited to regular parishioners and those already involved in the parish and allow the group to further delve into this reflective task.
3. **On a midweek evening:** Organise a number of evenings, perhaps one per month, and offer an open invitation on your parish bulletin, website, social media, word of mouth and personal invitation. Running for around 1-1 ½ hrs, this will give you the opportunity to introduce the Synod and some of the question and have some meaningful reflection and discussion.
4. **Work with the local primary school(s)** to organise an open afternoon, straight after school. Rather than distributing the questions among the group, instead use the template provided to gather responses on the main question 'How are we being inspired by the Holy Spirit to journey together?' Small group facilitators can be dispersed within the group to direct conversations and stay on topic.
5. **Encourage any existing parish groups to meet online or in person**, if possible, and spend time in prayer together. Guide them towards questions that are most relevant to their group and provide them with support, either through documents or personnel, where required.
6. **Host an open Zoom meeting, once or twice for between 1 and 1 ½ hrs, to pray together and discuss the questions.** The chat function could be used to help those with less confidence to speak out.
7. **Allocate extra time (30-45 mins) within/after PPC meetings**, or in place of a business meeting altogether, to have discussion of the questions, prayer time and feedback into the group.
8. **Use parish mailing lists, digital or postal, to reach parishioners who have not yet returned to Church.** Again, use the template, or a variation of it, and ask for prayerful responses to the main question. These could be returned either in person, via email or post or over the phone. Return to parish.

With all of the above, the aim is to provide a warm and welcoming atmosphere, where discussion and openness are encouraged. See the Synod Participants' guidance for specific advice regarding preparation and handling of a meeting. Where possible, refreshments should be available and tables should be set up in a coffee shop style rather than chairs in rows. This creates a less pressured environment and promotes more honest and relevant discussion.

Gathering responses

Parishes will feed their discernment to Partnership gatherings. In turn, a Partnership will send representatives to the two diocesan reflection days, which will take place on the 13th November 2021 and 8th January 2022 in the South of the diocese, and 6th November 2021 and 15th January 2022 in the North of the diocese.

As the aim of the Synod is to discern the will of the Holy Spirit rather than gather data, responses should reflect the natural flow of the discussion and be given as an aid to the parish representative for the Partnership meetings. This could be done in a number of ways:

- A list of bullet points, maybe linked to one or more questions, identifying the main stream of thought from the discussion.
- A written letter, addressed to Bishop Robert, explaining the points discussed and reflected upon in your group(s).
- A creative approach, this could be a detailed mind map of the different discussion areas or a timeline that walks along the Emmaus journey, as the questions do, and highlights specific points that were raised along the way.

How are we being inspired by the Holy Spirit to journey together?

Synod

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