Feedback Form for Parish Discussion on Synodality

This feedback form brings together responses to the questions on synodality proposed by the diocesan team, gathered during three parish meetings held in Fareham and Portchester. A total of 39 people participated across the three meetings.

The conversations did not always follow the questions directly, as participants appreciated the opportunity to speak openly, listen to one another and reflect together. There was a general sense that the meetings themselves were a positive step. However, this feedback form focuses specifically on the comments and responses relating to the synodality questions.

The discussions provided a valuable opportunity for participants to consider how the parish is developing, where there is a sense of progress, and where further work may still be needed. The responses gathered here therefore offer a snapshot of the parish's experience and reflections on synodality at this point in its journey

QUESTIONS:

1.	**How are we as a Diocese living the reality of synodality?** • **How do I personally contribute to the life and mission of the parish?** As is often the case the majority of those who attended the meetings are involved in various parish ministries; SVP, Welcoming Team, Bereavement Group, Prayer Walks… There was a recognition that everyone has a role, but participation must be realistic.
	How are we as a parish adopting a synodal approach? • **Through our approach to listening** • **Through our approach to welcoming** • **Through how we discern in our decision-making** One of the strongest themes was that there is an urgent need to help the parish community as a whole understand the concept of a synodal Church. There was a feeling that, even among people who have tried to engage with the idea, synodality can be difficult to grasp. If people are to participate meaningfully, they need to understand not just the word "synodality", but what it means for them as parishioners and what difference it makes to the way the Church operates. This raises the question of how synodality can be explained in accessible and practical

	ways. A very positive example of the parish adopting a quasi-synodal approach is the development of the Welcoming Teams across the two parish churches. The initiative began with an open meeting, (not in the Conversations in the Spirit listening style), providing parishioners with an opportunity to share their thoughts, ideas and perspectives. The ministry has continued to evolve through the ongoing contributions and input of those involved. As a result, it has developed into a strong and committed team that greatly enhances the experience of parishioners, both new and established, as well as visitors to our churches. There is a clear openness to new initiatives, such as the introduction of a monthly quiet Mass for those who are neurodivergent. However, the decision-making process through which such initiatives are supported remains relatively centralised. Typically, an idea is first brought to the Parish Priest, who then presents it to the PPC for consideration. The PPC may agree to support the initiative or offer guidance where they feel it may be unfeasible. There remains a sense that new ideas should first be brought to the Parish Priest, rather than emerging directly through wider parish collaboration and discernment. The parish has begun early planning for its 150th Jubilee in 2028. The invitation to everyone to become involved and to offer their time, talents and gifts in suggesting, planning and supporting a programme of celebrations was seen as particularly participative and collaborative. It provided a positive opportunity for parishioners to contribute to the life of the parish and to help shape this significant celebration together. There was recognition that some members of the parish community do not always feel fully included, while others prefer to practise their faith quietly and privately. There was a strong desire to support the Parish Priest and share the burden of responsibility, particularly in recognition of the considerable demands placed upon priests. There is a genuine sense of working together, with parishioners contributing their ideas, gifts and willingness to help. At present, however, this way of working remains largely centred around the Parish Priest, who is the first point of contact for most matters. While there is a strong foundation for synodality, there is perhaps scope for greater subsidiarity by sharing responsibility more widely across the parish community.
2.	**How can this be improved and developed further?** • **Where would I have wanted my parish to be at this time regarding Synodality?** • **How can I contribute to help my parish achieve this goal?** • **How can we contribute to help our parish achieve this goal?** A recurring theme was the desire for a parish where everyone feels that they have a place and a contribution to make, however great or small. This includes both newcomers and those who have been part of the parish for many years. People should feel recognised, listened to and able to find their place. In particular, the enthusiasm, energy and willingness of those new to the Church should be encouraged and accompanied.

	There was also discussion about how to help people recognise their personal responsibility for the life and mission of the parish. This needs to be approached with sensitivity, recognising that people have different circumstances, gifts and capacities. Simply attending Mass may represent a significant commitment for some, particularly those with young families. Personal invitation is likely to be more effective than general appeals, helping people to recognise that their particular gifts, experience and availability are valued. As individuals, we can contribute by being attentive to those around us, being willing to respond when invited, offering our own gifts and encouraging others to recognise what they can contribute. As a parish community, we can create a more welcoming culture of participation, make opportunities clearer and invite people personally into appropriate areas of parish life. There was a sense that we should provide greater opportunities for people to participate, take responsibility and share in the life and mission of the parish. The discussions also highlighted that parish roles and activities are not simply about achieving practical objectives; they can create opportunities for fellowship and help people to build relationships. Taking on a task or becoming involved in a group can provide an opportunity to meet others and “break the ice”. Good communication and transparency are important in supporting this sense of belonging and shared responsibility. Sharing the minutes of PPC meetings and providing greater information about parish finances would help to foster a stronger sense of ‘we’ as a parish community, rather than a perception of hierarchy. Links with the various parish groups already exist, but these could be made more visible and better communicated. Existing groups and ministries could be promoted more clearly through the parish website and other parish communications, with clear information about what they do and who to contact. This would help information, ideas and feedback to flow more easily across the parish and make opportunities for involvement more accessible. This should include opportunities for the development of lay leadership, enabling people to grow in confidence, develop their gifts and take on greater responsibility for aspects of parish life and mission. Alongside these practical considerations, there was strong support for returning to the basics and simplicity of our faith: helping people to grow closer to the Lord and strengthening the foundations from which a genuinely synodal and missionary parish can develop.