

As you know our Gathering on Saturday 7th November will be framed around the Emmaus Story and during the weeks of October we have invited you to, like those early disciples, 'remember' how Jesus, through the power of the Spirit, has been walking with us.

To help us in our 'remembering' we are sharing with you messages from some of our companions who have accompanied us on our journey since May 2020 and we really value your insights on these messages.

For our gathering to be authentically synodal it requires the listening and participation of all our members. Even if you are not able to participate in the Gathering, either in person or online, your 'promptings of the Spirit' as you listen to the messages are part of what the Spirit is saying to all of us.

No one's feedback will cover all that the Spirit is saying to us, but every word, sentence or paragraph is part of the communal message and will provide the foundation for our discernment.

We therefore warmly invite you to listen to the messages and to share your thoughts.

The messages will be available on our YouTube channel and each week we will upload a new group. There will also be a Feedback Form for the relevant week to enable us to collate the feedback and we invite you to use that form.

Messages from our Companions

Week 3

Messages from: Ben Wilson - SCIAF; Marian Pallister - Pax Christi Scotland; Gerard Swan - QUEST; Mary Varley - Root & Branch.

YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/5E-xxzrYWg0>

Week 3 Feedback Form: <https://forms.gle/j1dRh3ehY1QBi68N6>

Week 2

Messages from: Massimo Faggioli, Diarmuid O'Murchu, Phyllis Zagano, Tom O'Loughlin, Rafael Luciani and Tina Beattie.

YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/2JmiZBk21d8>

Week 2 Feedback Form: <https://forms.gle/RbSQJ7Q4F6Hw2WYq6>

Week 1

Messages from: Omar Haramy, Alison Phipps, Hyab Yohannes and Khawla Badwan.

YouTube Channel: <https://youtu.be/3VSTofmNtaI>

Week 1 Feedback Form: <https://forms.gle/ejyNJtzzmaAKB3xi6>

If you wish to access a PDF of any of the messages they are available on our website <https://www.scottishlaitynetwork.org.uk>

If you have not yet registered for OUR Gathering please do so at <https://forms.gle/cwNfGMRV5UxWf7fp8>. On the form you will see three options for participation: In Person; Online; Unable to attend either in person or online but would like to be involved in the discernment process.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from SCIAF _ Ben Wilson

Hi everyone.

My name is Ben Wilson and I work at SCIAF and I'm grateful to Rab for inviting me along to give a few reflections to the Scottish Laity Network assembly tonight.

Rab shared with me, when asking me to do this short reflection the list of all the different sessions that SLN has put on over many years since 2020 and it was great to see, to look back and to remember so many of those sessions which I was either attending or part of helping to facilitate as SCIAF.

And a really tremendous list of speakers and contributors and participating organisations, you know, I think the ability of SLN over those many years to bring together SCIAF, and Pax Christi, Justice and Peace, the Bishops' Conference and Open House and all the parties, I hope I've not forgotten people, who came together to co-badge those sessions and then to get really good numbers of people coming together on a Tuesday evening to reflect on these issues, often in deepest darkest winter. I think was a really positive thing.

And I think for me looking back in the list it was particularly nice. Just just to think back about what 2020 was like when these sessions began, you know, looking back I saw my good friend Jonathan McAveety who had been Campaigns Officer at SCIAF his was his name was there. I think he was at SCIAF when the sessions first began and I was reflecting on I suppose a bit on just what strange world that was when the sessions began, you know, taking us back to the COVID times. I'm giving this reflection now at my dining room table and this physical space in my own flat reminds me so much of those weird time during COVID and joining events like this, joining zoom calls, but also watching the news and watching the world kind of come apart and so many events sort of simmer up and bubble up over the surface.

So, I remember watching and the Black Lives Matter protests here and I remember the Insurrection on January 6th and the American Election back then. I remember doing a lot of preparation for COP26 here at the table and I suppose, now looking back on it, I'm just reflecting on how much the world sort of has changed, and in some ways it's quite a negative way. You know, I mean, I think now when we can reflect on what we see in our streets, now here in Glasgow, I think anti-racism, unfortunately is at an all-time low, and we see much more open racism on our streets as well as in our Parliament now.

I think, you know, thinking back then we had a Conservative government who had just enshrined Net Zero into law and had a 0.7% Aid Commitment in law to, from a conservative government. And now both those things are certainly under threat and the Aid budgets been absolutely decimated.

But if I think if there's a, I suppose a hopeful message that I feel speaking to the SLN is that the Scottish Laity Network brought together people of good will who cared to build a better Scotland and build a better planet. And that if there is a kind of natural pendulum swinging and that pendulum was maybe swung in the wrong direction at the moment on so many

different things. And I think through our faith through action, we believe that the pendulum can swing back again towards the light, in future and that ultimately the trajectory is towards a more positive, towards a better world for all.

But that doesn't happen by accident that happens through people coming together and taking action as the Scottish Laity Network has done and has helped facilitate for many years.

And if I may, I'll just end with a poem. So Rab suggested ending with the prayer. And I remembered this book that Pope Francis wrote and published during COVID and ends with a poem called Hope and by the author and the the writer Alexis Valdés

When the storm has passed
and the roads are tamed
and we are the survivors
of a collective shipwreck.

With the tearful heart
and our destiny blessed
we will feel joy
simply for being alive .

And we'll give a hug
to the first stranger
and praise our good luck
that we kept a friend.

And then we'll remember
all that we lost
and finally learn
everything we never learned.

And we'll envy no one
for all of us have suffered
and we'll not be idle
but more compassionate.

We'll value more what belongs to all
than what was earned.
We'll be more generous
and much more committed.

We'll understand how fragile
it has to be alive.

We'll sweat empathy
for those still with us and those who are gone.

We'll match the old man
who asked us for the buck in the market
whose name we never knew
who was always at your side.

And maybe the pure old man
was your God in disguise.
But you never asked his name
because you never had the time.

And all will become a miracle.
And all will become a legacy.
And we'll respect the life,
the life we have gained. w

When the storm passes
I ask you Lord, in shame
that you return us better
as you once dreamed us.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Pax Christi Scotland _ Marian Pallister

The BBC are running a series of ads at the moment, which featured a range of celebrities asking, "What has the BBC ever done for me?" which, of course, is a homage to Monty Python and "What did the Romans ever do for me?"

When I received Rab's email asking if I would make this short recording as the Scottish laity Network prepares to discuss its future I felt I should respond with "What has the SLN ever done for me, for PAX Christi Scotland?" Because of course the answers to the BBC and the Romans questions are all positives.

We became involved with SLN in the early days and the range of topics and companions was more than impressive. Those who joined those COVID era webinars were challenged to think ever more deeply about issues of faith and our personal and organisational roles in the church.

Pax Christi Scotland co-badged the 2021 Lenten journey and that became something that Pax Christi Scotland was very pleased to do. Anne Dobbing, a member of the Pax Christi Executive committee, of course, became a member of the SLN Core Group.

I seem to recall SLN being criticised by the church, 'the church', but the event on Synodality was co-badged by the Bishops Conference of Scotland Synodality committee and my own Bishop introduced the companion talking about Synodality.

Pax Christi Scotland has learned much from SLN, shared much with SLN and my prayers are with you hoping that you'll be guided to continue the terrific work you've done already. How else do we reach people throughout Scotland? How else do we raise issues that are otherwise never spoken off, to which we can otherwise get no answers.

I know from Pax Christi Scotland's experience that it's not easy, that fewer people watch these webinars, but if we can get them to register, we can send recordings and that continues the hard work.

What has SLN done for me, for PAX Christi Scotland, other than broadening my mind and increasing my faith in these difficult times.

I can't think!

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from QUEST_ Gerard Swan

Hi all, thanks have so much for the invite to submit a contribution to your assembly.

When we were invited to take part in the Lenten Journey. For us as a charity supporting LGBT+ people of faith we were, I guess, grateful for the invite, perhaps a recognition of the work that we do.

I think it was an important statement to make. It felt like the work that we have done for a long time is valued. And that the way in which we work, which was always 'synodal' - a willingness to walk alongside others was somehow recognized and we were hugely, I guess impressed by the willingness to explore some of the issues that impact on our community, the people that we represent, the people that we are as a member led charity.

So there was a sense of solidarity, and there was a sense of being made visible. As opposed to making ourselves visible. And I think that's really heartening and perhaps speaks to your future as a group,

I think it was an act, like a really good example of synodality in action. I think the session that stands out for me was the listening, sorry than non-recorded session which offered opportunities for us to listen to each other. I think I spoke a little bit about myself, my own journey, as a gay man as part of the wider LGBT+ Community. I spoke a little bit about Quest and people had the opportunity to openly ask questions, openly discuss, openly say things.

And I think that to speaks to the future and the future way forward for our church particularly in the culture that we exist in at the moment and I think all of the sessions where opportunities to plant seeds or to send ripples out in that bigger pond and I think that to speaks to the Journey of Discernment and the way in which we do our work.

There's a lovely Bhagavad-Gita quote from around 200 BC - 'Do your work, do it as well as you possibly can. But do not make the outcome the reason that you do it.' I think Pope Francis was an excellent example of that. He wasn't looking at his endgame, he was looking beyond his life and I suspect he recognised his part in a journey that predated him and that he knew would post date him and did what he was supposed to do without necessarily having his eye on seeing the fruits of his labour.

So that leads me onto possible themes for you to explore. I think the stuff around for me at the moment, which is how do we model, how do we be models? How do we model who we want to see in the world? And what does the world need right now?

How do we reclaim the grey in a world of polarized Yes and No's, black and whites, this and that's? Because it's in the grey that growth exists. And for me, it's a huge learning a couple of years ago, on my own journey, was the notion that there are multiple truths. There are multiple truths, and multiple truths can exist in the same space at the same time even when they appear to be in opposition. And again, that points to the continuation of this Synodal Journey.

I think there's a question about what the challenges are for a post Pandemic population in which each phase experienced ,each generation experienced the pandemic differently. We have a group of teenagers, young adults who missed out all of the rituals of transition. Who, for example, missed out sharing anxiety about my exams today with within a large herd of people who were all experiencing the same thing.

What does that mean for our generations moving forward? What experience do they take forward and how do we address the shared trauma that they experienced? Tied into that I think who are the marginalized and how do we reconnect to people that were told are not human? And perhaps the way in which you approached Quest gives you a pointer to some of the content, some of the strands of the work that lies ahead. There's something for me about how we illuminate and explore kindly the difference of opinions and beliefs that exist amongst us.

And I think there's also something about the laity growing into their sense of ministry God-given ministry, their place at the table, which was never a clerics gift, it's a gift from God, it's an entitlement. And if we believe that that carries with it great responsibility. It also carries with it defined authority and I distinguish authority from power. And how do we learn to use our ministry?

But not with the models that we've seen in the past, those models, don't work. And some of us feel as if we are victims of those models. So those are models aren't the ones that we want to to use to take us forward.

I'm going to stop there.

SLN November 2026 Gathering

Message from Root & Branch _ Mary Varley

Root and Branch sends our sincere thanks to our Scottish Laity friends.

You're one of the two groups explicitly working for reform in the Catholic church in the United Kingdom. Working with you on Stolen Lives, our series about the experiences of clerical abuse survivors gave us in Root and Branch a great deal. It gave us solidarity, friendship and hope as well as a really welcome sharing of collective resources.

Friends, your model an exploration of spirit-led spiritualities alongside being willing to work with the church hierarchy, church groups, as well as those that are challenging the institutional Church. What you've achieved will have borne fruit for many, many people, even if you might never know exactly what and how, you'll have given hope and support to many, and your sessions have been missed. So thank you.

So where might you go from here? I keep coming back to the fact that there are as well as Catholic Women's Ordination only to reform groups in the United Kingdom and you're one of them. What a loss it would be for Scotland and beyond if a way forward that's manageable for those of you involved in doing the heavy lifting isn't found.

So looking forward, huge appreciation for your bravery, in asking the difficult questions.

I need to say that. I find myself somewhat confused.

I know that there are many paths for those of us who want to act justly, to love mercy and to walk humbly with our God. And please know you aren't alone in asking the difficult questions, where should reform movements direct their energy? Should it be focusing on building a gospel based alternative or struggling to combat injustice and exclusion in the church or the really challenging job of doing both things at the same time?

There are many difficult choices to be made. Give them the Synodality appears to me to be a damp squib in the United Kingdom at any rate.

Is that a fruitful path? I just don't know.

Whatever you decide to do. Please keep on providing a safe space where people can share what's in their hearts and carry on listening deeply to each other. My Hope and prayer would be that some other people come forward to join when the small core team in taking

Scottish Laity Network forward in what every direction you decide.

Please know that you will have the support of your friends in Root and Branch.

I'm sorry that I can't be with you in November, but my thoughts and my prayers will be with you that day.