

Developing Come & C for a New Decade

Report from Synod 2019

United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough

Tuesday, 8th October 2019, Taney Parish Centre.

by
Dr. Maria Feeney

School of Law and Government
Dublin City University



Table of Contents

Acknowledgements	4
Executive Summary	5
Part 1: Background note	7
When it all began.....	7
Research in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough.	8
Part 2: Methodology	10
Overview	10
Come &C Panel Discussion.....	10
Come &C Presentation	11
Sampling.....	12
Sample size.....	12
Part 3: Evaluation of Synod 2019	13
Demographic Realities of Synod 2019	13
Structure and Organisation	14
Reflections from Synod 2019	15
Organisational Elements	16
Panel Discussion.....	17
Roundtable.....	17
Future Learning.....	19
Come &C and the 5 Marks of Mission	22
Message 1: Come &C is an ongoing invitation	23
Message 2: A scriptural message	24
Message 3: Opportunity for learning and collaboration.....	24
Message 4: Multiple messages	25
Future Learning.....	26
The Value and Benefits of the Roundtable Discussions	27
Roundtable Discussions Facilitate All Voices Being Heard.....	27
Roundtables Facilitate Meaningful Engagement.	29
Future Learning for the Roundtable Discussions	30
Come &C Parish Activity and Opportunity	32
What was happening in the Parishes?	32
Communications and using the Diocesan Website	39
Part 4: Experience of Come &C and the Five Marks of Mission	40
Roundtable Analysis	40
Young People.....	41
Church and the Environment.....	45
The Church and Other Faiths	48
Social Justice.....	52
Concluding Comments	56

APPENDICES 61

1 Evaluation Survey..... 61

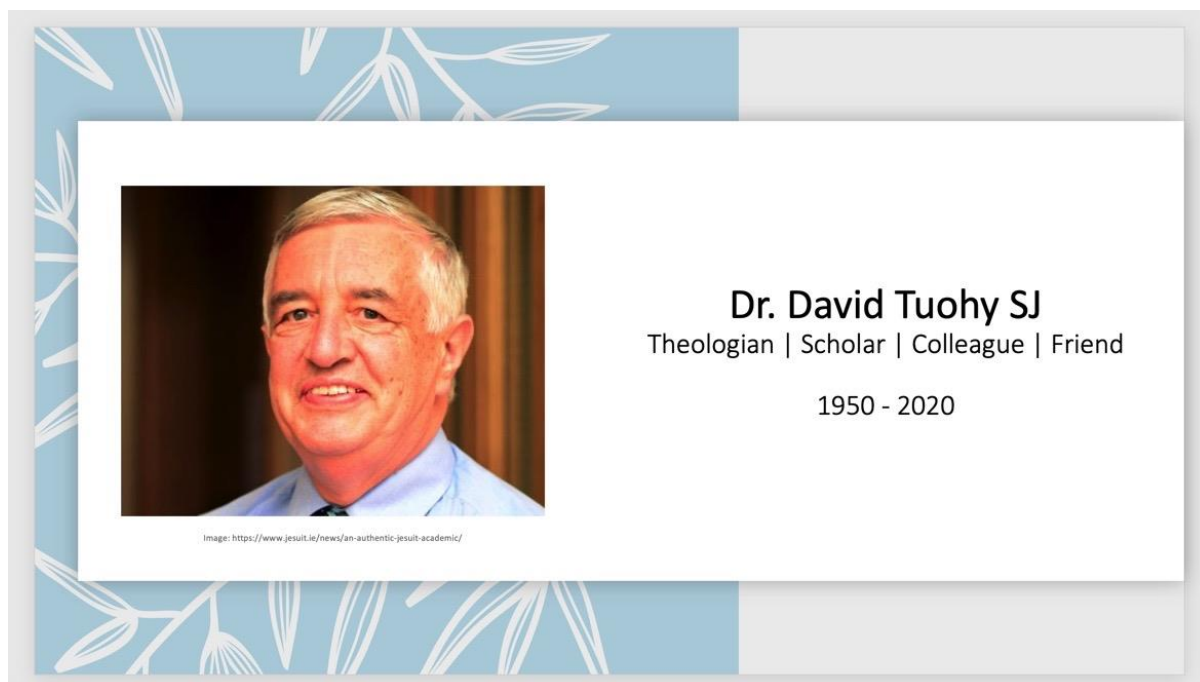
Email to Synod Members: Original Invitation: 17th October 2029 Reminder Invitation: 4th November 2019 65

Acknowledgements

Thanks are owed to Sylvia, Ruth and Vicki in the Diocesan and Archbishop's Offices for their invaluable work in facilitating this evaluation and for their assistance prior to, and during, Synod 2019.

I now wish to acknowledge my *Come &C* co-author Dr. David Tuohy SJ.

I had the privilege of working with David on the *Come &C* research 2018-2019. Some of the most recent work we discussed was Synod 2019 and planning for another Diocesan Forum in High School, February 2020. David was passionate about *Come &C* and enthused by how warmly it was received by Synod members last year. Sadly, David passed away three months later in January 2020. Close colleagues and friends were devastated by his passing. David has left us with a rich legacy – a multi-faceted one demonstrating his commitment to theology, scholarship, education and ecumenism. I believe David's legacy serves as a fine example of how we can all learn to grow in the image and likeness of God. David was a wonderful colleague and friend and is greatly missed.



Executive Summary

The purpose of this research report *Developing Come & C for a New Decade Report from Synod 2019, United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough* is to report on the research undertaken at United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough Synod Meeting 2019.

Synod 2019 was markedly different to prior Synod meetings. There were three significant inclusions that fundamentally changed the order and structure of the meeting. Members listened to a Panel Meeting before the main break. After the meeting reconvened, Maria Feeney presented the findings of the *Come & C* diocesan invitation to the Intentional Discipleship project in the United Dioceses. Along with Dr. David Tuohy (SJ), they undertook research across the diocese to understand how parishes and deaneries responded to the invitation. The results of that study were published in a book

Come & C Growing in the Image and Likeness of God: A Review of the Discipleship Project in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough. (2019)

After Maria's presentation to Synod, members formed into groups for a breakaway Roundtable Discussion. The discussions were guided by four main themes: Young People, The Church and the Environment, The Church and Other Faiths, and Social Justice. Following this, members reported back to the main group before departing when Synod concluded. It was expected that this discussion would serve as an early step in forming a blue-print as the Dioceses sought to develop *Come & C* for a new decade. The outputs of the discussion group would be used for guide further development of key strategic topics of concern at the High School Meeting that was scheduled for 29th February 2020.

One week after the meeting, members were invited to take part in an online survey evaluation of Synod 2019. 74 valid responses were submitted. The results of that survey are presented in Part 3.

The results demonstrate that overall Synod 2019 was a resounding success and a well organised affair. The atmosphere of the meeting was positive with some feeling it was the

“best in years”. The new additions to the meeting were very welcomed. 94.4% of respondents agreed that the Panel Discussion was interesting. Similarly, 86.1 percent of members agreed that the Roundtable Discussion was beneficial. Members felt it was a valuable exercise that offered meaningful engagement with fellow parishioners and it also provided an opportunity to learn about what other parishes were doing. Other respondents noted that it was valuable because it offered all members the opportunity to have their voice heard and feel included – something that they did not necessarily feel at previous meetings. While this is a most welcome finding, some suggestions were offered for future Synods to ensure even greater inclusion.

Another finding that merits attention is that Synod 2019 did not appear to be a balanced affair in terms of the age-profile of those who responded to the questionnaire – the largest age group were those over seventy years and no one under thirty years responded to the survey. It would appear that mid-week family commitments limit the younger generation’s ability to attend meetings. People’s impressions of Synod 2019 are also presented in Part 3 of this report.

The results of the Roundtable Discussion groups are presented in Part 4. Some useful ideas are offered here that would serve as discussion points for future development. Of particular interest are ideas for encouraging young people to be more engaged in Church. For many, it is simple – “meet them where they are”. When discussing the Church and Other Faiths, members expressed concern about having the correct language so as to engage sensitively and respectfully with those from other faith traditions who they wish to engage with and welcome. Welcome and worship were also key themes that emerged from the discussions had on the subject of social justice – the foundation of which is scripture not politics as one group noted. The report is structured as follows: Part 1 provides a background note to the *Come &C* invitation to Intentional Discipleship in the United Dioceses and the research that was undertaken as early as 2014. This sets context for the launch of the *Come &C* findings at Synod 2019. Part 2 presents the Methodology. The results of the Synod 2019 meeting are presented in Parts 3 and the results of the Roundtable Discussion are presented in Part 4.

Part 1: Background note

When it all began

In the spring of 2014, “Archbishop Michael Jackson commissioned a Vision and Mission survey of all the parishes in the united dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough. This elicited a response from 80% of the parishes giving a snapshot of the aspirations and achievements of the Church of Ireland at the time. The survey focused on three areas of parish life:

1. **Parish Communities Today:** respondents described what they were proud of in the parish, what aspect of the faith they did well and how they engaged with the local community. They focused on what they saw as the focal spirit of the parish as it developed, and what they were prepared to do to preserve that spirit.
2. **Hopes for the Future:** here parishes described their actual plans to develop activities and facilities and also their hopes for new initiatives. They also described the resources they had available to them.
3. **Vision Statements:** The parishes outlined and named their vision for the future.

The results of the survey were published maintaining the original voice of the respondents in the *Come & C Report*, a title chosen to reflect the strong emphasis on developing discipleship around worship and welcome. The report was officially launched at the 2014 Diocesan Synod by Mr. Sam Harper, with the advice: “To use this book to its full potential, I encourage each one to read it positively and look for the opportunities for service and growth in your own lives, in each of your own parishes and in your Dioceses and that you will go forth in the encouragement that this will bring you to be better servants of Christ following your own faith”.

As a first response to the report, the Archbishop organised a series of consultations involving clergy and laypeople where they responded to the survey report and explored ways the dioceses might encourage parishes and individuals to respond. In these discussions, the participants noted the common ground in the responses of the parishes, especially the desire to be places of welcome, where people come together to worship and deepen their faith. The survey also revealed a wide range of creative activities in different parishes, as outreach to people in need and in building discipleship. Two suggestions emerged from the consultation group:

1. To set up a diocesan forum in order to give an opportunity for parishes to come together and tell their stories in a conversation, rather than in an isolated report. As the group reflected on its own experience of reading the report together, the members suggested that more creative and collaborative energy might come from such a gathering than by a “top-down” initiative.
2. To declare Advent 2015 to Christ the King 2016 as a “Year of Come & C”, with a view of affirming the work of the parishes as they engaged in and promoted discipleship. The aims would be to:
 - celebrate the creative work already taking place;
 - give greater opportunities for sharing successes;
 - reflect at a deeper level on what the dioceses were learning about discipleship

- explore how the Church might be more “intentional” in its support for discipleship and linking discipleship with mission.

The consultation group emphasised that the response should be a celebration and affirmation of what was already happening in the dioceses. If new initiatives were proposed, then they should be invitational. Just as the original survey had been a listening exercise, a major component of the response should also be listening to what the parishes were saying, and helping them share it with others through networking, rather than simply responding to a survey. The listening could be structured and framed in terms of the Five Marks of Mission and three themes from the report – Welcome, Worship, Witness. The role of the dioceses would be to provide opportunities and incentives for networking.

To begin the process, a diocesan forum was organised to reflect on the *Come &C* Report. Parishes were invited to send four members to the High School event in September 2015. Over two hundred people turned up, representing over 80% of the parishes. Using the lens of scriptural reflections on discipleship, the ideas of Welcome, Witness and Worship as a vision for parish activity, and the Five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion, the participants reflected and shared on the successes and challenges of their local parishes. They endorsed the idea of a diocesan-wide exploration of the theme of discipleship. The process was continued in Rural Deanery meetings, where participants from High School joined together in groups of parishes to share and discuss approaches, and to plan for possible collaborative projects. This produced a list of suggestions of possible developments for individuals, parishes, groups of parishes and the diocese.

At the 2015 Synod, a broad outline of the initiative was given, detailing the role of the local parish in developing an appropriate local response and outlining the role of the Diocese in encouraging and assisting where possible. There was also a commitment given to the Synod to reflect on the outcome of the project, and to publish the results. This report honours that commitment.” (Tuohy and Feeney, 2019: 13-15).

Research in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough.

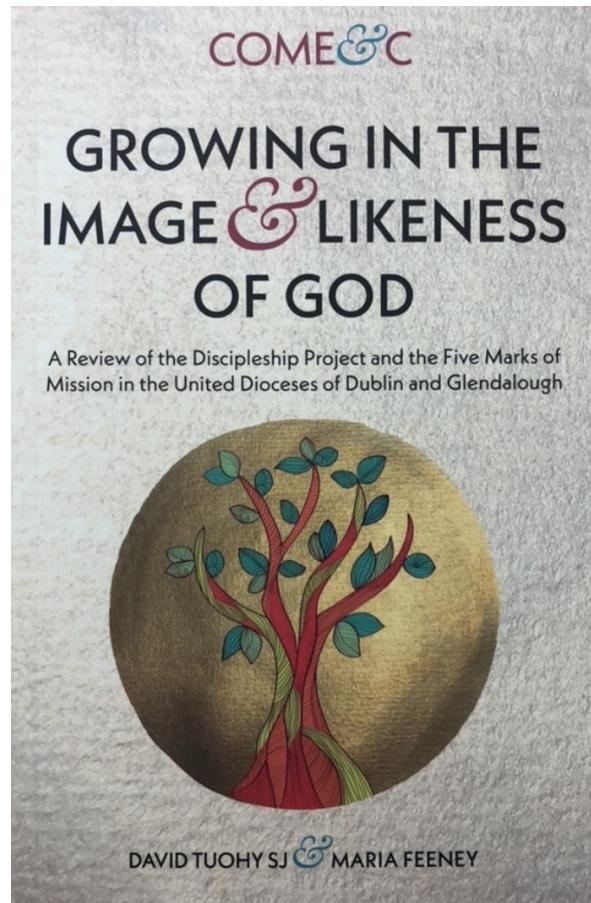
In 2018, Dr. David Tuohy SJ was joined by Dr. Maria Feeney, DCU Institute of Education, to undertake research across the United Dioceses. Numerous parishioners and their Rectors participated in interviews to discuss the ways in which they responded to the *Come &C* invitation. Others, who organised events and engaged in other activities such as creating resources also participated.

The findings were published in a book -

Come &C Growing in the Image and Likeness of God: A Review of the Discipleship Project in the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough.

It was officially launched by the Ven. Adrian Wilkinson at the Church of Ireland Centre, Dublin City University – hosted by Rev. Prof. Anne Lodge, on 29th March 2019; and news of this was published online at DublinAnglican.org Two important events followed where the findings of

the book were presented. The first was the October 2019 meeting of Synod where the book was launched and presented to Synod members. The second event was a short presentation of the findings and book to the Archbishop of Canterbury, Most Rev. Justin Welby during his visit to Dublin in November 2019. Special commendation was offered by Archbishop Welby when he explained that the findings of the work reminded him of the power and suitability of the Five Marks of Mission for greater, organisational purposes in his own work, such as strategy development.



The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of work that was undertaken at Synod 2019. This meeting served as a key strategic operations exercise for the Diocese as an organisation, for understanding how *Come & C* might continue but also be re-imagined as we were about to welcome a new decade. It represented a ‘situation and outlook’ of sorts, an important benchmark measure of where we were and where we would like to go and how we envisioned proceeding. How that task was undertaken is discussed in the Methodology section that follows in Part 2.

Part 2: Methodology

Overview

The findings of *Come &C* were presented at Synod 2019 by Dr. Maria Feeney on behalf of herself and Dr. David Tuohy SJ who was unable to attend the event. This Synod meeting was timely not least because it was occurring as we were about to welcome a new decade. Considering the findings and successes of *Come &C* would serve as an opportunity for reflection – what the Parishes and United Dioceses might aspire to at the individual and collective level as they embraced 2020.

It was also announced at Synod, that another Diocesan Forum - that would mirror the original and very successful High School event of September 2015 - would take place in February 2020. It was expected this event would continue the momentum that *Come &C* delivered but that it would also serve as a ‘benchmark’ opportunity for parishes to infuse their visions for the future with mission and intentional discipleship guided by the framework provided by the Five Marks of Mission. Moreover, members’ feedback firmly reiterates this point.

- **90.5% (n= 67) agreed that *there should be more opportunity for events that permit engagement with members of the Clergy and Laity***

Come &C was discussed by Maria Feeney on two occasions at Synod: (1) during a Panel Discussion and (2) the main presentation of the findings.

Come &C Panel Discussion

Members were introduced to a brief ‘taster’ of the findings when Maria Feeney, along with other Diocesan Representatives, joined Greg Folmholz for a short Panel Discussion after the official business of Synod concluded. This Panel took place immediately before the main Synod interval. The Panel served as an informal discussion about various activities that were being undertaken across the United Dioceses. It served as a useful opportunity to remind members of *Come &C* and the Five Marks of Mission and set a brief pre-text for the main presentation and roundtable discussions that would follow. It also served to highlight that *Come &C* was a diocesan-wide, ongoing invitation that facilitated diverse initiatives that emerged in the Parishes, for the Parishes. In their book, Tuohy and Feeney (2019) discuss this as a sort of ‘grass roots discipleship’ movement that built on the many activities that parishioners and clergy were already doing intuitively. The fact that *Come &C* was constructively aligned to the Five Marks of Mission meant it offered an opportunity for the parishes to distil and crystallise their efforts along scriptural teachings - something that many parishioners felt enhanced their discipleship efforts.

The Panel Discussion was an engaging exercise that members appreciated and the data from the survey attests to this fact. Considering the overwhelming positive feedback, it may be beneficial to consider that future Synod Meetings employ engaging exercises like this one.

Come &C Presentation

Maria Feeney delivered a twenty-minute presentation on the main findings of the research. The findings were very well received, and members enjoyed learning about the diverse ways in which different parishes in their Dioceses responded to the invitation to Intentional Discipleship. The application of the Five Marks of Mission to Intentional Discipleship offered people the opportunity to reflect on their practice in scripture thus empowering themselves and their efforts as they sought to respond to the invitation in local and nuanced ways.

In attempt to prompt some thoughtful reflection on the findings and how they might apply to the various parishes, specifically with a view towards how they could be developed going forward, members were invited to engage with one another at the meeting by breaking up into groups after Maria's presentation. Staff from the Diocesan Office planned for how this would work and ensured that all necessary resources were available. The entire group were divided up and instructed to go to one of four rooms. Each room represented a theme:

- Social Justice
- The Church and the Environment
- Young People
- Interfaith Dialogue

Once in their respective room, the group were sub-divided again, and that was the unit through which members engaged in lively roundtable discussions. A scribe was nominated at each table and another person volunteered to report back to the main group.

The opportunity for engagement with their diocesan peers was most welcome and members appreciated listening to one another's ideas about considering Church as we approached a new decade. In fact, it was this type of open engagement that was heralded as one of the key successes of the original High School meeting. 'Doing Church' differently is an exciting prospect and members clearly indicated that this was an opportunity to be welcomed. Moreover, the fruits of their efforts demonstrate the space that exists within the United Diocese for initiatives and ideas that originate from a 'grass-roots' process and these are discussed in a later section.

Interesting and innovative ideas were put forward. Maria Feeney engaged with each of the four groups as they considered possibilities for actions along their respective themes. She then reported some of these ideas back to Synod when the roundtable discussions concluded, and members reassembled in the main hall. A spokesperson from each group was invited to briefly outline their group's ideas to the entire audience. This was a lively and warm exchange welcomed by all and the survey of attitudes attest to this fact.

Before members left, they were reminded once again that another High School event would convene in February to build on the momentum and initiative that so clearly emerged that evening. All members were given a copy of the *Come &C* book as they left.

Sampling

One week after the Synod meeting, members were invited to participate in a survey of attitudes of the 2019 Synod meeting and the *Come &C* project. Maria Feeney designed a self-administered questionnaire using the online *Survey Monkey* platform (See Appendix 1).

Maria Feeney emailed a link to the questionnaire to the Diocesan Office, who then circulated the link to members in keeping with GDPR guidelines. Following initial slow uptake, a gentle reminder of the questionnaire was circulated by the office and this prompted greater participation. Data was collected between 25th October 2019 – 25th November 2019. More than two hundred members attended and 74 valid responses were analysed – a response rate of 29.6%.

Sample size

Of the approximately 250 members who attended Synod, a total of 76 respondents were recorded. However, it emerged that two respondents [one male (1), one female(48)] did not actually attend the meeting.

The male disclosed this fact in his open-ended response to Q2. His reason for not attending the meeting was interesting and this reflective response was retained by the researcher. It is noted as such and included in some qualitative analysis later. It was felt that in this way his response almost serves as a “negative finding” and has value, alongside other similar responses, for considering how Synod might move forward and evolve to be more inclusive - negative findings often tell us something interesting about the phenomenon under study.

Could not attend as I was working . This synod is more like a club for retired people , does not take in consideration people with young families and people who work , make it more inclusive , the church is like a club and a not very inclusive one at that (Deleted Statistical Response #1).

For non-open-ended responses he offered some ‘No Opinion’ responses but he did complete a section that required respondents to be in attendance at the Synod Meeting and provided agree/disagree responses.

Similarly, a female (#48), aged 60-69 years also reported that she did not attend and in response to Q2 said “*Can’t comment. Wasn’t there*”. Her responses to Q3 showed she had little awareness of *Come &C* and was critical of her Rector whose interests, she felt, were elsewhere and not focused on the Parish.

A decision was made to remove these overall responses from the statistical analysis. These responses were deemed inadmissible by the researcher and would compromise the validity of the statistical analysis. Consequently, the overall submissions were deleted from the data set and statistical analysis was conducted on the remaining 74 respondents whose responses indicated that they did actually attend the meeting.

The following analysis presents the findings of that survey of attitudes. It also presents an analysis of the work Synod members engaged in at the roundtable discussions demonstrating the ways in which they were currently ‘Doing Church’ and the innovative ideas they expressed to develop and grow further as part of the ongoing invitation to *Come &C*.

Part 3: Evaluation of Synod 2019

Demographic Realities of Synod 2019

An interesting demographic story emerged from the data. While gender often seems to be a popular cause for concern, this was not the case for Synod respondents. Slightly more males than females replied to the survey. However, the age issue has the potential to be cause for concern and is given more nuanced attention later in the analysis.

- **Gender**

70 people responded. 45.7% (32) Female 54.3%. (38) Male

- **Age**

Synod is not necessarily a young place to be. Of the 70 people that answered this question:

- Not one person was less than thirty years of age
- Only 3 (4.3%) were between 30-39 years.
- The largest single group were those aged 70+ years (32.9%, n=23)
- 85.7% (n= 60) of respondents were aged 50+ years
 - Almost two-thirds were 60+ years (64.3%, n= 45)
- 10.0% (7) were aged between 40-49 years

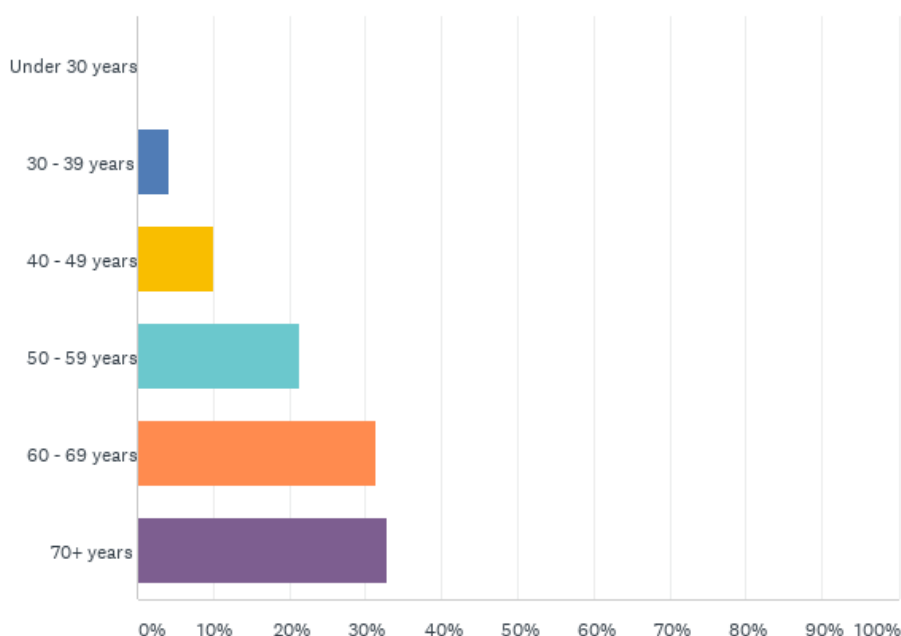


Chart 1: Age Profile of Synod Respondents (n= 70).

Structure and Organisation

The organisation and structure of Synod 2019 presented a departure from previous meetings. Rather than have it serve as a mere ‘mechanical’ affair concerned with the regular organisational business of the United Diocese, it was envisioned that members may appreciate the opportunity of listening and engaging with reports of recent and current parish activities that were ongoing across the Dioceses. It was expected that this would present an opportunity for members to begin to reflect on how they might aspire to moving forward and continue to embrace the *Come & C* invitation. It also represents the view that there is a need for more opportunities to facilitate engagement between Clergy and Laity. This strategy proved to be an overwhelming success and on points relating to this, the data simply speaks for itself.

%	Agreed	Disagreed	No Opinion
It is important that annual Synod meetings include other ‘activities’ (e.g. Panel Discussion) (n=72)	83.3 (60)	9.7 (7)	6.9 (5)
Annual Synod meetings are an effective forum through which research like <i>Come & C</i> can be presented (n= 73)	80.7 (56)	9.6 (7)	13.7 (10)
There should be more opportunity for events that permit engagement with members of the Clergy and Laity (n=72)	93.1 (67)	1.4 (1)	5.56 (4)

Three key activities were scheduled to facilitate this type of engagement: (1) the Panel Discussion, (2) the presentation of the findings of *Come & C* and (3) Roundtable Discussions. Members overwhelmingly agreed that the inclusion of the Panel Discussion, Presentation of Research Findings and Roundtable Discussions were interesting and beneficial.

	Agreed	Disagreed	No Opinion
Inclusion of the Panel Discussion was interesting (n= 72)	94.4 (68)	2.8 (2)	2.8 (2)
Hearing about the <i>Come & C</i> /5 Marks of Mission research in our Dioceses was interesting (n= 73)	83.6 (61)	5.5 (4)	11.0 (8)
Roundtable Discussion was a beneficial exercise (n= 72)	86.1 (62)	None	13.9 (10)

Moreover, the efforts involved in leading and operationalising such a new approach proved worthwhile and acknowledgement must be offered to those in the Diocesan Office who ensured a seamless roll-out of this new approach – aspects of which involved significant planning in the weeks leading up to the meeting. Similarly, the efforts of those who participated on the day to ensure a seamless roll-out of proceeding are deserving of acknowledgement.

- 91.7% of respondents (n=66/72) agreed that Synod 2019 was well organised.

Respondents were complimentary of this when offering their impressions

Thanks are owed to all who participated in a successful Synod 2019.

Reflections from Synod 2019

Question 2 in the questionnaire sought to assess people's overall impression of Synod 2019. 68 respondents provided responses to the question, 6 did not. Of those 68 respondents, 82.3% (n= 56) provided positive feedback around several issues that are discussed below. 17.6% of respondents (n=12) provided feedback that present opportunities for future learning.

The following themes offer an insight into the overall impressions members report about their experience of Synod 2019: Overall positive experience, Organisational elements – which includes providing feedback on the Panel Discussion and Roundtable Discussions before opportunities for future learning are considered.

Overall positive experience.

The general impression was that Synod 2019 was a positive affair. Some simply reported that it was “excellent” (12), “good” (16, 40, 57, 59, 60), “encouraging” (3), and “positive” (26). Others shed a little more light on their experience

Progressive, informative and interesting (31)

Much more engaging and informative (35)

Good start for future change (38)

Interesting evening (46)

Very interesting (49)

I enjoyed it and it gave me energy about my Church (61)

A significant proportion offered their appraisals by drawing direct comparisons to previous Synod meetings. Synod 2019 appears to register more positively in their imaginations compared to other meetings. Consequently, this appears to have been a source of encouragement for some.

The most positive Synod I've been to (26)

The best in years (33)

It was an improvement on previous years (slightly less boring) (27)

Better than previous years (28)

There was much improved positive atmosphere over previous years. (39)

Very good, more interesting than last year (58)

Much better than previous Synods (61)

There was a much-improved positive atmosphere over previous years. The group discussions prompted a much higher level of individual participation. (39)

I have been going to Synod for more than 12 years. I felt that there was more energy at Synod 2019 than at recent years and I feel that this is partly due to the more intimate setting at Taney Parish Centre. Templecarraig venue is great, and very well run, and also much more convenient for me geographically, but the hall seems just a little too big. Obviously the Templecarraig venue is a terrific asset... but you did ask. I also found the discussion groups at Synod 2019 very interesting (50)

I enjoyed the Synod and felt there was more energy in the room this year. (63)

One of the more interesting Diocesan Synods that I have been at in a long time, with a good atmosphere, and engagement. (64)

As one who had become disillusioned with stage managed nature of Synod, I found this one to be genuinely refreshing. I came away encouraged.(65)

Impressed. There's a bright future for the Col. (14)

Organisational Elements

- **Well-organised**

Some respondents made specific reference to the fact that the meeting itself was well organised. People appreciated that timing was adhered to and proceeding concluded on time.

Well run (11)

Very well organized (43)

Well organised... it is important to have time to hear the reports and encourage discussion.... (44)

Very good - timings were well adhered to and the additional elements were very welcome. (45)

...felt the Archbishop chaired the business of the day very effectively (34)

- **Facilitating Engagement**

People's impressions of Synod demonstrate that the new structure of the meeting, specifically the inclusion of the Panel Discussion, Maria Feeney's presentation and the Roundtable Discussion were successful and welcomed. These elements are directly associated with overall positive feedback about Synod 2019. Thematic analysis of the open-ended responses supports these findings. The data demonstrates that the Roundtable Discussions was a very welcome opportunity for members to engage with one another. Respondents felt that this generated lively and fruitful discussion with "Interesting and relevant discussion topics" (2).

Panel Discussion

The atmosphere was positive. It was great to hear about what is happening in the parishes that were profiled as part of the panel. (30)

The format of Synod itself doesn't lend itself well to excitement and stimulation but this was the most positive experience I have had of Synod. I think the inclusion of the Come & C Panel and the breakout sessions played a huge part in this. It helped to remind us that the more mundane administrative elements of our democracy exist to help us live out God's mission to the world. (32)

...the Panel Discussion on Come & See was very relevant. (43)

Panel discussion was great. Definitely more need for this type of discussion and sharing of ideas. (53)

I thoroughly enjoyed the panel discussion. I felt the presentation that followed was too long, especially at the end of the day. The group discussion was interesting and it was informative to hear other perspectives. (63)

Roundtable

The break-out session was good (4)

I found it to be more varied and more interesting as a result. I enjoyed taking part in panel discussion and thought that the break-out sessions at the end of Synod were beneficial (7)

Quite useful, especially to hear views of parish representatives who came to microphone. (9)

Very good atmosphere. Lively discussions especially in break-out session. (10)

I enjoyed the breakaway discussion and was able to speak within my little well-managed group about something of the very small initiatives we have initiated in X Parish (13)

Lively contributions from a wide variety of clergy and lay people (18)

There was a much improved positive atmosphere over previous years. The group discussions prompted a much higher level of individual participation. (39)

Breaking into groups for discussion was a good idea. (52)

The break out session were especially interesting and engaging. (62)

...the breakout sessions were the most lively part. (68)

Two people did suggest that perhaps the Roundtable Discussion should be scheduled earlier in the evening to avoid late-night fatigue.

it would be better if the panel discussion was scheduled immediately after the meal break rather than at the very end of the night when members' brains were tired. (6)

... would have had them a little earlier perhaps rather than at the end of the evening (7)

A very small number made positive reference to that fact that Synod 2019 offered specific opportunity for engagement between clergy and laity.

Great chance for member of Church of Ireland who might never get together. (15)

...opportunity for networking between laity and clergy (19)

...largely a networking event as people seldom have time to catch up other times (24)

Future Learning

The data suggests that there are opportunities to consider how Synod meetings might be more effective and inclusive in the future. These opportunities are themed in terms of

- (1) the time and nature of the Synod meeting
- (2) engagement at the meeting
- (3) perceived exclusion for some at Synod

- **Time and the nature of Synod**

While some respondents noted that they felt the meeting schedule was adhered to, the issue of timing provides an opportunity to review the current timing and scheduling of the Synod meeting. Twelve people responded with negative comments – seven of which related to the issue of time. For these people, scheduling Synod into one evening is over-ambitious and takes away from the business of it as some people feel it is ‘rushed’.

Tired people. Less engagement year on year. (20)

I find the one evening format too short, not allowing space for discussion of topics that may arise in relation to the presentation of a report spontaneous rather prepared ahead of time. (21)

Rushed. Not enough time for reports and debate. Members very aware of shortness of time scale, therefore there was not much response from the floor (25)

Synod has become far too rushed with very little time for laity to contribute their ideas. We are a widespread diocese and social connections are important and yet again this is becoming almost impossible. (47)

Still others felt that the evening, mid-week time for Synod makes it feel pressurised for some.

I feel though that it should be held on a Saturday, rather than on an evening after members are tired from work, etc. (61)

As I work full-time I would prefer Synod to be on a Saturday when I am fresh and can be fully present without having to check my work phone, but a vote was taken and I am not in the majority. (63)

It was very rushed. (68)

This was also noted by one of the individual's whose response was omitted from the statistical analysis since he did not attend Synod. His reason for not attending is because he was unable to attend due to the timing of the meeting being mid-week and this did not facilitate a busy family life. This reason is coupled with another that pertains to a certain perceived exclusivity about Synod meetings.

Could not attend as I was working . This synod is more like a club for retired people, does not take in consideration people with young families and people who work , make it more inclusive , the church is like a club and a not very inclusive one at that. (Deleted response).

In light of these findings, considering a potential re scheduling of Synod may merit attention especially if attracting parents with young children – an age group that was significantly under-represented at this meeting - is a priority.

- **Engagement**

In terms of the actual business of Synod, thirteen people offered comments. Most people felt that there was not enough proper and meaningful debate among members about Synod matters.

Still needs to generate more discussion. Questions raised were not answered. (22)

Not enough audience participation - limiting speeches to 3 minutes stifles debate and gives the message that debate is unwelcome. (36)

... there was disappointing engagement from the floor on the materials to be considered. One had the impression that few had engaged with the reports prior to the meeting. Reports to the Synod are not tapping the concerns of people and the short time available for speeches makes contribution intimidating. The Synod requires to have something to do, something to resolve and cause to happen. Without a challenge the synod becomes apathetic. (37)

Very disappointed the lack of comments & participation of synod members in the report (55)

Still seriously lacking in both debate and time for social (engagement) (56)

There is still very little engagement with the reports presented to diocesan synod. (64)

More participation needed in debates – attendees seem very sedentary at times. (66)

... I would like more debate on a few salient points from the Reports. (67)

Some more general comments were made [*Some arcane procedural matters weren't well explained (4)*] while others related to the fact that Synod was too rushed and there is not enough time to discuss matters adequately or to hear from more attendees. This also supports the reason why some believe Synod should be scheduled on a Saturday.

More time is needed to cover and discuss topics. The proceedings were very rushed. (15)

Rushed. Not enough time for reports and debate. Members very aware of shortness of time scale, therefore there was not much response from the floor.

Synod has become far too rushed with very little time for laity to contribute their ideas. We are a widespread diocese and social connections are important and yet again this is becoming almost impossible. (47)

For a very small few, while they appreciate the new elements because they were uplifting and encouraging, cause for concern was expressed that these new elements should not take away for the business of Synod.

The Come and See item was too long and took from the main business of Synod. (1)

- **Perceived Exclusion at Synod**

A small number of respondents noted that Synod meetings have a 'club-like' feel to them whereby the meeting seems to serve as a "reunion of veterans" (42). This has the potential to be off-putting for some, particularly younger members, who see themselves as being 'outside' of these club-like groups and dynamics. Moreover, it is felt that these 'club' members dominate and are the ones whose voices are heard.

General lack of any involvement of Synod members who are not part of the club. (41)

Most engagement seemed to be with an "inner circle" of parishes. (4)

This was also noted in another comment and was linked to other issues such as diversity. There was an awareness of a lack of diversity in terms of race/ethnicity at the meeting.

Seems to me that this is a place that encourages ego. The set up ensures that those who enjoy being at the 'front' are always the ones providing feedback and oftentimes it is not very relevant. Also, interesting to note that there were no people of colour at the synod. In modern Ireland, the synod is solely represented by aging middle class white Irish...this is not appropriate. (48)

Data presented later in the report demonstrates that the Roundtable Discussion served as an effective way for ensuring the voices of others can be heard.

The issue of inclusion also related to those with special/additional requirements to facilitate equal access to material and engagement, specifically those who have hearing issues. Given, that the age data demonstrates that the majority of those who attend are of an older cohort and more likely to experience difficulties relating to their hearing, it may be worthwhile to ensure all audio options are available and all reasonable resources are provided to ensure equality of opportunity to engage.

A slight issue with the audio due to hearing loss and the use of hearing aids may need to be looked at for future such events. (5)

Only two people used the word “boring” in their response. Another two felt Maria Feeney’s presentation was too long. Only one voice expressed a negative impression “I found the Come & C booklet something of a repackage, reflective as aspirational, rather than constructive and inspirational (13). And a nuanced perspective was offered by one member who was attending Synod for the first time

Interesting for a first timer – some of the clerics sounded like it was a sermon and not presentation – which I felt was off-putting. (55)

The data here provides an opportunity to consider key elements of Synod in terms of how people engage at the meeting and what members want and expect from the meeting. While some hold firm that Synod is expected to attend to certain business, it would seem that striking a balance between the regular business and retaining more engaging elements would be beneficial. Moreover, condensing the business of Synod into one evening, while efficient, does not appear to be entirely appropriate. Some feel that real debate of issues cannot be facilitated under such time constraints when there seems to be a real interest in doing so. And some comments reveal that members with young families simply cannot attend mid-week. This qualitative data is supported in the statistical analysis of the respondents’ age of which only 7 people were aged 40-49 years and only 3 were aged 30-39 years.

[Come &C and the 5 Marks of Mission](#)

This section of the report addresses people’s familiarity with Come & C and their impressions about it following Maria Feeney’s presentation at the meeting. As noted earlier, *Come & C* is an ongoing invitation to discipleship across the United Dioceses that was officially launched in 2015 and the vast majority of respondents were aware of it.

- **83.6% (61) of respondents were aware that *Come & C* was an ongoing invitation to Mission and Discipleship throughout the Dioceses.**

However, less than half of respondents (43.8%, n= 32) were aware of the fact that the *Come & C* research was published on the Diocesan website. Less than a quarter of respondents (23.3%, n= 17) had read about the findings on the website prior to Synod 2019.

Maria Feeney’s presentation at Synod aimed to present the main findings of the research. Her presentation was scheduled after the main interval when the official business of Synod

had concluded and before the Roundtable Sessions. The purpose of this was to provide a short overview and insight of the findings, specifically shedding light on how some parishes responded to *Come &C*. She provided numerous examples of this that were constructively aligned to the broad thematic strands that provided the guiding structure for the Roundtable Discussions. Her presentation took about 20-25 minutes and she reminded members that a copy of the book was available for everyone.

Question 5 in the questionnaire was an open-ended question that asked ***What key message about Come &C did you take home after listening to Maria Feeney's presentation at Synod last week?***

61 people responded but two responses were rendered invalid: one respondent offered the following number as their response '1)' and another offered a question mark. Consequently, there were 59 valid qualitative responses. The majority, two-thirds, of responses were positive (66.1%, n= 39).

Some noted that the message about *Come &C* was "inspiring" (10) while another noted that "The Church is alive and relevant." (40). Feelings that *Come &C* was inclusive were also noted – "It is there for everyone. Young and old" (51). And another felt that *Come &C* raised awareness "Need to be aware of how everything we do impacts on *Come &C*" (54). Presenting the findings served as a useful exercise for "Information and advice about the practical application of the initiative." (53).

The key messages are presented thematically, in no particular order of importance.

Message 1: *Come &C* is an ongoing invitation

There was a **definite understanding that Come and C was an ongoing invitation** in addition to an awareness that some parish activities were occurring intuitively before *Come &C*. People understood that *Come & C* was an opportunity to give focus to their efforts.

That this was an ongoing process rather than something tried out and dropped (37)

That Come & C is an ongoing initiative - I somehow had thought it was a once-off project. (45)

That it was an invitation. There are small on-going projects happening throughout the parishes that we may not be aware of. Collaboration was perhaps a theme. (56)

It is not rocket science and many parishes are already doing mission organically without realizing that it is 'Come &C'. (36)

That this was an ongoing process that informed all that we do in our Parishes. (58)

Message 2: A scriptural message

The key message for others was of a more 'higher order', with some relating their **key take-home message as being of a scriptural/gospel teaching one** that they specifically linked to mission and discipleship.

The importance of focusing on key areas of mission and witness among the many distractions of church life. (7)

It has inspired people in different parishes to initiate something new within the five Marks of Mission of the Anglican Communion. (8)

We need to focus more on discipleship and less on maintenance. (35)

Come &C offers (or potentially offers) a nuanced and multifaceted sense of mission which looks around at the 21st century, rather than looking back to the 19th. (39)

That C&C is following the five marks of mission that pre-dated C&C. (56)

The value of participation, community and discipleship. Felt grateful for this initiative. (59)

Message 3: Opportunity for learning and collaboration

The responses of some participants reveal that they saw *Come &C* as a **welcome opportunity for learning and collaboration and growth for and between Parishes**. This has the potential to be interpreted as recognising a need for inter-Diocesan engagement, something that could be explored further.

That there are a lot of interesting ideas out there that other parishes can learn from and experience that can be shared. (3)

She highlighted the importance of greater collaboration between parishes. (6)

Sharing of ideas is always valuable (15)

Parishes should share any initiatives. (25)

There is a lot of good work going on around the diocese - sharing these ideas provide options for other parishes to feel empowered to participate. (41)

Engagement is important. (42)

Even one small activity in the Parish can lead to other things. (47)

Message 4: Multiple messages

The majority of responses were positive (65.0%). Outside of the three main thematic messages identified above, other positive messages were noted which were of a more generic kind are documented here.

One response in particular stood out - a respondent offered an interesting 'marketing-type' explanation that effectively captures the essence of what *Come &C* is:

This was a template into which parish initiatives could be shoe-horned – a bit like the Wild Atlantic Way, gives focus to things already existing! (2)

Other more general responses are provided below in terms of the key messages that people recalled.

That there was a lot of work put into collating the material for Come &C and also to what new exciting events happening from this (1)

From what I can remember, it was a wonderful speech. The key message was inspiring. (10)

Better informed (12)

Breadth of interpretation (14)

Get involved (17)

Respect of the past while moving forward to the future (20)

I am glad to know that our church, as a whole, is looking towards the future rather than dwelling in the past and what has always been done. (22)

There's plenty of stuff going on in our dioceses (24)

An overall understanding of Come &C (28)

There is more happening in the Dioceses than I knew about, much of which provides helpful ideas and outcomes that we can all learn from. (29)

The many things we can do other than just attending Church. The bigger picture!! (31)

It's diversity (33)

Inclusion (44).

Good (52)

That many things get labelled as C and C initiatives! (60).

Future Learning

From a total of 59 valid responses, 22 (37.3%) can be considered in terms of opportunities for future learning. All but two rest across two main categories: (1) Awareness/Communications (6.8%, n=4) and (2) Maria Feeney's presentation (27.1%, n= 16).

- Awareness/Communications

A small number of individuals raised the issue of communication/awareness and engagement. noted that they, or their parish, were not adequately informed about the initiative or its related activities.

our parish not kept up-to-date on topic. Interesting but felt for better inclusion there is a need to ensure all parishes are aware of the topic so the Synod rep can give their views and not their own as they are there to represent their parishioners. (5)

The importance of constant communication and contact. (16)

Need for communications (30)

There were a variety of activities at parish level as a direct result of the initiative however I feel many congregations may have heard nothing of Come and C since Cone age C Sunday. (32)

Three further responses rest outside these categories:

Some parishes very engaged with Come & See but alot not. Why? (19)

Can't remember – Survey went into junk mail for a fortnight. Still reading the Come & C report. (23)

...more needs to be done to assist parishes with resources for new ideas. (43)

- Maria Feeney's Presentation

As noted earlier the presentation of the main findings took approximately 20-25 minutes to deliver. Of the 22 respondents who offered feedback that relates to future learning, 15 respondents (68.2%) made reference to the presentation and their comments are considered as useful feedback for future presentations. The majority (n=11) noted the following terms (or a close variation of these terms) in their responses "too long", "too

much” and/or “too lengthy”. When documenting their comments about Maria’s presentation they noted

... it was too much to take in & after a while, I’m afraid I tuned out & thought I’d find out about it another way (21)

I felt Maria’s speech was too long, though that is not to criticise the quality of the content or the skills of the person... (9)

Unfortunately Maria’s delivery was spoken too quickly and with too much content – so she lost me (and I was interested). This was a case of less was best! Sorry (48)

I do not mean to sound disrespectful but Maria Feeney’s presentation was far too long, and the key messages got lost in the longevity... (56)

This feedback has the potential to lend itself to some of the earlier and overall impressions of Synod where members noted that the event itself is long and has an ambitious business agenda. In those responses it was noted, by some, that people were tired and lacking focus at this point in the evening. This will be a key consideration for improving future addresses at Synod – in fact, another respondent offered a suggestion “To limit presentations to a time slot of say 15 minutes.” (34). Other responses noted “nothing in particular” (27), “Not a lot” (50), “she spoke quickly that I could not keep up” (46).

The Value and Benefits of the Roundtable Discussions

Question 6 on the questionnaire evaluated people’s impressions of the value of the Roundtable Discussion. This was a new element for Synod 2019 and received an overwhelmingly positive response. 72 people responded to the following three items:

- **This was a beneficial exercise 86.1% Agreement (n= 62)**
- **I enjoyed engaging with others from different parishes 88.9% Agreement (n= 64)**
- **I believe more opportunities for engagement like this should be provided 90.3% Agreement (n= 65)**

In addition to this general overview, 52 respondents provided qualitative responses pertaining to their impression of the Roundtable Discussion. Once again, the majority of the qualitative responses are positive. Those responses are organised thematically.

Roundtable Discussions Facilitate All Voices Being Heard.

12 individuals (23.1%) explained that the small group structure of the Roundtable Discussions created a space whereby people felt their voices could be heard without being lost by the

domination of a few voices that appears to be witnessed during the main Synod proceedings as evidenced in people's overall impression of Synod 2019. In this way, people feel a sense of inclusion and this makes for a more positive and democratic experience where the diversity of the group could be really appreciated by all.

Easier to engage and share experiences in a smaller group. The group I was with had a wide variety of parish types (urban, suburban, rural) which was good. (4)

Some people express their feelings better in small groups. (44)

Each participant was able to contribute and have their views considered. (46)

It adds informal sharing to the formal business of Synod and gives voice to all. (8)

Opportunity was afforded to advance one's point of view. (13)

It gave "the man in the pew" the opportunity to contribute in a more relaxed setting than during the main session. (14)

The major success of this was that people who had never addressed the synod previously came forward to speak. We were not treated to the same old fogies trotting out their same old broken records. (28)

It allowed variety of opinion and a greater participation for all concerned. (30)

I felt the discussion at the breakout groups was really interesting and engaged Synod Members directly with the practical issues of parish life on a variety of issues for clergy and laity alike. I really enjoyed engaging with people from other parishes and sharing the discussion with some old friends. The group I was involved with was how to engage young people in parish life in an ongoing way. These groups were a practical example of how to give individuals a feeling of personal engagement with the shared aims of a larger group - to which they belong but that they may usually feel alienated from. In that sense, we were all teenagers. I really enjoyed Synod 2019. Thank you. (39)

The size of the groups was ideal - it meant that there was genuine conversation between the members of the group. The feedback to the main meeting was very well managed. People felt that the views of the ordinary Synod members were

heard - that they were more than 'voting fodder' for votes that frequently appear to be stage managed. (50)

Small numbers of really interested participants meant good exchanges of views and suggestions. (52)

Roundtables Facilitate Meaningful Engagement.

Roundtable Discussions are a valuable exercise primarily because they bring people together to share their experiences and people embrace the opportunity not just to share their own experience but also listen to others.

Respondents shared some general comments and reported that they found it “interesting” (36), good” (15), “nice...refreshing” (20), “interactive, informative and fun” (17), “beneficial” (26) and “usefully provocative” (27). Such positivity was evident in 63.5% (n= 33) of the 52 responses.

The Roundtables also served facilitate people feeling included and that their voice mattered.

A very rare opportunity to exchange views with a range of synod members (or anyone) of differing age, experience, parish background, etc., in a very respectful way, sharing commitment to meaningful, active and reaching-out faith in the context of the many challenges of today's world. (33)

Opportunity to hear what is working in other Parishes and to get ideas to take home. Good cross section of ages and backgrounds in the group meant that thoughts and suggestions were varied. An excellent idea. I would have enjoyed taking part in the other discussion groups as well and would like to see more time allocated to this type of activity at Synod on a regular basis. I felt far more involved leaving this Synod than I did after previous ones. (41)

I revel in the shared meaning making. I think it is an effective way for us to explore the harder issues our Church and society face. (47)

In terms of these issues, “LGBT and others” (25), “youth” (3, 39, 52) and “minority faiths” (48) were mentioned.

Another noted that this type of engagement is essential for Church well-being “working/thinking together is crucial for survival and revival” (11). This can be further advanced and supported by the comments of other participants who believed that such discussions should be used to develop actions, otherwise the value of what the Roundtable intends to achieve is compromised.

In my opinion the Church of Ireland lacks a forum a parish level. There may be time for a few questions at the General Vestry meeting but that may not be the

suitable moment. Some aspects of the Church may not be open to question, but increasingly in a world which prides itself in increased transparency there are matters which need to be touched upon, one of which is the decline in attendance at Synod (10)

Unexpected responses from people of varying ages; people are genuinely concerned that our church doesn't take a stronger & more vocal stand on social questions of the time in Irish society - a stronger voice is needed (18)

It was nice to be able to discuss issues that have a real impact on society. It was refreshing to hear so many people have similar progressive views. It however needs to have some channel of action because it's just a heap of talk if it doesn't effect change within the church of Ireland policy etc. (20)

There should be some action on the floor of the Synod as a result of discussion, some decision for the synod to take, some proposal to adopt. In the absence of decisions, the forum approach will become stale. (28)

Listening to others from different parishes means that people can appreciate the diversity that exists across the United Dioceses.

It is easy to become 'insular minded' within one's own parish and forget the different challenges other parishes may face. An open and friendly exchange is a valuable exercise and a good learning experience. Different styles of services show the richness and diversity within the Anglican Communion. (9)

Consequently, coming together in this way has the potential to strengthen unity across all Parishes with an aim of uniting to fulfil the Church's mission.

gave some idea of what is happening in the dioceses and in other parishes and how we should be co-operating on the churches mission. (5)

Moreover, such engagement can serve as an affirming personal experience as noted by another member who led the discussion

Leading a breakout session was a great experience as it helped me get a better idea of others' ideas of justice and mission. It was really encouraging to see that some things I am passionate about matter deeply to people from other demographics and contexts. (23)

Future Learning for the Roundtable Discussions

A very small number of respondents offered some feedback that serves as opportunities for future learning.

- **Synod not appropriate for Roundtable Discussions**

Two people noted that Synod is not the appropriate forum for Roundtable Discussions.

It would be better to have roundtable discussions on a different occasion. Takes too much time from Synod. (1)

It was a good chance to exchange views but Synod should not be the forum for this exchange (37)

- **Time**

Some felt that the time allocated for the Roundtable was insufficient.

The number of questions to be considered required more time than was available and as a result some of our responses will have been somewhat superficial though well intentioned. (21)

There were too many questions really for the limited time. (22)

- **Group Formation**

An opportunity may perhaps exist for more detailed consideration in terms of assigning members to groups. The rationale for this is explained by one participant

The majority of our group were, I think, from "south of the Liffey" and north of Bray. So there was only some minor divergence of thought. (21)

- **Other considerations**

The questions (at least in the social justice group) were phrased in a somewhat leading manner. One other group participant commented on this--it was clear there was a 'right' answer, it was not an environment of sharing or considering different opinions or theological views. (22)

To improve this for future events consideration should be given to the physical environment. The ambient noise inhibited some members of the group from fully participating. I would also suggest providing additional training for facilitators to help them to remain impartial and avoid guiding the discussion in particular directions. (35)

Come &C Parish Activity and Opportunity

Four items in the questionnaire sought to ascertain a sense of *Come &C* activities in members' parishes and to examine if members felt more opportunities existed in their parishes for *Come &C*. We also wanted to know if members would like to initiate something new and if they would appreciate assistance from the *Come &C* team to realise their plans.

Q7: Has your parish undertaken any *Come &C* specific activities/initiatives that you are aware of? (71 responded).

- Only 35.2% (n= 25) of respondents answered 'yes'

Q8: Do more opportunities exist in your Parish for activities/initiatives that relate to *Come &C* & the Five Marks of Mission? (68 responded)

- 72.1% (n= 49) said 'Yes'

Q9: Would you like to initiative a *Come &C* initiative in your parish?

- Of the 63 people that responded, only 38.1% said 'Yes'

Q10: If you would like to initiative something in your parish, would you like the *Come &C* Team to assist you with your efforts?

- 64 people responded. Only 26.6% (n= 17) said 'Yes' they would, and the majority, 62.6% (40) reported 'Non-Applicable)

What was happening in the Parishes?

Twenty-four respondents offered comments that provided an opportunity to briefly examine some of the various activities that were happening across the Dioceses. Activities varied; some parishes held services, others developed 'outreach' type initiatives while others engaged in multiple activities. The activities are presented thematically in terms of (1) Services and studies, (2) Community Outreach and Engagement, (3) Two Parishes' Multi-Level Engagements are 'showcased'. One respondent's example of the efforts that pre-date *Come &C* is also included before a note is made about the unfortunate 'disbanding' of one lovely Parish initiative due to a lack of support structures.

Services and studies

Lenten bible studies (1)

*At least one *Come &C*-related Service was held (3)*

We have utilized Bible Study course, based on the Five Marks, last Lent and they were well attended and lively. I have also done a Sermon series here based on the Five Marks. I am also hoping to use the Five Marks as the basis for my Mon- Friday Holy Week Series here, just before Easter 2020. (5)

Service based on Come and C using the theme of 5 stained glass windows in the church to illustrate each point. Come and C also mentioned in other services. (7)

Teaching, activities and possible mission (11)

The parish participated in the Diocesan Come & Celebrate Service in September 2016. The Parish also held a Songs of Praise Service and participated in a Rural Deanery meeting. (17)

Come & C Service (18)

A service dedicated to it. (19)

Community Outreach and Engagement

We started a monthly Coffee Morning for our joint parishes which has now been running for 3years and although not too well supported it provides an informal meeting point and is very beneficial and socially inclusive. (2)

Since the building of our new parish centre many outreach activities have developed engaging people of all ages, traditional parishioners as well as casual callers and many from the wider community. (8)

We are always trying to reach out to the young and also to other denominations. We have children's services as well as Sunday club, have started a Youth club and are very involved with the community of the town. (9)

Children and family community outreach days. (14)

Who Let The Dads Out? (15)

Camino (22)

Two Parishes' Multi-Level Engagement

In our parish we have done some work on tending God's acre We have installed bird and bat boxes in the graveyard, conjunction with the parish school and have left a section of the graveyard grass un-cut for bees and insects and small animals to thrive. We have stopped using weed-killer in the graveyard. We have planted up herb boxes which people are welcome to cut and use. We have a couple of Saturdays set aside each year for anyone to come and help weed and tend the graveyard. Some

of us have enjoyed the Camino de Glendalough - but we did not organise this. As our church is very much part of the community, we open the church for the local heritage society a couple of times a year to deliver talks etc. This encourages the local community to come in and look around and feel welcome. We have a choir that is a community choir who sing at Harvest, Christmas and School services. The choir has organised concerts but in the church and in other venues to fundraise for Church projects such as the roof. We practice in the church. This is the only involvement some people have with Church but some members have started to come at anniversaries and at other times important to them and there is always a good turn out on Christmas morning when we are just part of the congregation. The choir is made up of parishioners, school parents, 6th class students and local members of the community from all faiths and none. This choir pre-dates the C&C initiative but is very much in keeping with it. (23)

We have started a group called the Pink Ladies. This is an informal group that meets a few times a year, and is to provide a gathering place for women. Eight women in our parishes were going through or had recently gone through breast cancer treatment, in addition to other women who were undergoing treatment for other forms of cancer. The pink part of the name links us back with breast cancer, and calling ourselves the Pink Ladies, sounds a little bit more 'sassy' than Women's Support Group! We are about to have a Men's Breakfast in a local pub, on a Saturday morning. We are conscious that men don't talk to each other as freely as women, and the idea is to gather men together in an informal and non-threatening way. Our first speaker at the breakfast is a sports personality who has also spoken out about mental health, and we are anxious to pursue ways to make mental health a 'okay topic'. We have a 'Sausage Service' once a month for children and teenagers who play sport on a Sunday morning. It is a short, informal service geared for children and teenagers, and is followed by a supper of sausages and potato wedges - hence the name! (24)

Efforts that pre-date Come &C

Various activities are on-going in the parish but not labelled as Come&C. The activities have been in operation since before Come &C was mentioned. Breakfast for parents before the monthly school assembly. Children left into school (or can have breakfast too) to get ready for assembly in the church. Parish summer activity camp plus other activities (20)

One person offered a general explanation “A number of activities and initiatives over recent years have incorporated the Five Marks of Mission.” (4). Two respondents mentioned “Awards” (12, 16), another respondent declined to provide detail because to do would “eliminate anonymity of this survey” (10).

Two replied in the negative and one merits attention. One person simply said, “Not that I’m aware of” (21) but another person’s response demonstrated that despite the best intentions of one parish to establish a meaningful initiative, a lack of support structures meant it was unsustainable.

I don't think so. I haven't heard of any. Messy Church was up and running well but has disbanded at the moment due to lack of leaders. (13)

Do opportunities exist and if so, what factors might assist/prohibit their establishment?

72% (n= 49) of respondents noted that ‘Yes’ opportunities exist for *Come &C* in their Parish. Forty respondents offered further comments that are organised thematically.

- **Mechanical Issues**

Interestingly, 22.5% (n= 9) highlight a range of issues that potentially limit and/or complicate the establishment of new initiatives. We see these issues as *mechanical* ones as they refer to the basic running of such initiatives.

Would like to get more things up and running but sometimes there is drawbacks like having to have people e-vetted (people are sometimes not forthcoming if they know they have to be vetted – not that they have anything to hide but just don't like the form filling at the end of it.). (1)

Hard to see them at the moment as we have had no Rector now for over a year (3)

Probably do but parishioners swamped with life and daily issues that its unrealistic to expect them to commit to more or to change. (13)

Lack of leaders is the big problem at the moment (15)

We have lots of opportunities to do more but don't have the volunteers; it's the same people run everything and stay to clean up. (17)

We are struggling – small in number – no children and every excuse as to why we don't! (32)

We are vacant now with no leader so it is difficult (33)

Because I don't think that the rector is taking the lead in this. The rector should set the tone. I don't think that the parishioners in general know about Come and see. If I was to ask most of them the response I would get is "what's that". (35)

Need someone to drive them. (40)

Current Activity

Not every respondent identified an opportunity for Come & C in their parish but they did provide brief accounts for the fact that their parishes are “active”.

We are an active parish, but don't frame our activities in terms of diocesan initiatives (2)

My parish has launched a number of new initiatives with a view to getting more parish members involved in the life of the parish. (5)

Yes Come & C more of an enabling guide - we have based vision building programme of late on 'Divine Renovation' but incorporating the 5 marks. (6)

I would feel that quite a bit of our existing parish programme and aims actually come under at least some of the Five Marks umbrella already. Perhaps it is more a matter of fine-tuning or categorizing them more, under the Five Marks - or being more aware that they in fact already meet the ideals of at least most of the Five Marks, in some way. Here, I think of our twin Mission - Links, for example, which are very active, and our also active Eco-Congregation group. (8)

It is mainly centered around loving one another and the family. (9)

There may be in the future but many new initiatives have begun in the last couple of years. (11)

Our parish is in a vibrant growing area, this has provided both benefits and challenges in reaching out to new housing areas. I feel some of the initiatives which were presented may have application however the Come & C project has not had any profile in parish activities to date. (27)

Our parish is very inclusive and engaging and very active with activities for all. (28)

Our rector has introduced so much to the parish in the time that he has been with us all good but I have no idea how many relate to Come & C (30)

In many ways, what we do in the Parish relates to the Come & See headings. (38)

... Very few gaps in our Church week between small groups, prayer meetings etc. (39)

Potential Opportunities

I believe so but will need to be properly informed of the concept by someone as it doesn't seem to have been brought up / given to the parish previously. (4)

Social and environmental issues (10)

There is constant encouragement for new ideas (12)

Build more awareness of inviting new folk to parish activities and worship (16)

This answer is somewhat speculative. Our parish has two distinct strands "Traditional" and "Contemporary" that are still getting to know each other. There is in my view more scope for interaction between the two congregations and I believe that Rector, Select Vestry and other group leaders are all working at this (18)

It's an opportunity to get together and have discussions. (20)

I feel it would be beneficial to our parish. (21)

It's a broad umbrella that allows a variety of interpretations. (22)

Is anyone ever doing everything that we possibly could?! In particular, I think there is potential for more engagement with marks 4 & 5. These are maybe the two marks of mission which could be seen to cohere less closely with many people's traditional understanding of mission and therefore which sit less automatically with the traditional range of parish activities. (25)

I think it would be possible to raise the profile of Come &C and the Five Marks of Mission in a parochial context. (34)

The answer has to be yes as there is always more that we can strive to do. However, I am not aware of anything in the pipeline just at the moment. (36)

We are exploring the possibility of having both churches open in the early morning for people to drop in and have a time of quiet and prayer on their way to work or after the school drop-off. (37)

Concerns

A very small number of concerns were raised by some members relating to *Come &C*. While one noted that they did in fact engage in discussions when it was launched, they provided no indication of current or proposed activity (26). Still two others felt that there was an element of 'box ticking' for *Come &C*.

There is always more that could be done under the banner '5 marks of mission'! The very real danger is that this is just another type of box-ticking exercise. Come &C becomes about putting on special activities. It is just another item to add to the to-do list of already busy people. The questions and talk of Come &C seem most frequently to be phrased as activities or initiatives that have been undertaken or identifying possibilities of future activities. There doesn't seem to be much that identifies mission as the lifestyle that arises out of a transformed heart, that extends love and grace and care to the community because of having already received love and grace and care from God. (19)

At the time of its inception there was a perception in the Parish that this was one more initiative among many before it that did not seem to go anywhere and it was hard to raise enthusiasm for it. (38)

There should be more engagement at a Rural Deanery level. There should also be a greater involvement in 'Treasuring' by protecting the environment and 'Transforming' the inequality of our local community. (24)

Communications and using the Diocesan Website

The questionnaire asked about people's use of the Diocesan website to inform themselves of events and initiatives like *Come &C* in Question 4, and also in Question 3 with the latter specifically inquiring about *Come &C*.

Generally, it would appear that there is limited use of the website with almost half of respondents (48.0%, n=35) reporting that they *Almost Never* use the website. Limited use of the website may relate to the age profile of respondents, the overwhelming majority of whom are over fifty (85%), while almost two-thirds (64.3%, n= 45) are over 60 years. However, the author is aware that this may not necessarily be the case since it is this same overwhelming majority who engaged in the online survey that they were notified about via email. It may be the case that this group have a preference for the type of online activity they engage in. Responding to one's email may register more favourably compared to searching the internet for news relating to their parish and dioceses. These findings may inform the United Dioceses' online/social media strategy going forward. The following chart illustrates the frequency that people use the Diocesan website.

Frequency	%
More than once a week	6.9 (5)
Once a week	8.2 (6)
2-3 times a month	8.2 (6)
Once a month	28.8 (21)
Almost never	48.0 (35)
	N = 73

Part 4: Experience of *Come &C* and the Five Marks of Mission

Roundtable Analysis

The Roundtable Discussions and their respective groups were focused around four key themes:

- Young People
- Church and Environment
- The Church and Other Faiths
- Social Justice

Members were randomly assigned to the groups in advance of Synod. Four large rooms in Taney Parish Centre facilitated this breakaway session. Each group had a Discussion Paper to facilitate and guide members around key points relating to the theme. The Roundtable Discussion among members was scheduled to commence at 8.30pm and last for approximately forty minutes. During this time Maria Feeney visited each of the four rooms and sat with one or two groups therein to obtain a sense of the issues and ideas they were discussion. After the group session concluded, all members returned to the main hall. Maria Feeney then relayed some of the main discussion points and ideas that the groups she engaged with had noted. She then opened the floor to all groups to come to the microphone to summarise their group's thinking along the thematic lines to which they were assigned. This was a lively and most enjoyable exchange and experience for members and the data in the previous section attests to this fact with 86.1% of respondents agreeing that this was a beneficial exercise.

The discussion that follows is structured around the four Roundtable Discussion Themes. The Discussion Paper that was given to members is copied here and what follows from each respective one, are the responses and ideas offered by the groups who discussed that theme.

Note: The original idea was that these ideas would serve as a very broad type of blueprint that would be further, and more meaningfully, developed at the High School Meeting scheduled for Saturday, 29th February 2020. Given the success of the first High School Meeting in September 2015, and the many expressions of interest and need for another such Diocesan-level meeting - as reflected in the findings of the *Come &C* report (Tuohy and Feeney, 2019), it was expected that this would be an appropriate forum for the considered development of a vision for a new decade within the United Dioceses.

However, due to much data-defying surprise and disappointment, interest in the High School 2020 waned and due to low registration, a decision was made to postpone the event. Within twelve days of the planned High School 2020 event, the COVID-19 global pandemic put the country into 'lockdown'. All activities, plans, and worship gatherings came to a halt. Until the nation can figure out the 'new normal' that lies ahead of us as we continue with social distancing measures, re-scheduling the High School event is paused indefinitely.

However, the circulation of this report might be worthwhile. It may serve as a thought-provoking exercise to consider the applicability of some of these new ideas as we face embracing a 'new normal'. It may be useful to initiate a new, online discussion forum where members can 'pick up where they left off' and continue their engagement online. But in light of respondents' limited use of the diocesan website, it would probably require significant investment of time and resources from a communications perspective.

Young People

The Church of Ireland is not unusual in finding it difficult to retain young people after they reach their teens. Those families which are interested in their children maintaining their faith will often bring them to church or Sunday School (if there is one). However, as they get older, children often find other things competing for their time – sleep, exams, friends, and very often, sport. It is at that time when they start to drift away from the church and, in a lot of cases, don't come back, at least until they have their own children.

In other cases, families find that Sundays are the only days when they are together and so going to church comes well down their list of priorities.

Trying to find innovative ways to retain children and young people within the church is a constant challenge and one that can only often be done with a dedicated youth officer.

Some questions that might be asked are:

- How do we make physical space in individual churches to accommodate young people?
- In what way can a parish involve young people in services, without excluding those who are older, and how do we ensure that the young people come to church for services when they are not involved?
- How do we take young peoples' comments on board if they are not on Select Vestries?
- How can we get more people to become youth officers and how can we retain them?
- Should we involve those who have just experienced confirmation sessions as "junior" youth officers to involve and retain their enthusiasm?

Youth Discussion Overview – *Meet them where they are*

Ample and creative opportunities exist for engagement with young people. The groups collectively recognise the importance of 'meeting them where they are'. Responses demonstrate a willingness to engage with the youth in meaningful ways that will encourage their engagement, for example reaching out to them via meaningful channels such as sport and music and having 'influencers' support Church efforts to speak to them at their level and also to recognise causes that are important to them, such as climate change. This demonstrates that the idea of "modernising Church, modernising worship", as noted in the

Come & C report, is very much alive and at work among those who responded to the 'Youth' discussion. The importance of democratic values is also evident from the groups' feedback. They respect the young person's voice and wish for it to be afforded channels within Church where it can be heard – for example through Youth Vestries, councils. Indeed, post-confirmation emerges as a key opportunity to engage with recently confirmed students who could potentially serve as leaders to the up and coming Confirmation group. It is evident that members do not simply wish to pay 'lip service' to young people rather they are happy and willing to facilitate young people's greater engagement. Moreover, it is also important to cater to their basic needs – specifically the spaces that are on offer to them and bringing them together with food and recreational activities. One challenge however was acknowledged and that relates to the modern and busy family life that parents and their children are heavily invested in. Working lives, commuting and weekend sport commitments explain why young people and their families' ability and willingness to engage in weekend Church services/activities is compromised.

Group 1

Thoughts: If there is no room, they can't come. Physical space is limited. Content vs. physical space. Inclusion is more important than physical space. Food works! Teenagers want separate space and their own activities with their friends.

Ideas: (1) Reading lessons, play instruments, Family 'meeters' and greeters', helping with serving teas etc., simple tasks they can easily manage & be praised for, helping with smaller children. (2) Give them a forum: democracy, Junior Vestry – build on youth groups, find a way to hear them and meet them where they are, (offer) a comment box. Agreement to attend three confirmation services after Confirmation – Invite them.

Group 2

1

Physical environment – generational differences, there needs to be space for everyone. Resources to change the space. Remove pews - (create) movement. A place where you could have meals after services. Activity on Sundays, sports etc. Music/Digital/Engaging. -youth needs to be encouraged to come to Church: welcoming, collection, shorter sermons, get kids to do prayers, give praise to kids who are involved in sports, blessing of school bags etc. Allow kids pick songs, child-friendly liturgy. Youth Select Vestry: how things work, give them jobs to do.

2 Reach Out

Perhaps look to see what we can do outside the Church to reach people where they are at. To reach parents is hard. People are not interested.

Having parent-focused events

Priest in collar is not a positive thing – people will not engage. Church history and recent issues cause people to mistrust Church.

Church needs to make an effort.

Visit sports events.

25-35 are not coming. They are our volunteers too.

Issues: GDPR – data protection & child safety training

Youth Officers: Funding - (1) full-time PAID workers required & (2) Select Vestry support youth i.e. pay bowling/pizza etc. Retain youth leaders.

Church roles: they need to come early to practice.

We require more family workers.

Outside church initiatives in words they understand.

Have a day once a month in a school

(Permit) Not Church of Ireland families come – let's not be picky!

Can we involve those who finish Confirmation as Leaders?

They need to be First Year up – so they know what confirmation is about

Junior Leaders can have small responsibilities

Funded Youth Officers

(Have) Strategic Vision – Resourced

Group 3

Physical space – designated space/place. A space to come together. Place to feel safe, belong, let them shape.

Possible activities: Sunday sport once a month, Sausage Service/Sizzle Service, 6.30 'pick your time'. Commitment changed from weekly to monthly, Parish Schools after schools (have) a mid-week 'club' that is Church-based.

Gaisce: Transition Year opportunity

Messy Church: choose day/time that suits best. Involving teens – Parish 'CallARotation'

Youth Worker volunteers – not parents.

Interns: keep in contact post confirmation (via) WhatsApp Prayer Group

Post-Confirmation: seek youth volunteers – meaningful address

Music/sport quarterly events.

Forum (for) young people: give them a voice, Student Council

(Challenges): Changing lives, busy/tired parents. Commuting. Would young people engage?

Group 4

Space: encouragement to read, alternative service times (sports). Before space, we need young people. SGT Ratios – struggle to get leaders.

Services: If they have friends at Church, youth will come. Alternative forms of worship – music. Advocacy – themes climate change. To build services around guest speakers/influencers. Mix of ancient and modern.

Vestries: What would attract them? Go to youth and engage them. Suggestion boxes online? Diocesan Youth Council/Forum. The right people in the right roles (officer). Listening groups.

Youth Officer: Release resources. Are we investing enough? Youth Officer in each Rural Deanery. A Diocesan problem too, not just Parish. Training? Networked, Oversight, Creative – grants, joint venture with University

Junior Youth Officer: Yes! Training – once right. Structure resources available.

Group 5

- 1 Parenting courses needed.
- 2 Old people to relate to young people.
- 3 Mix of generations in Church
- 4 Educate together not Church-orientated
- 5 Church schools not promoting Sunday Church
- 6 Invite Parishioners to school assembly
- 7 Get youth involved in services
- 8 Make contact through parents or youth??
- 9 Youth clubs not encouraged to mention 'God'
- 10 Encourage youth to get involved
- 11 Get youth to pray for sick youth
- 12 Select Vestry members to ask youth + all = any comments for meeting?
- 13 Seek out talent and use in Church!!

Church and the Environment

In recent years we have become very dependent on plastics for packaging and in order to comply with hygiene regulations. However, most of these take centuries to degrade in landfill and much of it has ended up in our oceans where it is ingested by fish and ultimately returns to the human food chain.

Climate Change is almost universally acknowledged as one of the most pressing issues of our time. On 15th March 2019, school children from many countries around the world skipped classes and marched in support of taking urgent action to combat its worst ravages.

On 28th March 2019, the United Nations Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (I.P.C.C.) issued a sobering report in preparation for a Climate Action Summit which took place in New York in September. In it they revised downwards to just 11 years the window of opportunity to do something to avoid the worst catastrophes of Climate Change. It warns that unless there is a drastic reduction in human generated carbon emissions and other 'Greenhouse' gases we will see the accelerated melting of Polar Icecaps with a resultant rise in sea levels which will flood many of the largest cities worldwide. It also predicts that there will be an increasing number of severe weather events such as devastating cyclones and hurricanes, heavy monsoon rainfall in areas which do not experience this phenomena at present as well as harsher winter weather with heavy snowfall at hitherto more temperate latitudes.

Internationally there is a worrying failure by many countries to meet targets set by the Paris Climate Accord, with the United States withdrawing from it entirely. So much so that following the United Kingdom declaring a Climate Emergency on 1st May 2019 (the first country in the world to do so), Ireland became the second, declared a similar emergency on 9th May 2019.

To tackle this emergency a number of proposals have been put forward including reducing transport emissions (i.e. more electric vehicles and increased use of public transport), reducing agricultural emissions (i.e. reduction of livestock, more environmentally friendly farming methods including restrictions in the use of pesticides), and reducing our dependence on fossil fuels for private and industrial heating as well as power generation. There is, however, an acknowledgment that this cannot and will not happen overnight!

1. What does the Christian Church have to say about stewardship of the environment.
2. What can the Church of Ireland in these United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough do to be better stewards of the environment?
3. Eco-Congregation Ireland promotes an interdenominational environmentally friendly approach (www.ecocongregationireland.com). It provides checklist and resources to work towards this goal. Should this be something that is promoted in all parishes throughout these United Dioceses?
4. Children and adolescence seem to have grasped the urgency of protecting our environment for their and subsequent generations. Is there anything that the Church can do to impress this urgency on older generations?

Church and Environment Overview – *Coalition of Generations*

Four groups discussing this topic returned their discussion points and the points proved interesting. Using and mobilising existing resources is recommended – specifically raising

awareness about Eco-Congregation. Recognising that stewardship involves a duty to the younger generation was one of the more profound suggestions and it married with the suggestion of another group to “recognise the attitude” of the younger generation on this topic. This is what Group 3 would appear to suggest when they referred to a “Coalition of Generations” – a powerful suggestion that no doubt would deliver powerful and positive outcomes. The issue of Church buildings and maintenance of same is identified by two groups as a means to make smart changes within the dioceses. Similarly, the use of single-use, non-recyclable materials, in addition to changes to paper and printing use were also suggested. Again, challenges associated with modern life, such as consumerism and materialism, appear to be linked to Christian values being over-ridden. Some groups also linked this theme to scripture. Wise stewardship of the planet is defined as a “Christian model” and opportunity for the Church to work towards this should occur at all levels with the suggestion it be led from the top.

Group 1

Church involvement (top down)

Think positively

IPCC Tipping Point

Urgency

Sustainable eating habits & food waste & footprint

Lead by example

Church Building

Protected structure restrictions (e.g. waivers for solar panels)

Don't use plastic windows

Reduce Paper

EV Transport

Set up environmental group

Circular Economy

Group 2

1 Stewardship of the Environment

Awareness

Creation – Hymns. Ecology.

Gifts – human responsibility

Food-water: need v want. Materialism (exploitation)

Christian Model = wise stewardship

Stewardship implies a duty towards future generations

Balance Consumerism

Christian values being over-ridden

2 What can we do?

Communicate existing initiatives

Recognise limitations – tap resources

Be flexible to specific situation

Look at current conventions i.e. paper, printing, water bottles

Practical actions + Awareness raising – Action

Recognise the attitude of younger generations towards environmental issues
Intersection of poverty + environment
Focus pressure

3 ECO-Congregation

Yes & Action
Inventory tool?

4 Theme Service

Use schools
Christian Aid – agencies media

World Population

Group 3

Biblical theology in the Mosaic Law
Original Church focus through Harvest Festivals
Creation Story puts the onus of stewardship on us
Jubilee Year – resting the land
Electric cars (Free for Clergy!! 😊)
Fair Trade Supplies
Avoid single-use plastic or coffee cups
Recycling as individuals or communities
Composting
Avoid food waste
Biodiversity areas in church yards
Charging points for electric vehicles
Bicycle racks Preaching around the issues
Appropriate use of heat & light – no waste
 Re-wiring & replacing light fittings
Central switch for lights, zoned heating
Coalition of generations

Group 4

1 Creation - a gift from God – God has made us stewards – it's who we are. How do we undo all the harm we have done? Make world aware of the need for action – responsibly.

2 & 3 Church: Encourage Eco-Congregation*

 Worship
 Church
 Parishioners
 Outreach – local and abroad
 Exit – on notice boards outside Church

Diocesan Councils – write to parishes to advise Select Vestry to adopt Eco-Congregation
Change stats in small ways – 1 person can influence/make a difference

Children come and talk to Select Vestry about their ideas and activities
Children involved in a new 'eco' parish service

Elections – talk to your politicians
We are members of Eco-Congregation, should be on notice board outside of the Church

The Church and Other Faiths

As members of the Church of Ireland we have been used to being a minority denomination of Christianity on this Island and very often (to the irritation of some) to being considered as a 'minority faith'. Whether we consider this experience as positive or negative may well depend on what age range we fall into. Many older Church of Ireland people will remember the devastating effect of the 'Ne Temere' decree which caused huge bitterness in the wider Protestant community. Younger members of our church will have experienced a more positive attitude towards the Church of Ireland which for the most part would appear to be more in harmony with the current trajectory of Irish society. We are generally seen as a liberal and open church, particularly in the Southern Province.

Whatever our experience as a minority we should have empathy towards those of other faith traditions on this island who as minorities are in some cases experiencing the same kind of discrimination and alienation that was a part of our own experience not so long ago.

Ecumenism was the buzz word for many recent generations but while not perfect we have come a long way as churches and there are many good stories to be told of shared ministry and witness.

Not so encouraging perhaps is the area of inter-faith dialogue and praxis where there is a lot to be done. In the context of the influx of refugees of other faith traditions and the indigenous growth and development of other faith traditions surely a priority for our Church and especially the Diocese of Dublin and Glendalough (which is the most religiously and ethnically diverse in the country) is to find constructive ways of relating to these new minorities.

1. In what way can we as the Church of Ireland in these Dioceses use our experience as a minority to help those of other traditions find a home and a welcome in our society?
2. What are the challenges we face in opening ourselves to those of other faith traditions?
3. Are you aware of any current examples of positive inter-faith cooperation and are there any lessons we can learn from them?

4. In her recent book 'Holy Envy - Finding Faith in the God of Others' Barbara Brown Taylor cites principles for religious understanding originally articulated by Bishop Krister Stendahl of Stockholm:
 - a. When trying to understand another religion, you should ask the adherents of that religion and not its enemies.
 - b. Don't compare your best to their worst.
 - c. Leave room for holy envy.

Do you find these principles helpful and do they change the way you might consider people of a different faith tradition to you own?

5. Is tolerance of the other enough? If not how far do we need to go?

The Church and Other Faiths Overview – *Let us be kind*

An acknowledgement of the Church of Ireland history was made by some members. Some also questioned the minority status of the Church of Ireland. Overall members comments reflect a definite willingness and openness to welcome others from various different faiths and none. One member noted that *Our mind set should be that people of other faiths are part of our community*. Welcoming others can be underpinned by finding common ground across the different traditions – schools and young children are one way and group through which inter-faith dialogue and engagement appears easy to facilitate – “children are more open”. It was also noted that common concern about social justice and the environment are often shared. Members expressed a wish to be resourced themselves in terms of language – without the “vocab” some felt unable to engage with people of other faiths. Knowing how to be sensitive to others, their traditions and biblical interpretations is important and having the proper language would be beneficial. One group noted that “Being inclusive can be very enriching”. Reaching out to others is certainly possible and members offered suggestions as to how this might be achieved:

reach out with small acts of kindness;

Friendship is the way to overcome the challenges; and

We as Christians need to live our faith by welcoming, learning about others & meeting & sharing.

Holy envy was noted by one group specifically in relation to their *zeal or beauty or enthusiasm or symbolism*.

Group 1

1/3 We can immerse people of other faiths in our schools while having respect for their ethos.

How can we project our welcome?
Personal links between Churches and Mosques
Let us be kind in our Churches
Identify, reach out with small acts of kindness
Listen and try to find areas in common
Our mind set should be that people of other faiths are part of our community
The new ecumenism is inter-faith dialogue
Cathedrals are respected as holy places
Inter-faith for/at local levels

2/3 Will parishioners worry about compromise – how to address this?
Developing confidence in faith will help
Let us lead the way to dispel myths around immigration and immigrants' religions
Being inclusive can be very enriching
Inter-faith worship
We need to be aware of the problems with gafcon which causes deep divisions
But unity is found in diversity

3/3 But we share concerns for social justice and ecological issues
Can we address our own issues with fundamentalism?
Using food – breaking bread as a welcoming gift for all
Learning discipline from other faiths
We need to move beyond generosity to solidarity

Group 2

1 C of I not minority 'faith' – as Christian (just numerically)
Defining other traditions as non-Christian or Christian
Maybe this relates more to our past
We can stand up for injustice
We have come to share common ground
Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist, No faith, Atheist, Hindu, Orthodox, Sikhs
There was little interaction with Catholics when we were young. Stuck to selves. We were regarded as privileged in some ways.
Peers didn't know anything about C of I + envious of our access to Scripture
We as Christians need to live our faith by welcoming, learning about others & meeting & sharing.

2 Challenges
Using language sensitivity – not to offend, be alert to nuances
Be sensitive to traditions
Be sensitive to other Biblical Interpretations
Fear of being converted
A duty to share our faith coupled with belief that we are in "right" faith
Learning what is in common
Friendship is the way to overcome the challenges

3 Come & See had interfaith events

Ethiopian orthodox connect with Powerscourt annually

Romanian Orthodox use C Church Leeson Park

Indian Coptic use St. G & T

Ecumenical Bible week

Week of Christian Prayer

School children linking with Direct Provision Centre with gifts at Muslim celebration (Chapleizod)

Children are more open

Women's Day of Prayer – All faiths

Shoe Boxes – giving to all faiths and none

4 It is upsetting when Christianity is judged by its lowest/worst failure. The same applies to other religions. We need to be sensitive.

2nd & 3rd generation 'new Irish' will soon be old Irish and will be part of our community.

Holy Envy: (1) Divided: we don't envy people with other Gods, (2) we could be envious of their zeal or beauty or enthusiasm or symbolism (not fanaticism).

5 We need acceptance.

Seeking to understand what others believe and why

Getting insight

Love of people as neighbour – as they are

Challenge is how we meet & dialogue

Formal meetings

Mixed groups might set up meetings, lay and ordained to meet local Muslims, Jews etc. by invitation to dialogue.

Group 3

1/2 Minority – no longer 'like with like', we occupy a slightly diff. position from our history

Are we 'quaint' in rural Ireland?

Old minority – New minority (name calling in past, stone throwing)

We were oppressors (class)

Great mix in schools ... redefining 'minority'

Community Sponsorship or refugees

Is question relevant anymore?

People do not have vocab to engage with people of diff. religion. Start small ... invite in other children

Open IFTAR – 'Come & Meet' us

Irish Times articles – interviews newly arrived ... in basic terms 'Are we really that friendly?'

Mosque restaurant... (a bit like Café in Kiltarnan)

St. James' (Church) ... offering Church to facilitate people

2/2 Share celebratory events

Speakers – i.e. An Iman Speaking About Repentance

Invite speakers on e.g. Abraham
Pay attention to neighbours, notice their tragedies
Walk of light
Potential for a new ecumenism
A year of Sanctuary - own the Word and Act
Refugee sponsorship

Group 4

Some experience of other denominations
 The value of offering all (illegible word) in our buildings
 Experience of sharing in University chapels
How to cope with other religions which are mission
Learning of other faiths
Example: expression of sympathy with Christchurch (NZ) (x2 illegible words)

Social Justice

1. Social Justice is obvious in some cases but getting the balance right can be very difficult. To take one example how did you as a person and churchgoer feel about welcoming Donald Trump to Ireland in June when many of his views are clearly unacceptable to many but he represents America without whose well paid jobs here we would be much worse off.
2. For a country with a long tradition of emigration do we treat immigrants and asylum seekers fairly? What about those in remote Direct Provision centres? What can your parish do, even if it's not directly affected by the 'New Irish'?
3. The LGBT community. While we think we are open minded, are we really? Recent referenda have shown a major shift in Irish social thinking. Are we in the churches being left behind? What more can/should we do?
4. Irish people have over the years been very supportive in response to overseas aid appeals. But last year saw a 30% drop in the money given to Bishops' Appeal compared with 2017 (Dublin and Glendalough were one of only two dioceses to show an increase) Is this good enough? What more should be done?
5. Does social justice not mean a gentle form of socialism i.e. a common welfare system with the community owning most things or is it about creating wealth in a more capitalist system (with all its faults and greed) so that more can be given to those in need. Should our church take a higher profile in local and national politics?

6. While our economy is in good shape and we have almost full employment, many sectors are still suffering be it farming or those with chronic and life threatening illness who have little certainty over the provision of appropriate medical intervention. What should we, the parishes and the dioceses do? Does the Good Samaritan only exist as a Bible story?

Social Justice Overview – *Foundation is in scripture not politics*

A number of specific groups were mentioned at these discussions – asylum seekers and LGBT. Members recognise a need to support asylum seekers and refugees and noted they should be permitted to work and earn a living. Direct provision is wrong. There is also recognition of the need to support at the local level and to causes that are meaningful “real stories motivate giving” and “knowing the story – seeing the impact”. Members also feel that it is appropriate to challenge unjust social structures. Much of this lends itself to findings of *Come &C* when people’s engagement was considered alongside the fourth Mark of Mission – Transform. Members who did mention the LGBT community believed the Church should provide more support to them and they should be permitted to marry and obtain a blessing. Interestingly, politics emerged – specifically the June 2019 visit of the President of the United States. The foundation from which we respond to those in need is “scripture not politics”. The voice of the Church was deemed to be important in this regard, one group felt Church leaders should be more visible in challenging unjust politics.

Group 1

Fear, ignorance, Integration, Infrastructure/Logistics

Crumlin House, Dalkey Kitchen

Need to respond

Society discernment, Insecurity seeking God

Giving – Responding to specific – local – knowing the story – seeing the impact

Speaking our re social injustice – possible individually or at local level

Group 2

LGBT: tend to be quieter/more subtle (no marriages)

Direct Provision: integrating families into parish & supporting transition; tension of needs of indigenous communities and asylum seekers

Politics: schools, vision vs. politics, soft vs. hard power (plus one illegible word)

“June Visit” (Trump in IRL) – Ignored, separation of office & office holder, Welcoming to those even those we challenge, Wecolmed... country but not uncritically & gov’t had no choice.

€ - people giving discreetly, re-envision?, crisis here, correct benchmark?, other different charities

Group 3

(illegible words throughout)

Let people be

Foundation in is scripture not politics

WWJD

Wealth division – east v west coast

Visibility issue

Saturation of Charity appeals

Driven from top – more goes to place: needs and name out of touch

Envelopes not given out

Issue of drop and rise of right wing

Public policy – need an intellectual attitude

Caring neighbours

Need advocates to work w/ chaplain

Has to feed into action

Political valves of society

Ethics

Levels of tolerance threatened – overcome human nature

Understanding situations

Work – committed decision to reach out

Enriched parish and school – work hard at inclusiveness

LGBT: need to be able to marry

Group 4

A US – Trump

1 Relevance of Jobs to Politics

2 Ireland of Welcome – office

3 Conflict – Christianity v personal views

5 Welcome no/yes

Link to economic. There is a need for a higher-level visibility of Church leaders.

B Asylum Seekers

1 Support for AS (asylum seekers)

2 We should have (illegible word)

3 What is right today – no need to look back

4 History should inform our Christian welcome

5 Public policy around Direct Provision XX (XX to mean wrong?)

Should be allowed to make a living and work

People and connection we make
Church should lobby for changes
Be political a Church – voice
Scheme to host family – Church

C LGBT

We like to think we are accepted
Evidence of non-acceptance of Church/people
Is our language inclusive?
Need to be welcoming
Acknowledge as a Church and deal with it
Like – women in Church, will take time

Surrogacy & adoption, registering birth? What is the Church doing to support?
Church has not clarified its position about baptism of children of LGBT
Some parishes are working
Blessing of relation
Should it depend on parish?
Marriage and blessing is essential

4 Giving

Parishes give more but to other places other than BA
BA is a remote and nebulous charity (perhaps a perception) – Change the name. - Rebrand
Real stories motivate giving
Charities perceptions since scandals
Is the deop (word almost illegible) linked to attendance

Concluding Comments

Synod 2019 was an overwhelming success and its evaluation offered some interesting insights. New elements were introduced to the order of business and they were beneficial for many reasons which were noted in the analysis and presented new opportunities for further enhancement. Furthermore, Synod effectively served as a first step for considering how the Dioceses might continue to move forward with the *Come &C* initiative and ‘vision build’ as it prepared to embrace a new decade.¹

From an operations perspective, Synod 2019 demonstrated that new structures were very effective for creating a positive environment that would facilitate meaningful engagement among members particularly with the introduction of the Roundtable Discussions. More generally, the overwhelming majority of members believed that Synod 2019 was a very well organised affair and they expressed their appreciation for this.

Having opportunities to learn from one another at Synod were most welcome. Ninety-four percent of respondents agreed that it was interesting to hear from members on the Panel discuss what was happening across the dioceses. This contributed to the positive energy that was felt during the evening and offered a glimpse into some of the day-to-day activities and realities of diocesan life that are not necessarily offered through the standard Synod business.

Eighty-six percent of respondents agreed that the Roundtable Discussion was a beneficial exercise. People enjoyed listening to, and learning from, each other. ‘Brainstorming’ during the session demonstrated the innovative ways in which people and parishes could integrate their ideas and move forward with new initiatives and essentially learn about what might/might not work. This offered a “rare opportunity” for an “open and friendly exchange” between members but it also reaffirmed people’s belief in “the richness and diversity within the Anglican Communion”. Furthermore, the random allocation of people to groups brought a fresh dynamic to their engagement. For others, the Roundtables provided an

¹ The second step of that journey was to be a meeting in High School in February 2020 for which much enthusiasm was expressed at Synod 2019. It was envisioned that this meeting would permit clergy and laity alike to consider *Come &C* as they commenced building their vision for 2020 and beyond. However, due to low levels of interest the meeting was postponed and remains so indefinitely due to COVID-19.

opportunity to have their voice heard. This was important given that the standard business and format of previous Synods, does not appear to have facilitated all voices being heard. For those who benefitted in this way, it would seem that the dominance of a few voices over the years had limited their participation on the 'main floor' of the meeting. The Roundtable Discussion emerged as an empowering channel for individual voice and participation.

Indeed, ninety percent of respondents reported that more opportunity should exist for this type of roundtable engagement and while every effort was made to facilitate a High School meeting in February 2020, low levels of interest meant it was postponed. This is not to say that the spirit of engagement has been lost, rather it may mean that we consider new ways to facilitate inter-Diocesan and Clergy/Laity engagement – especially now.

Learning about the findings of the *Come &C* report was also well received. For many, it was encouraging and invigorating to hear about the many positive and innovative ways people and parishes were 'Doing Church' in response to the *Come &C* invitation. For one respondent, *Come &C* served as an "enabling guide" to assist with "vision building" in their parish. The practice of 'modernising worship' through the application of the Five marks of Mission framework and applying that locally in their own parish has captivated and energised many on their journey of intentional discipleship across the United Dioceses. Seventy-two percent of respondents noted that opportunity exists in their parish to undertake a *Come &C* initiative. While the *Come &C* report shows that many parishes were already doing things intuitively themselves, using the Five Marks of Mission framework offers the opportunity to embed one's practice firmly in scripture thus enriching their journey of intentional discipleship as they grow in the image and likeness of God and this was evident in people's accounts of what they were doing in their parishes.

Opportunities also exist for improving certain aspects of Synod going forward. The data demonstrates that Synod's age demographic lacks diversity. Approximately two-thirds of all respondents were over sixty years of age. No respondent was under thirty and only three respondents were aged 30-39 years. There is an absence of younger age cohorts. It appears that the mid-week and evening timing of Synod presents challenges for the younger generation and those with families. This represents a potential loss of input from those with

different perspectives. For example, while very interesting and meaningful ideas were put forward in the 'Youth' discussion groups, it is worth considering how those ideas might have varied had there been greater input from a generation of parents or younger adults. This issue merits further consideration more broadly, particularly in the context of 'The Church and the Environment' discussion group findings. How a modern Church can respond to the issues of climate change and the environment is aligned to *Treasure* – the fifth Mark of Mission. Yet, one member explained that the Church could respond through a "Coalition of Generations". This is a powerful suggestion that will require all members, parishioners, clergy and laity alike to come together as one to protect our planet – God's creation – and those that are most at risk from climate change and global warming. Harnessing the participation and energy of our young people will be key for such a coalition.

Another potential opportunity also exists for Synod to be more inclusive. This relates to the fact that no person of colour attended Synod 2019. This is unfortunate because it does not reflect the ethnically diverse profiles of many parishes across the United Dioceses, or indeed the country's population more broadly. Some respondents expressed their regret at this reality but it in no way suggests that there is an unwillingness to be non-inclusive given the breadth of ideas, and genuine wish for meaningful engagement with people of other faiths as noted from the data that emerged from The Church and Other Faith roundtable groups. There is a genuine wish and longing to engage with others from other faiths and also with their ethnically diverse parishioners at Synod and this reflects members commitment to principles of social justice which was the topic of another roundtable discussion. Indeed, challenging unjust social structures is the essence of *Transform* the fourth Mark of Mission and ample opportunities to respond were identified during the discussion groups and were directly linked to scriptural teachings. Moreover, they were considered in a very contemporary way when some members noted that challenging unjust structures also extends to challenging unjust politics. This also related to some issues/opportunities that emerged from the Church and the Environment discussion group.

A spirit of engagement and energy then emerges as a key take-home message from Synod 2019. The data demonstrates that Synod 2019 served as a meaningful platform for engagement with fellow members. Listening to, and learning from, one another were

opportunities to be welcomed and a definite appetite exists for more opportunities like this. The introduction of new structures, specifically the Roundtable Discussion, offered many members the opportunity to have their voice heard. This was important as it facilitated a feeling of belonging and inclusion. Moreover, it is important for ensuring that diverse perspectives are included in 'vision building' exercises across parishes throughout the dioceses to ensure that they are 'future proof'.

Some final thoughts...

It is now a year since Synod 2019. No one could have predicted what 2020 would bring. It has been unprecedented. The COVID-19 pandemic brought immense challenge and tragedy. The need for social distancing as we try to stay safe has been incredibly difficult for us to bear as we try to 're-market' limited contact with our families and friends by telling ourselves we are "together apart" as we attempt to buy into restrictions for the greater good.

In May, the world was shaken into overnight global unrest in response to the murder of George Floyd. Technology and social media meant millions watched a white man kneel on a black man's neck and cause his death.

Australia burned, California is now too, Amazonian rainforests are being levelled and Antarctica continues to melt at an exponential rate. Each day we continue to witness in real time the harm we are causing our planet. But we also witnessed the remarkable resilience of God's creation when the world stood still in the early days of the pandemic and nature seemed to bounce back in front of our eyes. We heard birds sing instead of traffic noise and we began to marvel at the wonder of life as we faced the fear of death in a pandemic.

Despite the challenges this change and unrest bring, we are well-placed to respond through our journey of intentional discipleship, particularly when it is grounded in, and guided by, the Five Marks of Mission that David Tuohy so skilfully transformed into five accessible words for

all – *Tell, Teach, Tend, Transform and Treasure*. The strength of this framework lies in its “biblical base” – its foundation in the scriptures (Tuohy, 2019²).

Much is up for consideration and reflection as Synod 2020 approaches.

2020 has forced us to re-evaluate our lives in ways we could not have imagined at Synod 2019. While there are multiple challenges ahead, we must realise that significant opportunity does too. The opportunity to continue to grow and develop as the United Dioceses awaits in this ‘new normal’ and perhaps it will be infused with, and empowered by, the simpler messages of life that we have reacquainted ourselves with in recent months – an example of which was summed up by one participant in the Roundtable Discussion about The Church and Other Faiths

Let us be kind

While this relates to a need to welcome and respect all other faiths and denominations, there is room for reflection on this from within. This respondent’s sentiment reminds us of one of the key findings that emerged from the research undertaken prior to the launch of *Come &C*. Parishes expressed

the desire to be places of welcome, where people come together to worship and deepen their faith.

As long as it continues to be fuelled by the courage and commitment that is already evident and indeed described in this report, and as long as all parishioners throughout feel welcomed, heard and can share in the collective practice of becoming “better servants of Christ”³ by following their faith in all aspects of diocesan life - the United Dioceses of Dublin and Glendalough has the potential to be a powerful force for good in these trying times and beyond. Annual Synod meetings then become a key strategic forum to facilitate and realise this.

² Tuohy, D. *Mission is for Everyone*. 14th March 2019. Interview for Jesuits in Ireland.

<https://www.jesuit.ie/news/mission-is-for-everyone/>

³ Words of Mr. Sam Harper, Launch of *Come &C* Report (2014) as noted in Tuohy and Feeney (2019:13).

APPENDICES

1 Evaluation Survey

Q1: Evaluation of Synod

	AGREE STRONGLY	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	DISAGREE STRONGLY	TOTAL
Synod 2019 was well organised	33.33% 24	58.33% 42	6.94% 5	1.39% 1	0.00% 0	72
Inclusion of the Panel Discussion was interesting	47.22% 34	47.22% 34	2.78% 2	2.78% 2	0.00% 0	72
It is important that annual Synod meetings include other 'activities' (e.g. Panel Discussion)	52.78% 38	30.56% 22	6.94% 5	8.33% 6	1.39% 1	72
Hearing about the <i>Come &C</i> /5 Marks of Mission research in our Dioceses was interesting	23.29% 17	60.27% 44	10.96% 8	4.11% 3	1.37% 1	73
Annual Synod meetings are an effective forum through which research like <i>Come &C</i> can be presented	31.51% 23	45.21% 33	13.70% 10	8.22% 6	1.37% 1	73
- There should be more opportunity for events that permit engagement with members of the Clergy and Laity	54.17% 39	38.89% 28	5.56% 4	1.39% 1	0.00% 0	72

Q2. What was your overall impression of Synod 2019?

Open Ended Responses (n= 68)

Q3. *Come &C* and the 5 Marks of Mission Research in the United Dioceses

	YES	NO	TOTAL
I was aware that <i>Come &C</i> was an ongoing invitation to Mission and	83.56% 61	16.44% 12	73

	YES	NO	TOTAL
Discipleship throughout the Dioceses			
I was aware that the <i>Come &C</i> research was published on the Diocesan website	43.84% 32	56.16% 41	73
I had read about the findings on the Diocesan website prior to Synod 2019	23.29% 17	76.71% 56	73

Q4. How often do you use the Diocesan website to inform yourself of events/initiatives like *Come &C*? (please tick one response)

ANSWER CHOICES-	RESPONSES-
More than once a week	6.85% 5
Once a week	8.22% 6
- 2-3 times a month	8.22% 6
- Once a month	28.77% 21
- Almost never	47.95% 35

Total Respondents: 73

**Q5. What key message about *Come &C* did you take home after listening to Maria Feeney's presentation at Synod last week?
Open Ended Response (n= 61)**

Q6. Participation in the Roundtable Discussion [plus open-ended comments, (n= 52)]

	AGREE STRONGLY	AGREE	NO OPINION	DISAGREE	DISAGREE STRONGLY	TOTAL
This was a beneficial exercise	38.89% 28	47.22% 34	13.89% 10	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	72
I enjoyed engaging with others from different Parishes	51.39% 37	37.50% 27	11.11% 8	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	72
I believe more opportunities for engagement like this should be provided	45.83% 33	44.44% 32	8.33% 6	1.39% 1	0.00% 0	72

Q7. Has your Parish undertaken any *Come &C* specific activities/initiatives that you are aware of? [plus open-ended comments (n= 24)]

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	35.21% 25
No	64.79% 46

Total Respondents: 71

Q8. Do more opportunities exist in your Parish for activities/initiatives that relate to *Come &C* and the Five Marks of Mission. [plus open-ended comments (n= 40)]

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	72.06% 49
No	25.00% 17

Total Respondents: 68

Q9: Would you like to initiate a *Come &C* initiative in your Parish?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	38.10% 24
No	61.90% 39

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
TOTAL	63

Q10: If you would like to initiate something in your parish, would you like the *Come &C* Team to assist you with your efforts?

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	26.56% 17
No	10.94% 7
N/A	62.50% 40
TOTAL	64

Q 11: Gender

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Male	54.29% 38
Female	45.71% 32
TOTAL	70

Q12: Age Profile

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Under 30 years	0.00% 0
30 - 39 years	4.29% 3
40 - 49 years	10.00% 7
50 - 59 years	21.43% 15
60 - 69 years	31.43% 22

ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
70+ years	32.86% 23
TOTAL	70

Email to Synod Members: Original Invitation: 17th October 2019 Reminder Invitation: 4th November 2019

Dear Members of Synod,

I hope you are all keeping well.

As you know we are conducting some follow-up research following Synod 2019 and the *Come &C* initiative. I would like to invite you all to participate in a short, online questionnaire that offers you the opportunity to provide some feedback for us as we move forward and put preparations in place for our next meeting at High School on Saturday, 29th February 2020. Your thoughts and comments are much appreciated.

Thanks to those of you that have submitted some feedback thus far. It is much appreciated. I would like to appeal to those of you who have not yet had the opportunity to complete the questionnaire to please take a few moments to assist us with our efforts.

Please click on the link below and this will take you to the questionnaire which is completely anonymous.

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/Synod2019>

For those of you who have already completed this survey - thank you, there is no need to repeat the exercise.

I look forward to seeing you all once again at High School in February 2020.

Kind regards,
Maria.