

Elaine Green,
Quaker response to the Catholic Briefing Paper on Synodality

Opening (unscripted) Remarks

- Thank you to everyone here.
- Thank you to Ben Dandelion for his checking and corrections of my draft submission.
- The Reflections now are not my own but are a collation of the Quaker group experience.

1 Some reflections on the whole event

Beginning with the Bishop Dunn Memorial Lecture:

Generally for the Friends here, this was a good introduction to the event. We found it useful to regard 'Ecumenism as a laboratory of Synodality' and recognised that ecumenism can lead into interfaith dialogue as part of our peace witness.

Over the 48 hours, we have experienced genuine 'receptive ecumenism' and the generosity and joy of our ecumenical conversations. Quakers call this 'being open to new Light'.

We have shared in an enthusiasm for 'synodality' (not a word we would ever have thought of ourselves) and a great sense of ALL being open to a 'pilgrim hermeneutic'.

The presentations and in-group exchanges have given us a clearer picture of where we are in God's whole story in which synodality is a journey with divine purpose. On this journey, we recognise the pain and richness of diversity and we value the emphasis that has been placed on who is not at our tables when holy discernment is called for. Our absorbing conversations have brought these issues alive for us.

The periods of worship have provided welcome space for us to refocus on the divine as a gathered people. This event has given us an optimism about the church in the world. The openness that Pope Francis has shown is amazing. Perhaps no other church could have embarked upon such an ambitious and courageous project which meets with momentous institutional and cultural challenges. Because of that, this endeavour is a gift to the world.

2 What are we taking away for our church?

The Methodist 'flow' model is a nudge for us to re-examine the way we communicate and confer up and down our structures.

We may look to initiate wider conversations across our Society about synodality within Britain Yearly Meeting, (Paul Murray suggested 'synodal renewal' this morning), perhaps led by our Committee for Christian and Interfaith relations.

We might reflect on how we can heal wounds and respond more positively to our struggles with diversity in all its expressions.

We must learn to listen to other churches more than we do, so that we don't need to plough a lonely furrow in solving problems that others share. Many of us are grappling with declining membership, cumbersome structures and lower participation in decision-making.

Overall we take away a greater clarity about what we have to offer as well as what we can learn through dialogue, conversation and travelling along side our Friends in other traditions.

We gratefully accept these gifts of learning.

Thank you.