

January 2021

Memo No. 3 re Diocesan Synod

There are a number of processes and procedures that need to be honoured when conducting a diocesan synod. These are listed below.

1. Sessions of Synod

- Session 1 – Celebration and Exploration - Saturday 23 November 2019
- Session 2 – Discernment - Saturday 22 May 2021 (Pentecost Sunday weekend)
- Session 3 – Implementation - Saturday 20 November 2021 (Feast of Christ the King weekend)

2. Communication Plan for the Synod

- A Diocesan Synod Website has been developed – www.domnsynod.com.au
- Regular communication updates with the diocesan community will take place.

3. Synod Working Party

The Synod Working Party is the work of the Council for Mission (CfM), on behalf of Bishop Bill. They have been meeting monthly since 2018 in order to coordinate the many processes for our diocesan synod.

The members of this Working Party are:

Working Party Members

Staff Assisting

Teresa Brierley – Moderator, CfM Executive Secretary, Director Pastoral Ministries	Alyson Segrott – Executive Assistant to Director Pastoral Ministries
Helen Belcher – Co-chair CfM, Parishioner, Plenary Council delegate	Jenny Harris – Administrative Assistant Pastoral Ministries
Lawrie Hallinan - Co-chair CfM, Parishioner	Rachel James – Head of Communications
Michael O'Connor – CfM Member, Parishioner	Brooke Cross – Marketing and Communications Manager
Sr Patricia Egan - CfM Member, Parishioner, Religious, Connection to previous Synod processes	Ashleigh Banks – Marketing and Communications Coordinator
Ben van der Wijngaart - CfM Member, Parishioner	
Bernadette Gibson – Plenary Council Delegate, Catholic Schools	
Helene O'Neill - CfM Member, Parishioner, Family Ministry Coordinator	
Gary Christensen – Director CatholicCare	
Fr Geoff Mulhearn – Council of Priests	
Uta France – Liturgy Council	

They will continue meeting throughout 2021 to bring about the processes for sessions 2 and 3 of the Synod. If you have any enquires regarding the synod, please do not hesitate to contact one of these members.

4. The Synod Process

The process chosen by the Synod Working Party is outlined in the diagram below:



Relational Meetings and Listening Campaign – Since the 1992/93 Diocesan Synod the diocese, through Diocesan, Regional and Parish Pastoral Councils, has been listening to the voice of the people mostly through meetings, assemblies and gatherings. A massive listening and dialogue process were also undertaken as part of the Plenary Council which resulted in the six themes which became our focus for Session 1 of our Diocesan Synod.

Research and Planning – This process is the ongoing work of the Synod Working Party which is informing the papers which will be presented during the synodal process.

Decision-Making by Discernment – discernment is our ability to listen to each other and the Spirit and by doing so we will arrive at recommendations for the way forward.

Action – planned, focused and intentional action steps will be determined at session 3 of the Synod

Evaluation – the need to critically review the effectiveness of decisions and actions will form the ongoing work of the Council for Mission.

5. Diocesan Synod Directory (manual of procedures)

This is a formal document and follows the Instruction on Diocesan Synods by the Congregation for Bishops and the Congregation for the Evangelization of Peoples (1997)

The Synod Working Party has recommended that a user-friendly guide also be developed.

6. Membership of the Synod

The *Diocesan Synod Members* document provides guidelines for the discernment of delegates for Synod membership. The recommendation is to have a diverse, representative group of people from across the diocesan community.

Expressions of Interest for delegates are presently being received and will be reviewed by the Synod Working Party, ensuring the balance and spread reflects the diversity of the Diocese. Names will then be submitted to Bishop Bill for his approval and invitations will be sent, to which the delegates will respond either accepting or declining the invitation.

Synod Members (Delegates) will be commissioned and provided with a Formation Program in early 2021.

7. Diocesan Contemplative Dialogue Reflection Program

From Lent until Pentecost the people of the diocese will be invited, through a process of contemplative dialogue, to discern more fully the framework for considering ***'Building the Kingdom of God Together'*** in our diocese.

The purpose of the diocesan reflections during Lent (17 February – 31 March). is to enable all members of the diocesan community to respond to the papers developed by the synod working party.

The Church of Maitland-Newcastle is centred on Christ, the Cornerstone, and seeks always to live as a community of people who believe and are missionary disciples.

We are inviting people to explore our life and mission as the church of the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle through our five foundations with the following component parts:

- Virtual launch of Project Compassion (Tuesday 17 February)
- Week One - Identity and Community
- Week Two - Worship and Prayer
- Week Three - Formation and Education
- Week Four - Mission and Outreach
- Week Five - Leadership and Structure
- Week Six – Holy Week Virtual The Way of the Cross

8. Responsibility of Delegates

Training

As a delegate you will be invited to be trained to facilitate the Contemplative Dialogue Process throughout Lent. This can be done face-to-face within your local community or online if that works best regarding time and place.

Delegate Lenten Reflection Training (required to attend one session)

Date	Time	Location
Monday 8 February	10.30am to 11.30am	Zoom
	2.00pm to 3.00pm	Zoom
	5.00pm to 6.00pm	Toohey room
Tuesday 9 February	9.30am to 10.30am	Toohey room
	1.00pm to 2.00pm	Zoom
	6.00pm to 7.00pm	Zoom
Wednesday 10 February	10.30am to 11.30am	Zoom
	2.00pm to 3.00pm	Zoom
	7.00pm to 8.00pm	Zoom
Thursday 11 February	9.30am to 10.30am	Zoom
	1.00pm to 2.00pm	Toohey room
	6.30pm to 7.30pm	Zoom
Friday 12 February	9.00am to 10.00am	Zoom
	11.00am to 12.00pm	Zoom
	5.00p to 6.00pm	Zoom
Saturday 13 February	9.00am to 10.00am	Dilley Library, Lochinvar

Once you have accepted the invitation to be a delegate, it will be important to facilitate your own Contemplative Dialogue group for Lent. Each group should not exceed six in size.

Other important dates

- Reflection program during Lent – Weeks beginning 22 February and 1, 8, 15, 22 March
- Reflection with Bishop Bill – 13 April/Aberdeen, 14 April/Maitland, 15 April/Charlestown, 20 April/Foster, 22 April/Toronto and 4 May/Newcastle West
- Delegates Commissioning Ceremony – This will be held during the Mass as part of the Reflection Gatherings with Bishop Bill
- Session Two Synod – 22 May
- Session Three Synod – 20 November

More information will be provided as we get closer to these dates.

9. Reflection Gatherings with Bishop Bill

These will be held in the Easter Season 2021. It is hoped that the members of the Council of Priests and the Council for Mission will accompany Bishop Bill and join the diocesan community during these days, to participate and to actively listen.

Anyone from anywhere across the diocese can attend any of these sessions.

Day	Date	Session	Time	Pastoral Region	Venue
Tuesday	April 13	Reflection	2.30pm – 4pm	Upper Hunter	St Joseph's High School Segenhoe St Aberdeen
		Mass	5pm – 5.30pm		
		Reflection	6pm – 8pm		
Wednesday	April 14	Reflection	2.30pm – 4pm	Chisholm/Vineyards	All Saints College - St Mary's Campus 16 Grant St East Maitland
		Mass	5pm – 5.30pm		
		Reflection	6pm – 8pm		
Thursday	April 15	Reflection	2.30pm – 4pm	Blackbutt/Port Stephens/Eastlakes/City	St Mary's Immaculate Parish 11 Milson St Charlestown
		Mass	5pm – 5.30pm		
		Reflection	6pm – 8pm		
Tuesday	April 20	Reflection	2.30pm – 4pm	Northern	Holy Name Parish 33 Lake St Forster
		Mass	5pm – 5.30pm		
		Reflection	6pm – 8pm		
Thursday	April 22	Reflection	2.30pm – 4pm	Macquarie/Western	St Joseph's Parish 140 Wangi Rd Toronto
		Mass	5pm – 5.30pm		
		Reflection	6pm – 8pm		
Tuesday	May 4	Reflection	2.30pm – 4pm	Blackbutt/Port Stephens/Eastlakes/City	Cathedral House Sacred Heart Cathedral 841 Hunter St Newcastle West
		Mass	5pm – 5.30pm		
		Reflection	6pm – 8pm		

10. Focus Groups for the Synod

Focus Groups form part of the Diocesan Synod Working Party and are working on the different aspects of the synod.

Synod Focus Groups:

- **Foundational Guiding Principles:** To develop a spiritually inspiring document that reflects the vision of how we the Church of Maitland-Newcastle will work together to further Jesus' mission in today's world.
- **Discernment of Data:** To process data relevant to the Plenary Council and Diocesan Synod that has been generated thus far within and beyond the diocese, and from that data develop recommendations for discernment by the diocesan community and in time by the Synod.
- **Diocesan Directory:** To compile and review all the documentation that has provided direction for the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle since the last Diocesan Synod of 1992/93 and recommend the ongoing ratification or abrogation of that documentation.
- **Governance Guiding Principles and Documentation:** To develop clear documentation concerning the governance structures of the diocese, parishes and agencies and the principles on which the diocesan community is governed canonically, pastorally and civilly. There is a need to honour the principles of synodality, transparency, inclusivity, accountability, and stewardship.
- **Event Planning:** To develop processes for planning, coordinating and managing each of the synod sessions.
- **Liturgy:** To oversees the preparation of the liturgies associated with the Synod and promote prayer for the success of the Synod.

If you have any questions regarding the diocesan synod you may like to contact Teresa Brierley, Director Pastoral Ministries, Teresa.brierley@mn.catholic.org.au or phone 02 4979 1157 or 0417 885 760.