



Diocese of Plymouth 'Walking Together': Facilitator listening Guide

'Dear brothers and sisters, have a good journey! May we be open to the Holy Spirit's surprises, the grace of encounter, reciprocal listening and discernment, joyfully convinced that, even as we seek the Lord, He always comes with His love to meet us first.' Pope Francis.

This guide offers a detailed outline for the parish listening session(s). Words in italics provide a script for the facilitator to follow. The role of the facilitator is to track the time devoted to each section, provide time updates, and move the group through the conversations in a timely way.

This is a suggested schedule for a 1.5-hour period for a group of 6-8 people. (Larger groups can be subdivided into smaller groups). Parishes are completely free to create their own approach. Each group will need to have a scribe to note the key reflections.

1. Welcome the participants and invite people to introduce each other. Begin with the opening prayer for the theme you are introducing (provided in the Advent Resources)
2. Introduce or appoint someone to take notes (2 minutes)
3. Ask for a volunteer as a timekeeper (2 minutes)
4. Describe the process. (5 minutes).

Suggested introduction to the process

- *All are welcome*

- *The Spirit of the Risen Lord guides us to recognise Jesus among us, with us, on the road, walking with us as we walk together. This is to be for us, a renewing, re-energizing, inspiring 'walking together' which, by the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will deepen our personal love for Jesus, deepen our sense of His Risen presence among us, and at the same time inspire, encourage, and energise us to 'go forth' so as to invite others to walk with us.*

- *this is a spiritual process and one in which we are asked to listen to the Holy Spirit and to each other*

- *the most important element of this process is that we are journeying together – that is an outcome in itself – to develop a culture in our Diocese of listening and walking together to share the Good News*

- *this is a genuine listening process not a debate or forum – over the next hour or so everyone will have the opportunity to speak and be heard although we will need to ask you to keep to some time limits in order to hear from everyone*

- *we will be asking people to listen to each other without responding to enable active listening of what others are called to share*

- *the facilitator is not here to answer questions nor resolve any issues which may emerge but to enable people to feel comfortable to share their thoughts and to help record those thoughts and themes which may emerge for feedback into the Synodal process.*



- the feedback will be captured anonymously and will form part of the Diocesan response to the local listening phase of our Diocesan 'Walking Together'.

5. Invite different people to read out the scripture readings and reflections from the Advent guide. Groups may wish to read through the scripture twice and invite people to name a word or phrase which has stood out to them.

6. Invite a period of personal prayer (light a candle if you wish). This could be up to 10-15 minutes if a group wishes.

7. The facilitator reads out the key theme and questions from the Advent Guide and invites everyone to share their thoughts.

First round of sharing on the key questions (30-40 minutes)

Each person has 3 minutes to speak. The focus is on listening to others, rather than simply thinking about what you want to say. No-one should respond to a particular contribution. Participants are asked to open their heart and mind to listen to one another. Between each person, there will be a 30 second pause to reflect on what was said. The facilitator can nominate someone to start, then participants can share one after the other. No one is obliged to speak.

8. Break (10 minutes)

9. Second round of sharing (30 minutes)

No one is obliged to speak, and participants speak spontaneously in any order. However, each person can only share once in this second round. This is not a time for discussing or refuting what someone else says, but an opportunity to ask questions like:

§ How were you affected by what you heard?

§ Is there a common thread in what was shared?

§ Is there something missing?

§ Did anything said have particular meaning for you? ¹

This second round is where the conversation becomes an experience of shared discernment and where some reflections for feedback might emerge. The group is not required to agree on any particular points but to be open listeners.

10. Please thank people for their contribution. Please remind people that the next step will be for the facilitator/scribe to share the group's reflections with the Synodal working group. But this process doesn't end there. This listening process will become part of a longer term shift in the way we walk together as Christians and helps us grow in faith as individuals and as a Church. The feedback will be shared and reflected on at parish, Deanery and Diocesan level with emerging themes shared with the national Synodal working group.

11. Closing prayer (The Adsumus).

¹ <https://www.synod.va/content/dam/synod/document/common/resources/The-Spiritual-Conversion.pdf>



For the 2021-2023 Synod, the Holy Father is proposing that the entire People of God pray this simplified version of the Adsumus.

We stand before You, Holy Spirit, as we gather together in Your name.

With You alone to guide us, make Yourself at home in our hearts;

Teach us the way we must go and how we are to pursue it.

We are weak and sinful; do not let us promote disorder.

Do not let ignorance lead us down the wrong path nor partiality influence our actions.

Let us find in You our unity so that we may journey together to eternal life and not stray from the way of truth and what is right.

All this we ask of You, who are at work in every place and time, in the communion of the Father and the Son, forever and ever.

Amen.