**Scottish Laity Network (SLN)**

**SLN November 2026 Gathering Synthesis & Strategic Framework**

**The Scottish Laity Network (SLN) stands as an irreplaceable, distinct lay presence in Scotland.**

Filling the unfulfilled promise of Vatican II, it provides a safe, sacred sanctuary where the struggling faithful and marginalised are seen, heard, nourished, and empowered. This document consolidates the testimonies, emotional experiences, and structural proposals from our recent *Conversations in the Spirit* sessions into a single coherent guide for our future.

Following our recent Gathering, we want to share the rich insights and future proposals that emerged from our morning and afternoon sessions. Together, we reflected on and gave thanks for what SLN has meant to us so far, what we must protect at all costs, and how we are called to grow.

## 1. What We Heard: The Impact of SLN

Our time together brought forward powerful testimonies about how SLN nourishes our "spirits, hearts and heads":

- **Relief in Shared Struggle:** Many expressed the immense joy and comfort of finding like-minded people who speak the same language, discovering they are not alone in wrestling with their faith while still holding the Church as their home.
- **Healing from Institutional Hurt:** We heard from those affected by a patriarchal, institutionalised Church who feel deeply hurt by hierarchy actions. For them, SLN is "fresh air"—a non-institutionalised space where they feel genuinely held, healed and nurtured.

- **Reawakening & Personal Growth:** Being seen and actively listened to—especially in breakout rooms—has removed the fear of speaking openly. This has sparked joy, conversion, and a yearning for liberating theology, inspiring members to research, read, and share their discoveries.

- **Faith in Action:** Members were deeply moved by listening to others who are actively living out the Gospel against the odds, reminding us that faith is not just words, but action.

**2. Our Core Essence (The Non-Negotiables)**

As we evolve, the group was unanimous on the foundational principles that define SLN's identity and must never be lost:

- **A Safe, Sacred Sanctuary:** A rare environment of absolute trust and friendship that serves the struggling faithful, the marginalised, and those wounded by institutional structures.

- **Radical Inclusivity & Visibility:** A nurturing community where laypeople become visible to themselves, each other, and the wider church, affirming that we are all responsible for carrying the Good News.

**3. Strategic Themes & Moving Forward**

Our future discernment and practical steps are organised around three core areas:

**A. Ecclesial Identity & Relating to Reform Groups**

- **Solidarity, Not Solely Campaigner:** While we share deep solidarity with reform and justice groups, SLN is not a traditional single-issue campaigning group. Our distinct calling is to be a **synodal sanctuary**—a pastoral and spiritual home where laypeople are healed, nourished, and empowered to live their discipleship.

- **Embracing Synodal Church:** While remaining non-institutionalised, our ideal is laity and clergy walking together—being truly synodal and being Church.

- **Exercising "Soft Power" & Accountability:** We must recognise the unique presence SLN offers the Scottish Church without becoming an isolated "church within a church." Now that bishops and priests have formally acknowledged SLN's existence, we will explore how to responsibly hold authority to account—including sending feedback to the Bishops' Conference and meeting with representatives from each diocese.

**B. Building a "Community of Communities" & Supporting Groups**

- **Solidarity with Reform & Justice Networks:** Rather than duplicating the work of campaigning bodies, we will build intentional bridges with external groups—including *Root and Branch*, Stolen Lives, *We Are Church*, CCRI, *Pax Christi*, *Justice and Peace*, *SCIAF*, *Catholic Safeguarding*, and religious orders—to share strength, ideas, and face challenges together.

- **Supporting Local & Interest Groups:** Alongside our vital digital spaces, we will actively encourage and provide practical backing for organic, face-to-face local groups across Scotland, as well as focused "domains of interest" groups.

**C. Visibility, Capacity & Enabling Leadership**

- **Enabling Facilitators & Distributed Leadership:** To expand our Core Group sustainably, we will actively build leadership capacity across the network. This means training, pairing, and encouraging new facilitators and Zoom hosts so more members feel confident leading conversations.

- **Inviting Passions, Interests & Skills:** We will invite members to share both the **themes and concerns that energise them** and their **practical talents** (in administration, finance, website management, and technical know-how…), while treating our mailing list as a high-stewardship resource.

- **Making Ourselves Visible:** To reach wider communities and show that "new ways are possible," we will explore publishing articles in outlets like *Open House* and *The Tablet*, issuing press releases, and utilizing targeted advertising.

**Guided by Grace**
Every step we take next is anchored by two principles shared during our reflection:

*"The truth is not possessed but sought together."* — Pope Leo
*"We are always in the process of becoming."*

Thank you to everyone who made our Reflection Day so fruitful, nourishing, and full of joy. We look forward to walking this next chapter of our journey with all of you.

Warmest wishes in prayer, companionship and solidarity.

**The SLN Core Group**