

The Synodal Church

How do we realise this at St Clements?

1. The Pope's Request

Pope Francis has requested that the Church in today's world should have a Vision of "missionary communion orientated to evangelisation". (Ref CBCEW Web Site: Synodal Journey)

To assist the Church in moving towards this Vision, the Synod Office in Rome, under instruction from Pope Francis, has produced a comprehensive process that assists us to 'walk together' and in which all of us join in the work of discernment and have the freedom to do so.

"Walking together" or to use its other title, "becoming a Synodal Church", and what this means in promoting the Vision, has been the subject of Parish discussions since early March. The results of those discussions have been shared with Parishioners and the Vatican.

The next phase in our Parish "walking together" is for St Clements to determine how it wishes to become "Synodal" in order to realise the Vision within our Parish.

2. Background Information

Attached to this paper are two important reference documents.

The first, appendix 1, is the guide or framework to the Synodal Church.

The second, appendix 2, is a table of the current Activities that the Parish undertakes within our community.

Phase 1 Preparing the Foundations

3. Preparing to Become Synodal –

The essence of being synodal is for us as a Parish to discern what the Holy Spirit is telling us all and to find effective ways of putting that into action.

The feedback from the synodal sessions held by the Parish clearly indicate that there are a number of essential elements that need to be in place for us before preparing the creation of this discerning and action orientated environment.

This "foundation" or preparatory phase in which these essential elements are created represents a voyage of re-discovery for the post C19 pandemic Parish. These essential elements can be summed up as getting to know ourselves. This involves the collection of a *variety of information* the nature of which can be summarised in a series of questions.

(1) Who are we?

This is not just about a listing of all the current Parishioners and other elements of the Catholic Church with which we are involved. It involves understanding the wider Christian and secular communities in which we live and which amongst them we need to seek a deeper relationship.

(2) What are our talents/gifts?

What talents do we have as a Parish community to help build the Kingdom of God on Earth. In addition, what gifts (assets and resources) do we have as a Parish

(3) How are we willing to help?

Post C19, to what extent are we prepared to get involved in applying our talents, resources and using the gifts to develop the synodal Parish and realise the Vision.

(4) How do we communicate within the Parish and with external parties?

There needs to be a review of the way in which the Parish communicates both internally and externally.

4. How do we answer these questions, collect, store and publish the related information?

Establishing the answers to these questions will require a considerable and concentrated effort and a commitment to the idea of a Synodal Church.

I believe a Synodal Action Group needs to be formed to organise and deliver these answers. The membership of this Group should be open to all Parishioners. However, the number involved should not exceed 10/12 and will need to reflect a range of skills and attributes.

If there are more Parishioners volunteering than the 10/12 required, Fr Graham and Julian should determine the most appropriate Parishioners to start the process.

5. Synodal Action Group

Once the Group is established, it will need to determine how it wishes to organise itself, address the questions and parcel out the work that results. It also needs to keep the Parish informed as to what it is doing and the plans that it formulates to address these questions.

However, it should be given a timetable for completing Phase 1 – not to exceed three months.

6. Access to existing Parish Resources

The Group will need access to the existing administrative and other resources of the Parish. This will greatly assist the process of preparing the synodal foundations by using existing information, accessing avenues for collecting more and refining the means for communicating within the Parish.

Phase 2 - Building on the Foundations (Moving Forward)

7. Becoming Synodal

Once Phase 1 is completed, the Group should then address the issues that are set out in the Synodal process (Appendix 1) and determine a series of recommendations that the Parish needs to consider in order to implement these synodal themes.

The recommendations should specifically include how the Parish can build on the existing activities (Appendix 2) and expand upon them in support of this Synodal Process (Communion, Participation, Mission).

These recommendations should be available within 6 months of the end of Phase 1.

Appendix 1 - The Synodal Church Framework (A&B Diocese version)

The Vatican has very helpfully identified provided a guide to what being synodal looks like. It is divided into three main categories;

(1) Communion

a. Journeying Companions

Who makes up our parish community?

Which people or groups are on the edges of our parish community?

Whom do we know who no longer walks with us, those who used to and now we don't see?

How do we engage with those for whom the experience of Covid has prompted thoughts about faith (positive and negative)?

How do we welcome people?

b. Listening

Do we listen to each other?

How do we best do this – people to people, clergy to clergy, bishops to bishops?

How do we deepen our listening, making it a 'a listening of the heart' and not just of the issues and subjects at hand?

How do we ensure that the Church responds to the culture and needs of society?

c. Speaking Out

What is the communication like in our Parish & Diocese?

Do we have the freedom to speak freely, openly, and respectfully?

How am I living out my Christian life?

(2) Participation

a. Celebrating

Do our celebrations in Church inspire a deeper encounter with the risen Lord?

How does my prayer – both individually and in my community – enable my participation in the mission of the Church?

Is the Eucharist the centre of mine, and my community's life?

What flows from the Sunday (or daily) Eucharist, from our communities into the world?

What do I give thanks to God for in prayer? What do I seek from him?

b. Co-responsibility (through Baptism) in the Mission

Do I understand the mission of the Church – in my own life, in the local church, and the universal church?

How do our lives relate to the Great Commission of Jesus? This is found at the end of St Matthew's Gospel: Jesus said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'

What formation do I need to be more committed to the mission of the Church?

What impact is our local community making in the area – do we make a difference?

c. Dialogue in Church and Society

How do we understand dialogue (respectful conversation) between Church and the wider society?

Do we see dialogue as a unique contribution that the Church can make to the world?

How do we address the challenges that dialogue brings about?

How do we begin to dialogue with others?

d. Other Christian Denominations

What is our relationship with other Christian communities?
Do we listen to each other as we journey on our pilgrim way?
What enriches us from other traditions? What do we offer them from ours?

(3) Mission

a. Authority and Participation

How is authority exercised in our communities?
How do we preach the Gospel?
How does our parish community bring people closer to Christ?
What groups or courses are available? What initiatives are in place?
What are the fruits of this collaboration, and what are the obstacles and challenges?

b. Discerning and Deciding

How do we discern together the direction in which the Holy Spirit is leading us?
Is there freedom to exercise my particular gifts in the Church, and participate in this common work of discernment and decision making?
Is my parish community accountable and transparent in decision making? What can help improve this?
Do I support the Bishops and the Priests in arriving at their decisions?

c. Forming Ourselves in Synodality

What additional formation do I need to be a missionary disciple?
Is the local community effective in catechising and passing on the faith?
What tools are necessary for the Church to be truly synodal, listening and journeying together?
How do we continue the listening and dialogue beyond this process so that the Church have a 'lived synodality' as the Holy Father asks?

Appendix 2 – Parish Activities

Activity			
Liturgy/Spiritual	L1 Baptism		
	L2 Communion		
	L3 Confirmation		
	L4 Proclaimers of the Word		
	L5 Eucharistic Ministers		
	L6 Altar Servers		
	L7 Bidding Payers		
	L8 Children's Liturgy		
	L9 Adult Formation		
	L10 Music		
	L11 Choir		
	L12 Churches Together/Ecumenical		
	L13 Repository/Bookstall		
	L14 3 rd Party Charities/2 nd Collections		
	L15 Alpha/Sycamore		
	L16 Master of Ceremonies		
	L17 Sacristy Dept		
	L18 Flowers		
	L19 Prayer Notice Board		
Administration	A1 Finance Chair		
	A2 Accounts		
	A3 Estate Administration		
	A4 Gift Aid		
	A5 200 Club		
	A6 Live Simply		
	A7 Charity Fund Raising		
	A8 Social Fund Raising		
	A9 News Letter		
	A10 Website Manager		
	A11 Registrations		
	A12 Filing		
	A13 Flowers/Garden		
	A14 Bookings/Social Events		
	A15 Coffee Mornings		
	A16 Uniformed Groups		