

Listening Church Sessions – Facilitator guide

INTRODUCTION, OPENING PRAYER, READING [5-10 mins]

Facilitator: Welcome to our Listening Church Session. We want to listen to you – and we invite you to listen to others. We are asked to share from the heart – so please keep what people say confidential.

As you may know, the word “Synod” refers to “journeying together.” The purpose of the Synod is to give us all the opportunity to reflect – individually and as a group – on how this “journeying together” is happening today in our local Church. In today’s session we are particularly invited to consider: **“What changes should we make in myself, in our Parish, in the Diocese – to make the Church’s mission today more vibrant and effective?”** You will find this question on your participant sheet.

Let’s start this session with a prayer, called the Adsumus prayer, which asks the Holy Spirit to be present in our session.

All:

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 Synod is not a parliament or an opinion poll; it is not a survey. And the same is true of our meeting today. These are listening events – not debates.

We are offered 10 subsidiary questions. But they are not a questionnaire. These are prompts for reflection and inspiration. Which 2 or 3 questions resonate with you, capture your imagination?

There will be period of silent individual reflection, followed by two rounds of sharing. In the first sharing session, we will not be responding to anyone else’s contribution. Instead, we are asked to open our hearts and minds to speak and listen to one another. In the second round of sharing, we are invited to reflect on what we have heard.

Reader:

A reading from the Acts of the Apostles (2:1-4)

"When Pentecost day came round, they had all met together, when suddenly there came from heaven a sound as of a violent wind which filled the entire house in which they were sitting; and there appeared to them tongues as of fire; these separated and came to rest on the head of each of them. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak different languages as the Spirit gave them power to express themselves."

[BREAK-OUT GROUPS: *If appropriate, divide into small groups at this point.*]

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FIRST REFLECTION/WRITING/SHARING

*Make sure everyone has a copy of the participant sheet or share it on screen.
Invite people to introduce themselves.*

Prayer and personal reflection [15 mins]

Facilitator: We now have 15-20 minutes for personal reflection. Choose 2 or 3 questions to focus on first, rather than attempting all of them. Please write freely. Each person will have up to 3 minutes to speak if they wish. If you write lots, consider which points you will wish to share in the first round.

First round of sharing [c20 mins]

Between each person, make sure that there is a 30-second pause for reflection.

Facilitator: I'm now going to invite you to speak [e.g. going round the room] for up to 3 minutes on the main question and a few of the themes if you wish. Please speak slowly, from your hearts and souls. You don't have to speak.

Remember, this is not a debate, so we won't be responding to any particular contribution at this stage. Instead, we are asked to open our hearts and minds to listen to one another. Feel free to make notes about what you hear, anything which strikes you, which you may find helpful in the next period of reflection.

SECOND REFLECTION/WRITING/SHARING

Prayer and personal reflection [5-10mins]

We will now have another period of reflection on what we have heard and prepare our response to what has been shared, before going on to a Second Round of Sharing. This is not a time for refuting what someone else has said, but rather an opportunity to respond: how were they affected by what you have heard? Is there a common thread in what was shared? Is there something missing? Did anything you heard have particular meaning for you?

Second round of sharing [c10mins]

I now invite you to speak about your response to what you heard for up to 2 minutes. Once again, no-one is obliged to speak. I will take a few notes for the feedback.

Thank you for your thoughts. Is there anything else anyone wants to say?

[RETURN FROM BREAKOUT] CLOSING COMMENTS + PRAYER [5 mins]

Facilitator: Thank you to everyone for taking part today. The Parish working group will prepare an anonymised summary from all the sessions into a summary for the Diocesan team. This will contribute to a national and then European process, before going to the team at the Vatican preparing the Synod meeting of bishops in Rome in 2023.

At a local level, Father Mark is asking us to create an ongoing local process. One that inspires people within and outside our parish community, with no-one excluded, to create a vision of the future filled with the joy of the Gospel. So he hopes to be able to invite you back for further Listening Church Sessions.

Let us finish with thanks for this time together by saying the Glory Be:

Glory be to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit, as it was in the beginning, is now, and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.

After the meeting

The facilitator should complete the [Feedback Form](https://www.stpeterswinchester.org.uk/feedback-form) from their notes and send it to listening@stpeterswinchester.org.uk.