

For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission

New Zealand Discernment on the Document for Continental Stage



New Zealand Catholic Bishops Conference
Te Huinga o ngā Pīhopa Katorika o Aotearoa

Synthesis of responses to *Enlarge the Space of Your Tent*,
the Document for the Continental Stage
December 2022

“For a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission” Discernment on the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS)

Note: Italicised quotes are from the groups who participated.

The Church in Aotearoa New Zealand

1. There are almost half a million Catholic-affiliated people living in Aotearoa New Zealand, 10% of the total population. The Catholic Church is the largest Christian denomination and largest faith group.
2. The population of New Zealand is increasingly diverse, with a large migrant population. Māori, the indigenous population, make up 16.5% of people, with the Asian population 15.1% and Pacific peoples 8.1%.
3. New Zealand is an increasingly secular country, in the last Census undertaken in 2018, almost half of all people in New Zealand stated they had no religion (48.6%), versus 34.6% in 2006.
4. There are six dioceses in New Zealand. The Archdiocese of Wellington is the metropolitan diocese. The Catholic Church in New Zealand also consists of many Catholic religious orders and lay organisations, some that are undertaking significant ministry in New Zealand. There is a strong network of Catholic schools.
5. A Royal Commission of Inquiry into Abuse in State and Faith-based Care was established in 2018 by the government. An interim report with recommendations was released by the Commission in late 2021, and a final report with recommendations to the Governor-General is due in June 2023. The Catholic Church, led by the Bishops and Congregational Leaders, has been heavily involved with the Commission. The abuse crisis has affected the credibility of the Church.

The synod process in Aotearoa New Zealand

6. The diocesan phase of the synod process took place in Aotearoa New Zealand between October 2021 and July 2022, involving parishes, schools, dioceses, organisations and religious congregations, and individual and group contributions online. All dioceses were affected by the pandemic, with the Diocese of Auckland having Covid-19 restrictions on gathering during several months of the diocesan phase. The local New Zealand process ended with the National Synod Hui held in Wellington on 2 July 2022, after which the New Zealand Bishops Conference sent the national synthesis to the Synod Office by 15 August as requested.
7. Reflection on the Document for the Continental Stage (DCS) “Enlarge the Space of your Tent” took place in Aotearoa New Zealand between 28 October and 5 December 2022. Diocesan and national groups were invited by the bishops to respond to the document, using the Spiritual Conversation process. Responses were received from 37 groups, including the bishops.

8. Groups who participated included Diocesan Pastoral Councils, diocesan Councils of Priests, Commissions for Ecology Justice and Peace, Diocesan administration boards, Catholic Social Services, diocesan staff groups, Young Adults and diocesan youth groups, university students groups, the NZCBC Council for Young People, ethnic community leaders, Tongan chaplaincy leaders, prison chaplains, Catholic Women's League, Focolare Movement, formation staff of Holy Cross Seminary, SMSM Sisters, Presentation Sisters, National Office for Professional Standards, the New Zealand Catholic Education office, Te Kupenga (Catholic tertiary education institution), Te Rōpū Māori (NZCBC Māori advisory group), the Tribunal of the Catholic Church for New Zealand, and some groups of people with varied backgrounds.

9. The short timeframe for the response to the DCS inevitably imposed limits on participation but given the circumstances we are satisfied with the number of groups which took part and their diversity.

The experience of synodality

10. There was great gratitude for the process, being able to speak freely and to be listened to. "Young and old, women and men, so glad to have this chance - they must be heard." The participation of so many people was commented on by many.

11. Participants noted that listening is a powerful tool, a means of welcome, healing, and transformation. Many responding groups mentioned that they experienced their Spiritual Conversation as a fruitful and life-affirming process.

12. The process of prayerful listening has generated a sense of something new happening in the Church, a new way of thinking and doing that is powerful. "Listening and discernment are the bedrock of a new way of being church". For many people the whole process has been remarkable, a Vatican Council moment that has brought the People of God together to listen and to speak. People have spoken freely about the realities of their lives and their experience of Church.

13. During the process people recognised the presence of the Holy Spirit in the joy and freedom they experienced and in the common ground they found. The kindness and patience of others as they listened, the gentleness of the process and the peace flowing from listening and speaking were all seen as the work of the Holy Spirit. Participants also sensed the Holy Spirit in the DCS: "Parish, diocese, country, continent – we can hear the voice of the Holy Spirit at each stage, even though there is no pre-set roadmap. A beautiful hope-filled document. The challenge is to apply it, live it, flesh it out". They found the emergence of clear themes across the world amazing, and evidence of the Holy Spirit at work in the Church. The experience with the DCS has given many people a global perspective of the Church which they did not have before, which has induced a sense of wonder at the diversity and breadth of the Church to which we belong.

14. There were some fears and cautions expressed during the process. People are waiting to see if their voices have been heard, or if they will be lost as the process reaches the Rome Assemblies. Some are anxious and even angry about people talking about change, and see the synodal process as potentially "wounding the Church". One group felt that language such as

‘Enlarge your Tent’ is very similar to rhetoric used in political campaigning in the USA and that terms such as ‘diversity, inclusivity, transparency’ are politically charged.

15. The synodal process of listening, discerning and respecting each person and their views is a powerful process. Most people see synodality as the way to move forward in their own spiritual journey and collectively, and agree with the DCS: “In fact, it is the way of being Church. The Holy Spirit is asking us to be synodal (DCS 3)”.

Question 1

“After having read and prayed with the DCS, which insights resonate most strongly with the lived experiences and realities of the Church in your continent? Which experiences are new, or illuminating to you?”

Inclusion and the Tent

16. The image of the Tent inspired many groups, who explored the explanation in the DCS and took it further in their own circumstances. The Tent is the dwelling for a pilgrim people, moveable, adaptable, enlargeable, held in tension but not rigid. It is not a dwelling with levels within it, everyone is at the same level, even if they might have different tasks in maintaining and managing the Tent and serving one another.

17. The Tent was compared to the *fale*, a structure found in many cultures and communities in Oceania. The *fale* is the centre of focus for communal activities, the spiritual home for the community. It has open sides for cooling in the hot climates of Oceania. If the Tent of the DCS has open sides then, like the *fale*, it will be a place with multiple points where people can enter, and its openness will be welcoming and non-exclusionary. This openness means there is no door where entry to the community can be controlled.

18. One group spoke of the Tent as a symbol of the Church being *tūrangawaewae* - a place where we feel connected, empowered and accepted. There are many concerns about ‘gatekeepers’ in the Church who exclude and judge who can enter.

19. What happens within a Tent with open sides is very visible, and people spoke about their desire that those who are not baptised will be able to see the Church as a family where “everyone has a place in the family, no one is insignificant. All are welcomed into the family, and we create an environment for them in which they feel at home and can grow”, and as scripture says, “people will say ‘see how they love one another’ (1 Peter 1:22-23).

20. The tent was also seen as bringing us close to the earth, and as the tent is moved, there is a need for “fruitful ground as opposed to poisoned ground” and to “respect the earth and the environment within which we assemble the Tent”.

21. In enlarging the Tent there will be tension as “we provide space for those who don’t feel included, don’t feel comfortable, to speak, and we need to listen. We need to be prepared to hear some uncomfortable, disturbing things. We need to acknowledge there will be tension, but this tension is needed to keep the Tent standing. To listen to and through the tension to move forward”. This is a Tent for all, not just for the perfect.

22. The Tent is a metaphor for becoming communities where all are included – people of all cultural backgrounds, indigenous peoples, people of all ages. This means more than simply telling people they can be part of the Tent community; it means engaging with communities as they express their needs and priorities, and learning to embrace and be comfortable with diversity.

23. An insight that was noted in the responses about inclusion and the Tent is that the Synod documents are using a world map that does not show Aotearoa New Zealand or most of Oceania, although the other continents appear in full.

The Global Church

24. The emergence of such clear themes around the world was described as “*breath-taking*”. Many Catholics understand the principle of subsidiarity, which seeks to solve problems on a local level, but the DCS was a profound reminder of the global nature of the Church and that this brings responsibilities, especially that of solidarity: “We are part of wider humanity, a bigger picture, and we are to be advocates for those people who need help – poverty, war, climate change, migration, sexism and misogyny, and environmental degradation (eg in our own region sea level rise). These people are exactly who Jesus would seek out”.

25. This awareness of the situation of the Catholics in other parts of the world has been eye-opening and humbling: “I belong to an experience of Church that is privileged. Our complaints are those of privileged people – what we think is earth-shattering is put into perspective by this universal document. I can hear the deep human concerns in society.”

26. The people have spoken across the world - young and old, women and men, have expressed their joy at having this chance to speak and be heard. The DCS captures their voices and helps leaders to hear and understand their people, and people across the world to hear and understand one another. What has been said “is not an expression of disloyalty but rather a flowering and growing despite constraints and restrictions”.

27. The DCS reminds us that we are all part of a universal church, a very big and culturally diverse Church. Lifting our eyes from our local scene to the global reveals the beauty of this diversity and broadens our understanding of Church beyond our often-small local issues: “The Church is big enough to encompass all the diversity – the biggest strength and the biggest weakness. We often tend to think that our way is the only way. We cannot see the goodness and beauty in other parts of the Church. This fractures the Body of Christ. Whānau (extended family) look at the Church and they say nah, it’s not for me. They cannot see God reflected in the Church”.

28. The global response has also been a reminder that the Church is wounded, and that the wounds are being experienced globally. The scandal and the legacy of abuse by members of the clergy and religious orders is an “open wound”, and it is felt at an individual level by the faithful as well as at an institutional level. For those countries such as Australia and New Zealand which have experienced intense government-mandated scrutiny of the abuse in their local Church the wounds are very fresh and propel us towards deep change, some of which cannot be easily accomplished without the discernment and cooperation of the global Church.

29. The DCS expresses honestly the pain and woundedness of the Body of Christ across the world, but it also generates hope and strength for reconciliation and healing. In the process of prayerful listening and of being able to speak without judgment there is a sense of a new thing happening, a sense that this takes us beyond the issues of clericalism and abuse, beyond to a welcoming Church in which we recognise our interconnectedness and interdependence. Rather than being trapped in an unchanging system, we are called to change, a necessary dying so the new can emerge. Amid the crisis of clerical sex abuse, “we are forced to recognise and enter this process of dying for the new to arise. We need to enter the process as Pope Francis does, face up to differences and hurts and move beyond institutional norms in our way of relating”.

The synodal process

30. Many groups said that they experienced Spiritual Conversation as a fruitful and life-affirming process in which all felt respected and listened to. There is a strong desire that the Church continue to be synodal, listening to all. “The synodal process of listening, discerning and respecting each person and their views, is a very significant and powerful process for us all. It is an avenue for us to move forward, in our own spiritual journey, in our ministries, in our meetings.” It was also noted that Spiritual Conversation is just one form of discernment and that we need to understand and be open to other forms.

31. This process has allowed people to voice their ideas and feel listened to without being judged, humiliated or silenced. It has allowed people to speak out of their experience, their lived reality, and how that intersects with their faith and with Church teaching. The process was described as “remarkable – a kind of Vatican Council moment that has brought all the People of God together to listen and to speak. This is the Church speaking”.

32. Fear and caution have been expressed at times during the synodal process. Some fear the process itself and have chosen not to engage, some fear that nothing will come from the process and from what they have shared, some find it hard to trust the process and others. “Trust cannot be assumed. Trust is needed to be built to continue on this synodal journey. Trust in one another, in those in leadership, in the synodal process, in decision-making processes and in the Church as an institution”.

33. The deep listening of the synodality process requires letting go, asking the Holy Spirit to lead. “It takes courage to go somewhere rather than be held back by fear. We expand the Tent, but we don’t let the Tent be blown away. We open and expand but we don’t lose our identity.”

34. There was also a caution about who is invited into the synodal process and who actually participates. The same people who are already strongly committed may be taking part enthusiastically in the conversations. There are people missing from the process who may feel it is not for them, such as young people, but there may be others who feel unwelcome because of past experiences with those “in power” in the parish or diocese.

35. These issues can be addressed as we become more familiar with thinking about practical inclusivity, and we must not let this new way of synodality go or be undermined. “It is

important to hang in with the process, in spite of particular or general criticism or apathy. Synodality must continue to be emphasised at both the heart and peripheries of the Church.”

Baptism

36. Much was said about Baptism and it was often evident that people are gaining a deeper appreciation of the sacrament, not just as their entry point to the Church, but as the basis of their participation in ministry and mission. The true nature of communion and participation is becoming more evident to people, as expressed in “Towards a Spirituality for Synodality”: “Communion as participation in the Divine Life is the grounding reality of all Christian life and, therefore, of a synodal Church. This means that communion and participation can never be reduced to a sociological phenomenon, nor can it be sustained by institutional structures alone.” This understanding was one of the fruits of Vatican II but has been new learning for many people.

37. The staff of the national seminary explained the connections between synodality, Baptism and Vatican II: “Synodality presents us with a new model of Church in accord with the teaching of Vatican II, the Church as the People of God united through the sacrament of Baptism. Vatican II was undermined by structures that did not facilitate this new model, particularly the clerical structure highlighting the separation of clergy from the rest of the baptized”.

38. There is a yearning for the acceptance that all the baptised are called to full, active and equal participation in Church. Respondents considered that in light of the material of the Continental phase and their Spiritual Conversations that the Church needed to “explore solutions to counter systemic issues regarding leadership which currently prohibit the faithful from living their baptismal call to active participation”. This would see an enhanced role for the laity, and priests and laity understanding and appreciating each other’s baptism and vocation, which requires formation for both laity and priests.

39. There was an emphasis on the “dignity of the baptismal call” which requires greater participation by lay people in co-responsible and collaborative leadership and decision-making, in pastoral ministry and in mission. Women religious spoke about how the gift of consecrated religious life in the Church is rooted in a shared Baptism, living a specific gospel spirituality for mission.

40. There were questions about the role of lay pastoral ministers in the administration of some sacraments in restricted environments such as prisons. At the same time it was noted that while we all have our baptismal calling, certain people will still have particular roles in serving the community, as we all have different gifts.

Women

41. The situation of women in the Church resonated deeply in Aotearoa New Zealand, despite women being present (and encouraged to be present) in all roles in the Church which do not require ordination. The strength of feeling was marked, with the absence of women in conversations affecting the life of the Church being a common concern, along with it being noted that they are usually the minority in decision-making and governance roles. Some

attributed this to the power imbalance between ordained clergy and lay people, dictated by canon law, which is a major obstacle for women. However one group of young lay women said that a lack of equality for women in the Church was not their experience as they are equal and play a unique role in the Church. A group of priests also said their experience is that women are present and influential in parish bodies and ministries, although they recognised this may not be the case in other countries.

42. In this phase, unlike the local phase of the synod, there was no request for the consideration of ordination of women as priests, although one group asked for their ordination as deacons. There was a strong emphasis on using the gifts and experience of women in discerning and providing advice, guidance and challenge in decision-making beyond the managerial and parish roles many women now occupy, involving them in decision-making at governance level in a collaborative and co-responsible way. This includes a desire “that Catholic women are valued first and foremost as baptised and equal members of the People of God” and that they are involved in a plurality of roles and ministries (including some types of sacramental ministry). There were questions about why both women and lay men are excluded from key roles in the Tribunal given that the sacrament of marriage “belongs” to lay people. There were also calls (including from priests) for women to be involved in the pre-seminary and ongoing assessment and formation of candidates for priesthood.

43. Both men and women responded strongly to the use of women as “cheap labour” in parishes, women being ostracised for offences for which men are forgiven (in other countries but not unknown in Aotearoa New Zealand), male domination of Church teaching on sexuality (with LBGTQIA+ issues and contraception being particularly sore points), and the difficulties faced by Catholic women who are divorced and remarried especially where they have been the subject of domestic violence.

Young people

44. The global nature of the problem with young people’s participation in the Church was deeply troubling to many, although there was a sense of solidarity and a slight relief in finding out that the problem is global, not just local.

45. This is a source of great anguish which was threaded through many submissions, and a profound worry for the future: “We are only ever one generation from dying. It only takes one generation to say NO. The Church is fragile”.

46. Our young people are not without faith, but their world and their lives do not seem to fit with the Church. Speaking about young Māori, one group said: “People are changing, but is the Church changing with the people? Will we survive as Church? We feel this burden sitting heavily on our shoulders. Our young people – God is on their heart but they don’t feel drawn to the Church...They have their prayer groups in their whares (houses).”

47. The response of the national youth council to the DCS was blunt:

“The DCS is largely inaccessible to young people, in terms of language, process, and practical application. New terms such as, ‘dialogical sharing’, ‘fraternal conviviality’, and the Eucharist as a ‘generative tension’, are not accessible to young people and arguably the everyday

Catholics in Aotearoa New Zealand. As opposed to providing clarity and insightful observations, the experience of reading the DCS repeatedly left one asking: What does this mean? What does this look like in practice?' The failure of the DCS to define terms gives rise to mental 'tension', more accurately described as confusion."

48. Various reasons were advanced for the absence of young people:

"Our young people are looking for authenticity and truth."

"Better catechism explaining Church teaching is needed for the young". [Young Adults].

"Youth can feel that they are inside the Tent but kind of ignored, they are invisible."

"Some young who have left the Church do not feel able to return due to fear of being judged or not fitting in."

49. Do we understand their issues? Young people are facing a world in which change to the climate which they will experience in their lifetime is a source of anxiety. Submissions at this stage of the synodal process and earlier show that there are other groups who are also concerned about the climate crisis. Pope Francis has been vigorous in drawing attention to this great danger to our common home. Do our young people detect a lack of interest in this issue in their local Church? LBGTQIA+ issues are also of intense interest to young people, who have to work through them at a personal level and among their friends. Submissions have indicated that the Church's teaching on this and other aspects of sexuality are a major barrier for many young people in maintaining their connection to the Church.,

50. Catholic schools in Aotearoa New Zealand work hard to be vibrant places where faith is lived and where leadership is lay and inclusive. They often struggle to connect young people, their families and teachers to faith and the Church's practices and traditions. For these people the school is the interface with the Church. How we keep young people and their families connected to the Church once the young people leave school is of great concern.

Question 2

"After having read and prayed with the DCS, what substantial tensions or divergences emerge as particularly important in your continent's perspective? Consequently, what are the questions or issues that should be addressed and considered in the next steps of the process?"

Change

51. "Dying and rising" appeared in a number of submissions. Rather than being trapped in an unchanging system we are called to change, and we should not be afraid of it: "Out on the ocean, as a surfer you can feel tiny. The ocean is constantly changing around you. It's all on the move, ongoing change. To survive and live, we need to change. The audaciousness of Pope Francis to start this process!"

52. People expressed their sense that their Church is dying, but they see that as part of its life. “We are meant to die and rise, die and rise. This is the cycle of the life of Christ in us. Some things are brought to death so that other things may rise. We need to let go, and go with the dying and the rising. This is what this moment is asking of us.”

53. The synodal process has raised many questions about the Church’s structure and governance, and even questions about its teaching (or in some cases the application of its teaching). Those who see a dying and rising cycle as being normal for the Church want to engage with these questions, which have long been unable to be discussed. “No need to be afraid of the dying. Holy Week always leads to the Resurrection. Hui Aranga (the Easter gathering), the heart of everything we are.”

54. Some who see the dying as a necessary prelude to the rising embrace change. They can live with the temporary uncertainty which change brings and are even excited by it: “There is a tendency to be fearful of change. But we are being moved on – called out of where we’ve been. There is a sense of being unmoored. Grace is the ocean that carries us all with our joys and pains”.

55. There are others who see the dying as unnecessary and the rising as dangerous. They view the Church as an unchanging rock in a sea of societal change, and they see re-statement of its teaching and further catechesis as the necessary response to this change: “We thank Pope Francis because he makes space for dialogue and does not ignore what others have to say. Alongside this, we await the moment when, like the first in the chain of the Papacy, he or his successor will pronounce, not the outcome of polls or consensus, but the faith of the Church”. They believe the issues the Church faces need to be addressed personally, rather than collectively: “We would like to hear more about ‘conversion’. Jesus welcomes sinners: everyone is received with open arms. But like the Prodigal Son, like Zacchaeus, like Mary Magdalene, like the Samaritan Woman, Nicodemus, the “Good Thief”, Simon Peter etc, they all come to Jesus in an act of ‘conversion’, not demanding that Jesus - his Church - converts, but knowing that they are the ones who individually have to convert.”

56. There is a tension between these two views of how to respond to the challenges the Church faces, but to many people there is evidence that the Holy Spirit is leading us in a dying-rising cycle towards institutional change, as well as to personal conversion. In many countries the crisis of clerical sex abuse has “forced us to recognise and enter this process of dying for the new to arise. We need to enter the process as Pope Francis does, face up to differences and hurts and move beyond institutional norms in our way of relating”. How do we resolve these tensions globally?

Embedding the synodal process

57. The synodal process has brought hope and joy to many people globally. It has been a unique and engaging process with the potential to fulfil the vision of Vatican II. The power of the Church to gather, share, truly listen and to do so globally, is a great sign of hope and joy.

58. The DCS reflected a Church that is listening to ordinary people more deeply than it has done in the past. Voices have been heard because people were given permission to speak.

They have experienced being listened to as a means of healing and welcome, and an opportunity for transformation when they were the listeners.

59. There is a tension between those for whom the process “has nourished the desire for an increasingly synodal Church” (DCS 3) and those who see it as unwanted and unnecessary change, a threat to the Church, its teaching, power structures and stability. For some the process threatens their position in the Church, often attained after much study and sacrifice. For others it rocks the safety they feel in a Church which they see as providing a framework to manage their lives.

60. There is the hope that all voices travel through to the end point of the synodal journey (clergy, lay, religious, women, youth, etc) and that the composition of the group making final decisions understands the reality of people’s lives. The contributions are the fruit of lay people and clergy working together in a synodal way. There is a fear that the process will become the property of bishops, during the Rome gatherings and as it nears its endpoint.

61. Many groups spoke about synodality and Spiritual Conversation becoming normal processes in their dioceses, parishes and national organizations. There was also a proposal that diocesan synods become a regular part of the life of the diocese, a more formal gathering of the People of God in the local Church. There were also questions about process: “If we are to develop new ways of making decisions in a synodal church, at what point is it taken to be clear that there is a consensus?”

62. How can synodality be embedded as “the way of being Church” (DCS 3) at every level in every diocese? How can we guard against it being undermined or taken over by those who hold forms of power or have vested interests in maintaining the status quo?

Church teaching

63. Responders seek a welcoming and inclusive Church. In most submissions deep concern was expressed for people who feel unwelcome in the Church because of their relationships or their sexuality or both. “People are walking away because they, or their relatives, feel disenfranchised and excluded due to LGBTQ or marital issues. The DCS is the fruit of a process in which so many people have spoken up for them. The universal recurrence of the themes in the DCS show that these blocks are real and are worldwide.”

64. The way in which Church teaching on LGBTQIA+ people is expressed is seen as relegating them to a second-class “disordered” group in the Church and as an impediment to their acceptance as full and equal members of the People of God. The non-acceptance and non-recognition of their relationships hurts not just the LGBTQIA+ person, but many families, because the family usually wants to welcome their LGBTQIA+ person’s partner. Being excluded from receiving the Eucharist is a consequence of the relationship, so is essentially a secondary issue although it is often where the sense of being unwelcome is felt most deeply.

65. There is also much concern about the situation of those who have divorced and remarried, and this is very real for many families. Although *Amoris Laetitia* opened potential pathways for the divorced and remarried to receive communion, these are perceived as narrow and difficult. Tribunal processes have been simplified but there are many difficulties for people

seeking to engage in annulment processes. It is still simpler for some people who are divorced to walk away from a Church which they feel does not understand their particular situation and which they believe sees them as somehow “having fallen”. Women responded strongly to the situation of the divorced and remarried and were very aware of the circumstances in which a divorce took place and the consequences for the woman and the wider family.

66. As with those in LGBTQIA+ relationships, the exclusion of the divorced and remarried from receiving communion is seen as taking away spiritual support from people who need it the most: “Sacraments are not rewards but a means to provide for us on the journey of life and need to be available for all” was quoted by many groups.

67. There were very blunt comments from some women about Church teaching on artificial contraception: “Archaic rules regarding contraception need to be abolished”, and a call for priests to be better informed about contraception during their training. This is an aspect of the Church’s teaching on sexuality where the majority of the laity have made their own decisions.

68. Although there was little said about consideration being given to ordaining women as priests (and just one request that the diaconate be open to them), an examination of this issue, together with the requirement for priestly celibacy, could assist in restoring unity in the Church on these issues.

69. Many of the issues to do with Church teaching outlined above have contributed to the alienation of young people from the Church. They have been impacted by them personally or through their friends or in their families.

70. Ecumenical relationships are seen as being impeded at a local level by the Church’s teaching. A group which included priests said: “There needs to be more eucharistic hospitality to members of other churches in place of the exclusive line currently practised.” Some lay people practice ecumenism but feel that despite the advances in ecumenism since Vatican II, the Church’s teaching makes it difficult. They spoke strongly of the need to engage in ecumenical and interfaith dialogue because “We need to open ourselves to a diversity of expression and work together to create a united world”.

71. There was a plea from women for an examination of the Sacrament of Penance, as some see it as placing a lay person in an inferior position to the priest. Other women would like to see the Third Rite of Reconciliation allowed in normal situations not just in emergencies, and believe it is an important pastoral way to assist people to reconnect with the Church community.

72. There are divisions about whether change is needed in Church teaching in some areas, and about whether Church teaching can change. “Acknowledgement is needed that the teaching of the Church has changed on many points over the centuries, and that there needs to be honest reflection on where the teaching might now need to change, particularly so in themes of sexuality.”

73. Generally, people responded that the DCS calls “the Church to be a refuge for the wounded and broken, not an institution for the perfect” (DCS 39), and the corresponding

need to enlarge our Tent resonated deeply with their own experience and what they had heard at various time in the synod process. There is deep and widespread concern about Church teaching which is viewed as excluding people, causing people to leave the Church, or making it difficult for them to reconnect. One group saw a need for practical advice about how they might remain faithful to Church teaching while being inclusive. There was also a view that the DCS made evident the need for good, faithful, formation, and that issues such as the inequality of women, participation in the liturgy, the role of priests, the Eucharist, LGBTQIA+ issues, and contraception all stem from a lack of formation.

74. Are the people distressed by the effects of these aspects of Church teaching dissidents, poorly formed, or prophets?

75. Returning to the metaphor of the Tent it was noted that “there is a tension here – on the one hand enlarging the tent, on the other hand remaining faithful to the Word”.

Authority, governance and leadership

76. The DCS and their Spiritual Conversations highlighted for many people that the Church needs “to explore solutions to counter systemic issues regarding leadership which currently prohibit the faithful from living their baptismal call to active participation”. With the emphasis on Baptism which has come through the synodal process there is a deep desire for acceptance that all the baptised are called to and capable of full, active and equal participation in Church.

77. A cultural clash between authority structures of the Catholic Church and how effective organisations operate in western society was identified by some: “The Church’s current leadership model does not always allow for sharing of power or for the People of God to participate fully in decision making. There are good and skilful lay people who, given the opportunity can lead and manage effectively, while supporting our clergy and bishops who are stretched”.

78. It was noted that priests, religious and laity all have equally important roles to play if our faith communities are to be dynamic and collaborative centres of life. A new approach to leadership is needed, reflecting a collaborative style and providing for strong input and participation of the laity.

79. Many people see co-governance involving laity and clergy as being the way forward if we are to truly be a synodal Church. This was described as needing “cultural and structural change” so that there is a true sharing in decision making, based on communal discernment rather than just consultation or decision-making by the majority principle (DCS 78). This was also described as “co-responsibility in the exercise of power”. To shift to this form of governance priests and laity will need to understand and appreciate one another’s Baptism and vocation, which will require formation.

80. There was a call for leadership to be more participatory with “a less exclusive role given to bishops”. The power of bishops and priests in decision-making processes and structures, including bishops’ conferences, is seen as one of the mechanisms which excludes lay voices, and women’s voices in particular.

81. The selection process for bishops is considered to be opaque, and potentially only involving certain types of people in the Church. People want to know how the current process works, and want to ensure that the selection is the product of genuine discernment involving a wide range of people, clergy and lay. There was a desire for specific scrutiny of a potential bishop's record on abuse, and a close examination of his attitude towards abuse.

82. The role of canon law in prescribing how governance operates in the Church was identified as needing examination. It was noted that canon law is often used to restrict rather than to provide opportunities. People see canon law, not Church teaching, creating a power imbalance between bishops, clergy and lay people which has major effects in relation to authority and governance in parishes and dioceses. People are aware that there have been changes to canon law in recent years and know that this is possible.

83. There were many questions in relation to authority, leadership and governance:

“What is the right balance between central and local authority in the way we are organised and make decisions?”

“We queried just how far church leadership is prepared to go to provide space for lay people to have genuine agency?”

“We feel that the church leadership needs to decide where they see the value that lay people can add. Does church leadership want lay people to act as a consultative group, or to be decision-makers?”

And from another group:

“Does the power of governance in the Church come from canonical mission on the basis of a person's baptism or is it from Holy Orders?”

Pastoral ministry

84. Together with calls for new thinking about authority and leadership in the Church, there were very poignant requests for full acceptance of all the baptised as being called to and capable of pastoral ministry in Church.

85. Chaplains are the kaitiaki or guardians of the spiritual welfare of people in prisons and as such have similar responsibilities to a parish priest. The nation's lay prison chaplains explained how they accompany some of our most disadvantaged people on a life-changing faith journey but have to step back when sacraments are required. They would like to be able to confer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick if needed at a point in a prisoner's faith journey.

86. By its nature the Tribunal of the Catholic Church for New Zealand, along with Tribunals around the world, deals with lay people and marriage. Those involved in the Tribunal's processes see no reasons for the restriction of certain key Tribunal roles to clerics, and believe that attitudinal and canonical change is needed to allow lay people to participate more fully in the pastoral ministry of the Tribunal.

87. A desire for greater participation of lay people in liturgical ministry was evident. “We all have a role in breaking open the Word of God”. “The liturgy particularly the Sunday Eucharist

is the lifeblood of the Church. This needs to be less priest-centred and more participatory on the part of the people.”

88. There are questions about how parishes operate and the dominance of the priest. People asked for “radical inclusion” as the way for the Church on its synodal journey but do not see current parish structures as able to provide the type of pastoral ministry those who are disadvantaged or feel excluded need.

89. The way in which parishes operate is of great concern to prison chaplains: “Working with the marginalized feels like we are in a different world than our parishes. There is much deeper prayer and spirituality experienced in the prison. It is almost impossible to integrate from the margins into the parish which seems to be only for the perfect. The chaplains are listening to the Spirit and building their faith but there is no-one to continue that on release. Para-churches are needed to accommodate those who feel they do not belong and as a stepping stone for those seeking full acceptance.”

90. There is tension between those who believe sacramental ministry is the prerogative of priests, and lay pastoral ministers who see being able to confer the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick as a natural part of their ministry, especially among the disadvantaged. There are questions about why canon law reserves Tribunal roles to clerics.

The Ecological Crisis

91. In *Laudato Si* and in many other ways Pope Francis has stressed the urgent need for action to address the ecological crisis and the demands of economic justice.

92. In the responses to the DCS there is a clear and specific call that as a Church we address issues of climate justice. Mistreatment of our planet disproportionately affects the poor. “We cannot ignore Papatuanuku (Mother Earth) any longer. Our universal Church and our local Church have an obligation to change the mistreatment of Earth, it must be spoken about and acted upon by all.”

93. This is not an area in which the Church’s teaching is lacking, but there is a need for formation, for prophetic witness, and encouragement to act. If we are people of the Tent then we must understand the importance of the Earth as our common home, respecting the ground, the sea and the environment within which we assemble the Tent.

94. “The People of God express a deep desire to listen to the cry of the poor and the cry of the Earth” but somehow this has not yet become a catalyst for entering vigorously and globally into the struggle for the future of our common home.

95. We are not lacking in resources. “We have a richness of traditions and practices. For example, *Laudato Si*, Catholic Social Teaching, the Liturgy, enculturation, ecumenism. We write a great deal about these things but how do we support and encourage these to be put into action? There is richness in the collaborating with others who share a common purpose.”

96. We have the teaching, but apart from Pope Francis, where are our activists and prophets? How can we be effective both locally and globally in the struggle for the future of our planet so that it is a healthy and just home for future generations?

Formation

97. Many responses to the DCS expressed concern about formation. There were calls for formation for lay people in taking up existing roles and potentially new roles in the Church, and to re-think the formation of priests.

98. Formation, in its many facets, is seen as being required for all the baptised, lay and clergy. We are in need of constant refreshment of our faith lives so as to be a dynamic and missionary Church. Formation is needed that equips people to further develop co-responsibility and participation of all members of the Church, including in new processes such as synodality, and potentially in new roles.

99. Formation in which everyone participates would acknowledge the diverse cultures present in the Church and especially Māori. It would include formation in synodality, the role of the baptised, Church teaching and spirituality, and would assist priests and laity to understand and appreciate one another's baptism and vocation.

100. The joint nature of the formation required for synodality was stressed: "The reality on the ground for many priests is the struggle with mission, as maintenance absorbs most of their energies. At first, most priests didn't engage in the synod process partly to allow lay people space and partly because the synod was one more thing to do. Priests are a key conduit in a hierarchical Church, more used to transmitting downwards than upwards. Laity too are learning this anew. Ongoing formation in synodality for all of us is essential." Formation in synodal discernment for mission and ministry, and respectful listening have a role to play in loosening "the knots of conflict" (DCS 92).

101. As in earlier parts of the process there was a call to re-think the formation of priests, to broaden it (although it is not clear how), to involve more lay people and especially women. Seminary staff noted that "The ordained have a high profile part to play in the life of the Church as presiders of Eucharist, but this ministry is primarily one of service, not of power and control." Comments about the "elitism of priests", clericalism being an "over extension of clergy's authority based on male leadership who demand superiority to the laity" and "driving a rift between clergy and laity who should observe one another with mutual respect, functioning as partners", indicate that the ideal of priesthood as service is not being experienced by some lay people.

102. There was a call for women to have a role in the formation of seminarians and participate in the evaluation team deciding suitability for ordination. People don't seem to be aware that there are women involved in the pre-seminary and priestly formation process in Aotearoa New Zealand, including in assessing suitability of candidates. How these processes operate and who is involved probably needs to be more well-known.

103. The levels and type of formation being sought raise many questions about prioritising and financing, and about delivery mechanisms which will reach beyond those who are already highly committed and financially stable. How do we reach the beleaguered people with many family responsibilities, multiple jobs and financial worries, and for whom getting to Mass on Sunday is all they can do, if that? What does formation for the marginalized look like?

Mission

104. The word “mission” was mentioned many times but as in earlier parts of the synod process it is not clear what “mission” means when people talk about it. It does not seem to have a concrete or active form for many people. There is a need for a shared understanding, and work needs to be done in this area.

105. One group appreciated how the DCS talks about the fruits, seeds and weeds of synodality. They see the weeds as the plants that grow where we don’t want them to, and asked “Can we not become comfortable with the weeds? We need to get comfortable with the weeds. See their beauty. God loves them. We need to sit with the weeds. The weeds in our Church have life too – we need to look at how we treat them!”

106. Prison Chaplains work with some of the most marginalized and isolated members of Society for the period of their lives that they are in prison. They are saddened that there is little involvement of the Church in assisting with the reintegration of former prisoners. Parishes appear to be different worlds which are not structured or resourced for this type of mission, and even uncomfortable with it.

107. Priests spoke of their time and energy being absorbed by “maintenance” - meeting the pastoral needs of their parishes - and finding engaging with mission difficult. Lay people were unsure about how to get alongside the many who have not walked away from God, but from the Church.

108. Another group said “We need to allow challenging voices to rise. We are a wounded Church, but even in the wounds there is a mission, a hope that is there even though at times it may be hard to see”.

109. There are tensions and questions from both priests and lay people about mission, and whether the way the Church currently operates and forms both laity and clergy impedes mission.

Question 3

“Looking at what emerges from the previous two questions, what are the priorities, recurring themes and calls to action that can be shared with other local Churches around the world and discussed during the First Session of the Synodal Assembly in October 2023?”

110. The highest priorities for the First Session of the Synodal Assembly should be those matters which can only be discerned and decided at the level of the universal Church. Some of these are the source of division, and both sessions of the Synodal Assembly and the time in between them may be needed to reach a conclusion. As Pope Francis said in *Evangelii Gaudium* and has reminded us many times “Time is greater than space”.

111. It would be helpful if the *Instrumentum Laboris* for the Synodal Assembly and possibly other theological documents could address the different approaches to change in the Church eg that it is part of a dying-rising cycle, or that the nature of the Church requires that change

must be resisted and the focus must be on personal conversion. Without this understanding, discernment of many other matters will be difficult.

112. Priorities, recurring themes and calls to action for the attention of the First Session of the Synodal Assembly:

113. Embedding the synodal process

Begin embedding synodality as “the way of being Church” (DCS 3), at every level.

Early steps might include:

- Identifying those bodies in the Church at all levels which are synodal by nature
- Developing further resources for discernment and synodality in the ordinary life of the Church

114. The ecological crisis

Engage the whole Church, globally and locally, in the urgent struggle to preserve our planet and its life, and to provide economic justice for its people.

Issues to be addressed include:

- Understanding the ecological crisis as a mission field
- The role of individuals, parishes, dioceses, national bodies, the Holy See
- How we support and work with young people on climate issues, locally and worldwide.

115. Authority, governance and leadership

Solutions need to be explored to counter systemic issues regarding authority, governance, and leadership which may currently prohibit the faithful from living their baptismal call to active participation.

Issues to be addressed include:

- Clarification of the source of governance in the Church - does governance come from canonical mission on the basis of a person’s baptism or from Holy Orders.
- Lay participation at Bishops Conference level.
- The process for the selection of bishops.
- Clarification of terms used in relation to authority and leadership (eg governance, decision-making, collaborative leadership, co-responsible leadership), and development of a common vocabulary and understanding for this area of the life of the Church.

116. Pastoral ministry

Acceptance is needed that all the baptised are called to and capable of pastoral ministry in Church, and that this may include sacramental ministry.

Issues to be addressed include:

- Allowing bishops to mandate deacons and suitably formed lay pastoral ministers in certain situations to administer the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick.
- Changing canon law which restricts certain Tribunal roles to clerics to allow qualified lay people to take up these roles.

117. **Church teaching**

Address the aspects of Church teaching which are perceived as exclusionary or hurtful, or which cause people to walk away from the Church or deter them from returning.

These issues include:

- Teaching on sexuality, including homosexuality and LGBTQ+ relationships, contraception
- The situation of the divorced and remarried
- Intercommunion with other Christian denominations whose baptism we recognise
- The Sacrament of Penance, including the Third Rite of Reconciliation.

118. **Women**

Address the divisions in the global Church about women.

Issues to be addressed include:

- The reality of the role and status of women in the Church, including cultural influences at local level
- Theological understanding of the role of women in the Church (not just women as mothers)
- Clerical attitudes towards women, and formation for seminarians and priests in this area
- Involvement of women in the formation of future priests
- Calls in the Church for the ordination of women (priesthood, diaconate).