

Diocese of Paisley Response to Synod Synthesis Report

March 2024

What can we do locally at parish and diocesan levels to continue learning synodality?

Following our Diocesan Synod in 2016, seven Diocesan Commissions were set up: ***Caritas; Communications; Education & Formation; Evangelisation; Liturgy; Marriage & Family Life; Structures & Collaborative Ministry***. These commissions have a Vicar Episcopal and a lay chair and are constantly evolving; their objectives match closely with proposals within the Synod Synthesis Report.

In November 2021 a Diocesan Pastoral Council of representatives from all parishes was constituted, meeting twice a year, with its agenda mirroring that of the Diocesan Council of Priests. The sense of being a diocesan family complements and supports the local parish community, enabling improved communication and consultation to foster a wider vision of Church beyond parish life. This response highlights three initiatives the diocese wishes to take forward within the next year, alongside the appropriate themes and proposals from the Synod Synthesis Report

FORMATION

Theme 14. A synodal approach to formation¹

In consultation responses, formation has always been identified as fundamentally important in encouraging the partnership between clergy and laity in the new evangelisation of our parish and diocesan communities. This could be arranged within parish clusters or in deanery groupings, as in previous years. The content for such formation would be that given within the proposals in themes **4. People in Poverty, Protagonists of the Church's Journey²** and **5. A Church "out of every tribe, tongue, people and nation".³** The Diocesan Pastoral Council has specifically asked that a Baptismal Preparation Course for parents be established and work has begun. The formation programme could also include catechesis on the upcoming new translation of the lectionary. It is envisaged that the formation will be delivered by diocesan clergy and made available on the diocesan website and social media to a wider audience. This is in line with the proposal in theme **17. Mission in the Digital Environment.⁴**

CHURCH STRUCTURES

Currently the diocese is presenting area clusters with opportunities to explore and enhance the structure of parishes, which may result in the merging, clustering or closing of parishes. Parishes, initially through their Parish Pastoral Councils, are being invited to explore the future of each building, especially if the parishes are in debt, to assess if it is better to invest financial resources in other ways, i.e. moving from maintenance to mission. This is in line with the proposals in themes **18. Structures for Participation⁵** and **19. Groupings of Churches within the Communion of the Whole Church.⁶**

COLLABORATIVE MINISTRY

The care and support of our priests is a vital concern of the Catholic community. Regular opportunities should be scheduled for rest, recreation and retreats for our clergy. Appropriate

pastoral and fraternal support will prevent them becoming isolated from each other and from the diocese. There is a need to promote within our parish communities that there are opportunities for prayer without the presence of a priest, e.g. Eucharistic Adoration, recitation of the Rosary, Stations of the Cross. This is in line with the proposal in theme 3. **Entering the Community of Faith: Christian Initiative.**⁷

FOOTNOTES

1 *“In the light of synodality, we propose that priority should be given to providing programmes designed and intended for the joint formation of the entire People of God (laity, consecrated and ordained ministers). Dioceses should endeavour to encourage these projects within the local churches. We encourage Episcopal Conferences to work together at regional level to create a culture of ongoing formation, using all available resources, including the development of digital options.”*

2 *“The Church's social doctrine is a too little-known resource. This needs to be addressed. Local churches are invited not only to make its contents better known but to foster its reception through practices that put its inspiration into action. Church teaching, liturgy, and practice must more explicitly and carefully integrate the biblical and theological foundations of integral ecology.”*

3 *“From the work of the Assembly, there is a call for better knowledge of the teachings of Vatican II, post-conciliar teaching and the Church’s social doctrine. We need to know our different traditions better in order to be more clearly a Church of Churches in communion, effective in service and dialogue.”*

4 *“We need to provide opportunities for recognising, forming, and accompanying those already working as digital missionaries, while also facilitating networking amongst them.”*

5 *“Based on the understanding of the People of God as the active subject of the mission of evangelisation, we suggest legislating for the obligatory nature of Pastoral Councils in Christian communities and local churches. It would also be desirable to strengthen the bodies of participation, with a proper presence of the laity, recognising the role they can play in discerning decisions by virtue of their baptism.”*

6 *“Relevant authorities should implement synodality at regional, national, and continental levels in accordance with the insights that have emerged in regard to Church groupings.”*

7 *“A third step consists in the pastoral commitment to widen community prayer beyond the celebration of Mass. Alternative forms of liturgical prayer, as well as practices of popular piety, in which the distinctiveness of local cultures is reflected, are elements of great importance in fostering the involvement of all the faithful. They introduce the faithful to the Christian mystery and bring those less familiar with the Church closer to an encounter with the Lord. Among the forms of popular piety, Marian devotion stands out because of its ability to sustain and nourish the faith of many.”*