

# RESPONSE TO THE WORKING DOCUMENT FOR THE CONTINENTAL STAGE - STROUD PARISH

## Question 1

We look towards a church that is inclusive, open and welcoming and are joyful that the People of God have been asked for their desires for the future of the Church. Synodal meetings will continue in our Parish, though a challenge at first, joy is expressed by all who took part.

Through walking together in a Synodal Church we share our common dignity and vocation through Baptism to fully participate in the life of the Church. And thus become a true Missionary Church.

Deepening Ecumenical links can only stand to strengthen the universal church. This in turn widens our tent, embraces diversity and community

Due to the shortage of priests, our tents are enlarging through laity travelling to surrounding churches for Mass where our priest is celebrating for us. This is echoed in the vision for a Church that remains steeped in Scripture and teachings of Christ whilst offering a witness of radical inclusion and acceptance for all.

Prayer, Listening to all, Acceptance of all, Young and Old is imperative for the building up of Christ's Kingdom on earth. We must continue to 'Hear the cry of the poor in our midst' including those who feel they do not belong. Inter-church and inter-faith families offer us the chance to expand our tents and should be embraced fully.

We must ask ourselves "What would Jesus say?" Especially true when discussing differing views, hopes and desires for the church for tomorrow.

250 Words

## Question 2

The Church is seen as a rigid institution unwilling to change/modernise itself. Separation of priest and people. Sadly, the scandal of abuse in the church - has this in part resulted in a lack of vocations to the priesthood? How can we heal this for all of God's people - priests, people, victims of abuse etc? Is this a cultural disease of modern day life?

Relatively few people took part in the first Synodal process in our parishes. Partly because of timing and lack of time, and partly due to individual fears about speaking out - they have never been asked to do this before.

Denying access to the Sacraments because of lifestyle seems to fragment the church as a whole. So many stay away rather than face judgement. Our world today has so many who live on the peripheries that exclude them from full participation in the life of the Church.

Forming collaboration with other churches/denominations is challenging but could develop fruitful outcomes and helps us grow together.

There is deep concern that fewer priests result in overburdening the few who are doing their best to keep going. Some priests are reluctant to allow laity to take on some tasks currently held firm by priests (not all parishes). Why is this?

The role of women in the church still resonates loudly in our churches. Whilst women are active within the church, the roles are very limited depending where the parish is and how the priest accepts their participation (or not).

The lack of priestly vocations bring to the forefront thoughts on allowing married men to be ordained - how many priests were lost to the church because of marriage? The Church allows married Church of England Priests to practice in Catholic Churches (in England) - why not allow previous Catholic priests forced to leave because of marriage come back fully as priests?

532 Words in total

### **Question 3**

#### **Priorities for discussion at the First Session of the Synodal Assembly October 2023**

Continuation of the Synodal Process must continue in parishes.

Total inclusivity for everyone. Better understanding and acceptance of those on peripheries of the church for whatever reason.

Expanding dialogue with other denominations – working together.

Consideration towards allowing married former priests to return as practicing priests, particularly where the number of priests has declined.

The role of women in the church.

Access for all to the Sacraments of the Church - especially as our brothers and sisters in other denominations are already doing this. Continue to ask daily “What would Jesus do?”

Inclusion and encouragement of young people to take key roles in developing the church of /for tomorrow. This will require further dialogue with young people within parishes and is vital if the church is to survive.

We are all connected through the dignity of our baptism - laity need to be reminded of this constantly. We need to develop further the synodal process to unify each and every one, laity, ordained ministry and those feeling left out, other fellow Christians of other denominations. In our common goal of following Christ in all we do and say.

TOTAL 757 WORDS