



SLN Discerning the Way Forward

November Gatherings

Analysis of Feedback



Background

At the end of October 2023, as the Synod Gathering in Rome ended, and we moved on to another stage of the synodal conversation it seemed an appropriate time for us to discern how the Spirit is prompting us to move forward.

Since our founding in August 2017, we have sought to respond to the promptings of the Spirit in enabling us to fulfil our basic aim:

to enable Scottish laity to come together as disciples of Jesus, and through prayer, dialogue and discernment find 'new ways' of being Church in Scotland in the 21st Century.

To enable all members to get a sense of our journey we invited them to read [November Gathering - Overview of the Scottish Laity Network](#)

In the overview we noted that whilst we are the Scottish Laity Network, we have welcomed many friends from outside Scotland and therefore no matter where people lived we warmly invited them to participate in our process of discernment.

There were two stages:

1 Personal Discernment

We invited people to complete the form [SLN The Way Forward – Personal Discernment](#)

2 Communal Reflection

To discern the communal prompting of the Spirit, we invited people to share their reflection with other members of the SLN and to help facilitate this we offered five sessions for them to participate in an evening of spiritual conversation and discernment.

The sessions were offered from Monday 13th to Friday 17th November and were from 7.00 to 8.30pm UK Time.

Both stages had two focuses:

I Our Journey so Far and II The Way Forward.

For 'Our Journey so Far' we invited people to reflect on how the SLN has supported and empowered them to become a missionary disciple.

For 'The Way Forward' we invited people to reflect on the 'signs of the times', in the world and in the Church, and discern how we go forward in a way that empowers and sustains us to address the issues.

Participation

Personal Discernment

87 people completed the Form.

Communal Reflection

65 people registered and 48 participated.

We also received 6 emails from those who had participated in the sessions and wished to share insights that had arisen after the sessions.

Our Journey so Far

The feedback on our journey so far was very positive and certain key points emerged:

- The opportunity to share with other followers of Jesus in a [Safe](#)¹ and [Spirit Rooted](#) environment that gave people [Hope](#).
- The importance of the [Format](#) of the sessions was affirmed in many ways: above all in always seeking to allow the [Holy Spirit](#) to be the protagonist.
- The issues addressed the key [signs of the times](#).
- Our [Companions](#) shared their insights in a way that was authentic and engaging. They provided meaningful and [Faith Formation](#) that [Empowered](#) participants in their [Discipleship](#).
- The [Global Outreach](#) regarding both companions and participants enabled a true sense of the [Universal Church](#).
- [Collaboration and cooperation with other groups](#) and [sharing what other groups were doing](#) was seen as very positive.
- There was a sense that all the above manifested a genuine [Synodal Way of Being Church](#).
- The [SLN Synodal submissions](#) to the stages leading to the October 23 gathering were seen as important in engaging with the synodal process.
- Our [YouTube Library](#)² being freely available was valued.

¹ Words or phrases in [blue](#) came directly from the feedback.

² SLN YouTube Channel has 389 subscribers and 33,610 views

The Way Forward

Reflecting on the way forward there was an overwhelming commitment to embrace and actualise the vision that Pope Francis has placed at the centre of his pontificate - *the missionary reform of the Church*.

I hope that all communities will devote the necessary effort to advancing along the path of a pastoral and missionary conversion which cannot leave things as they presently are. “Mere administration” can no longer be enough. Throughout the world, let us be “permanently in a state of mission”.³

The need to continue to reflect on the ‘signs of the times’ with a view to discerning the promptings of the Spirit regarding how we should Go Forth, individually and communally as missionary disciples, raised a number of areas that came under the broad headings of the Cry of the Poor and Marginalised, and the Cry of the Earth.

The Cry of the Poor and Marginalised

- Refugees and Migrants
- Women's Rights
- Abuse - Survivors Voices
- LGBT
- The Common Good
- Voices from 'the Global South'.
- Human Rights
- Social Justice
- Voices from the margins
- Peace and the non-violent Jesus

The Cry of the Earth

- The Reality of Climate Change
- The Cry of all who inhabit the earth including animals.
- Eco Spirituality
- Understanding Laudato Si and Laudato Deum
- Refugees and Migrants
- Voices of those being most effected

It is hoped that we will respond to the next phase of the Synod Journey - *How to be a synodal Church in mission?*

There was real concern about the relatively poor response to engaging with the synodal process in parishes and dioceses and a desire to see if we could address that.

Whilst welcoming the wide geographical range of participants how do we retain our Scottish identity?

The need to truly understand, and practice, the methodology of synodality is something that was also emphasised.

³ Evangelii Gaudium 25

Whilst we look forward to the flourishing of a Synodal Missionary Church we need to, in whatever way we can, seek to [be that Church today](#).

Being a Synodal Missionary Church requires us to address a question that has consistently emerged throughout all our journeys – [how do we sustain ourselves](#) when many are directly experiencing the malign ‘scourge of clericalism’ in parishes or dioceses?

Participants in the November Gatherings offered some interlinked ways to sustain us:

- [Small Christian Communities – online or face to face.](#)
- [Collaboration and cooperation with other groups.](#)
- [Exploring creating and celebrating liturgies.](#)
- [Developing Lay leadership.](#)
- [Ecumenical Outreach and Inter-faith dialogue.](#)