



# **Parish of Our Lady of Lourdes, Harpenden**

## *Considerations raised by the Laity in our Synodal Conversations*

Submission to the Diocese of Westminster and Parish Council  
January 2022



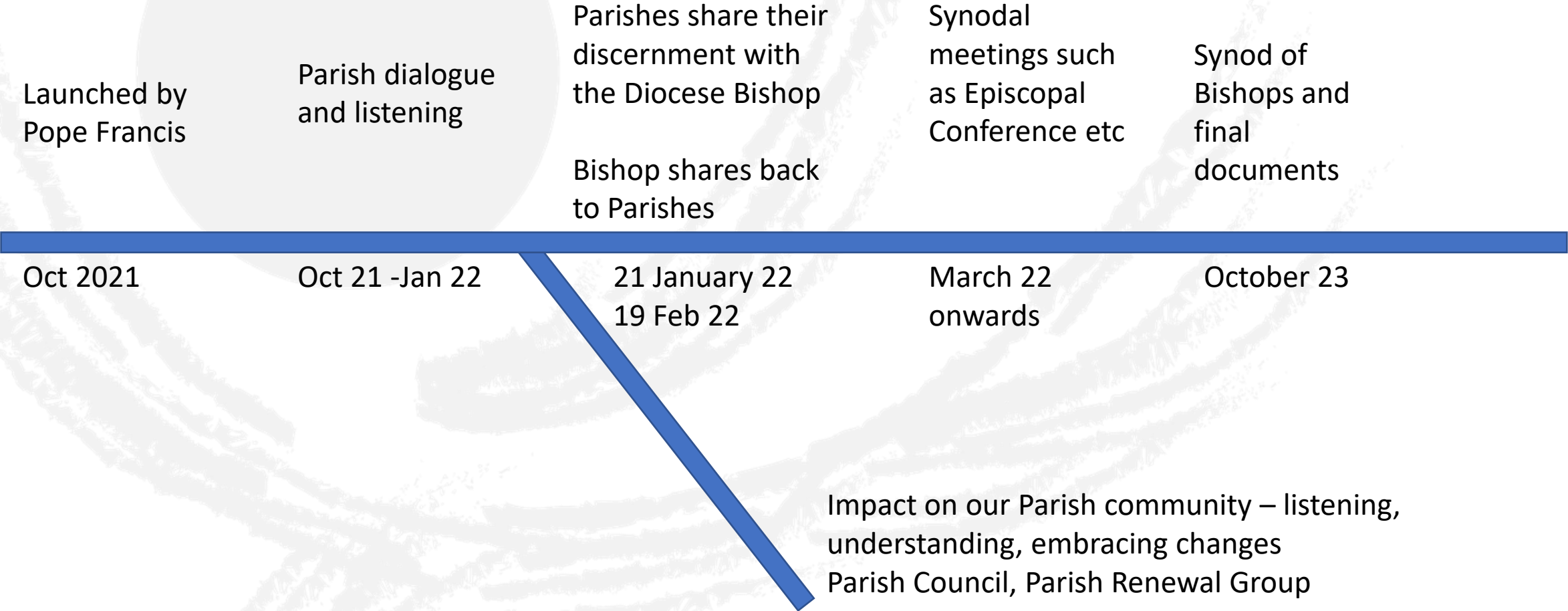
# What is the Synodal Pathway?

1. **Giving Lay people (us!) a voice in the shaping of the Church**
2. **Regenerating relationships among members of our Church communities**
3. **Reaching out to those who are disengaged from the Church for whatever reason, and understanding their perspectives**

- *The Synod is a participative and inclusive process of listening and discerning that offers everyone—within and beyond the worshipping Catholic community—the opportunity to express themselves, to be heard and to contribute to how the People of God can better ‘journey together’.*
- *It is intended to inspire people to dream about the Church we are called to be, to learn from one another, to realise the gifts in each and every person, to bind up wounds, to renew relationships and build bridges, to warm hearts and restore strength for our common mission.*



# What is the Synodal process



# Together, listening to the Holy Spirit, let us be led by God

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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.



## Who took part and the process

### **What worked...**

- Advertised in mass and in St Dominic's school
- 3 group meetings (2 in person, 1 online)
- 2 reflection groups
- Handful of one on ones or small groups
- Inputs from at least 50 persons, most regular church goers, ages 30-80, a few disengaged
- Natural fit with the Parish Renewal Group and Parish Council— resurface community views and pass on to relaunched Renewal initiative
- Participants appreciated the process – experience felt connecting and uplifting

### **What didn't...**

- Didn't go the extra (few) miles needed to reach many of those disengaged
- Youth meeting didn't happen – covid and exams
- Diocesan guide felt restrictive and 'managing' to participants. People had things they wanted to contribute – revised and simple format (good things, things to improve) felt more in tune with community



# Strong desire for greater connection with each other and to be part of the Catholic community

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- We want to be part of a community together
- We love that the Church exists around the world and the mass is the same everywhere – feel at home wherever in the world
- Church is uniquely where we connect with others on the deep issues of the world
- We love the stability of the Church and the sense of belonging it gives us
- It gives us a connection to others in our community beyond our normal lives
- It provides vital support and consolation when we are most in need



To be an inclusive, global Catholic community needs us to be tolerant and embrace diversity – the world is too big and has changed too much for a ‘one size must fit’ approach.

Women must have an equal role.

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- **We want to welcome and be inclusive – but the Church is not that way today**
  - If the Church is too ‘black and white’ on social (or political) issues it will exclude – we need to understand there are grey areas but our love and connection with one another is greater and we can live as a community together and speak freely about our differing views
  - If our children tell us they are LGBTQI+ then today they have no place in our Church – they should be included
  - Women should have an equal role in the Church - children today are raised in equality, this is the future. Update the literature – full of derogatory readings about women and language that upsets half the congregation
  - Too much emphasis on sex, sin and fear of God – far out of step with our God of compassion, how new generations live and a healthy approach to sex

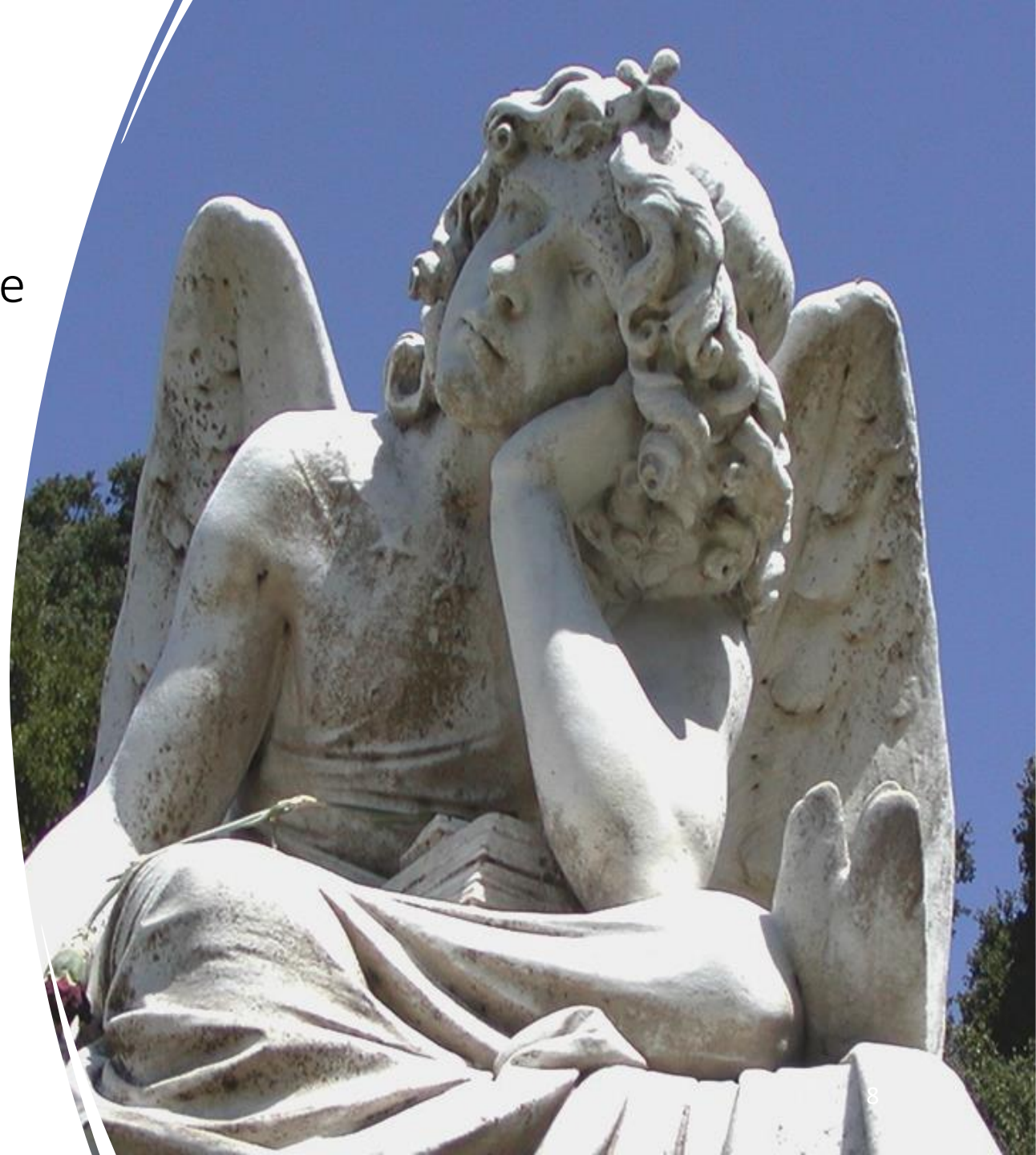
*Some of the Pharisees said, ‘Why are you doing something that is forbidden on the sabbath day?’ Jesus answered them, ‘So you have not read what David did when he and his followers were hungry – how he went into the house of God, took the loaves of offering and ate them and gave them to his followers, loaves which only the priests are allowed to eat?’ And he said to them, ‘The Son of Man is master of the sabbath.’”*

**“Clergy remember: The people as a whole are guardians of the truth because where there is the Church there is the Spirit (Cat 797) and the Spirit leads us to the truth (Jn 16.13). The role of the clergy is to teach it (Cat 77)”**

In our community we can do more to connect with adults in their spiritual formation, as well as help them to be active forces of good in the wider community

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- There are few opportunities for adults to grow in spirituality – can there be a paid position to do this in our Parish? Can adult catechesis be part of mass on a regular basis?
- **The mass experience is not engaging – the words are good but they do not inspire.** This is the main moment for adults reflect on the word of God – it is critical. Can we have guest speakers? Try different formats – different music, sometimes less music, reconciliation services, services aimed at youth?
- We do not make the most of opportunities to build lasting community ties – please can we have coffee after every mass; when we do have connections (first communion, confirmation, baptism, wedding, funeral) it is used to preach rules not to evangelise in a way that connects
- We should do more to have our voices heard and serve those in need – **can the Church community support youth and adults to be active in service?**





There is a strong focus on key moments in children's life – but we can do more to build a community that welcomes and retains connection with children and their families, and youth

Youth access the world in a very different way – change is coming

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- Most of the family experience comes from St Dominic school – this excludes those in different schools
- Can we build more into the First Communion and Confirmation experiences? Follow the cohort and have periodic reconnection
- **Make the most of those moments to build community, connect with love and inspiration – not be off putting**
- Give the youth a role working in the community – if they have a role they will stay connected
- Youth worker and a youth club would be very welcome
- Be creative and innovative, have ambition for a new future – the world has moved fast. Ignatian yoga



The Church must overcome its struggles and limiting hierarchy, to break through as a paragon of good in the world

Are you listening ? We are waiting

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- **The Church is a closed, insular hierarchy that does not seriously take into account the views of the laity and excludes women and LGBTQI+ . Priests are not accountable. Clericalism smacks of Pharisaic attitudes that Jesus condemned**
- Hopefully the Synod starts to change this – expectations are now raised, but many are sceptical, some are very angry
- There are great wounds related to child and other types of abuse – even in our own Parish we have been affected but had no community moments to process this and heal together. The Church must always, unrelentingly, think of the survivors first
- Have the hard conversations and people will come back. End the culture of secrecy – the public is too sophisticated for this now
- Priests are reducing, use them wisely – let's embrace women and married people in Parish roles





# We still care, we want to be connected, we want the Church to thrive

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- We hear a lot about the Church being in decline, but the Synod shows we care and the Church cares
- There is so much good in the Church and what it does, so much people don't see, isn't communicated and people do not realise exists
- We want to keep talking and keep connected – in fact we really enjoy it
- **Let's celebrate our differences, let's keep speaking to each other on these matters, let's change what we can, let's pray the Church listens and responds**



## Next steps:

Share this write up with the parish in mass and on website  
Share the full notes with the Parish Council  
*Parish Council to respond (you said, we did...)*

Submit this write up to Diocese  
*Diocese to respond*

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