

Learning on the Way: Receptive Ecumenism and the Catholic Synodal Pathway

Centre for Catholic Studies, Durham University 22–23 June 2023

*This paper remains under the copyright of Wolfgang Vondey as author.
No quotation or reproduction should be made without permission.*

Briefing Paper: Pentecostal Tradition

© Wolfgang Vondey, University of Birmingham

1. Introduction

The Pentecostal movement arrived on the global scene through a series of revivals and subsequent praxis of mission and ministry at the beginning of the twentieth century, most notably at the Azusa Street Mission and revival in Los Angeles, California (1906-15), the Welsh Revival in the United Kingdom (1904-5), the revival in India (1905-6), and the revival in Korea (1907-8), as well as through a host of other revival movements in regions such as Africa, Asia, and Latin America. While the exact origin of the Pentecostal movement is debated, it is generally accepted that the Pentecostal tradition is formed by ‘a way of coming together’ (*syn-hodos*) of various streams or clusters worldwide. In this sense, synodality is not a foreign concept among Pentecostals although it is not known by that name. In this paper, the focus is placed on the historical circumstances that have conditioned Pentecostal perspectives and experiences before identifying various strands, positions, and personal experiences that belong to the diverse make-up of the tradition and its experiences with synodality. The paper outlines the common features of the tradition rather than the practices of any particular Pentecostal church. The primary perspectives are derived from existing practices rather than theological positions or denominational teachings. The perspectives voiced here aim to express the multiplicity of voices among Pentecostals, not only in the United Kingdom, today.

2. Vision

The theological vision of Pentecostals is in the most basic sense always determined by the day of Pentecost and the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the church. Pentecost functions as a symbol of theological reflection, determined for most Pentecostals by their own experience of the Spirit and articulation of that experience in the light of Scripture. Hence, to be ‘Pentecostal’ is derived from the historical events on the day of ‘Pentecost’ recorded in Acts 2 as much as by the desire to experience ‘Pentecost’ anew today. Because Pentecost is therefore the core symbol of Pentecostal identity, the notion of synodality may also be described with regard to its placement in the light of Pentecost. The Pentecostal vision of synodality is determined by the proximity to the transformative experience of the outpouring of God’s Spirit at the hands of Jesus Christ, or what Pentecostals call the baptism in the

Spirit. The initial questions Pentecostals are likely to ask are: how does synodality lead the church *to* Pentecost or where does synodality lead the church *from* Pentecost? Put more abstractly, synodality has both a centrifugal and centripetal dimension, ushering the faithful towards Pentecost and embarking from Pentecost into the world.

Because any articulation of the experience of Pentecost is determined by the importance Pentecostals place on Scripture, particularly on Luke-Acts, the vision of synodality in the immediate context of the day of Pentecost may be identified with the help of two broader stories immediately preceding and following the event: (1) the disciples on the road to Emmaus recorded in Luke 24 following the death and resurrection of Jesus, and (2) the council of Jerusalem in Acts 15 following the outpouring of the Spirit on the Gentiles. The Emmaus narrative expresses the life and mission of the church on *the way to* Pentecost, whereas the council of Jerusalem expresses a form of synodality *flowing from* the day of Pentecost. In other words, if synodality denotes ‘the particular style that qualifies the life and mission of the church, expressing her nature as the people of God journeying together and gathering in assembly, summoned by the Lord Jesus in the power of the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel’, then the experience of Pentecost qualifies this journey in several significant ways:

- The journey of the church is often marked by several journeys of God’s people in different directions including away from and towards one another. The disciples of Jesus were disbanding after the crucifixion, and the followers of Christ disagreed about the inclusion of the Gentiles, yet the way of finding discernment together always leads through the experience of the Holy Spirit. The biblical image of this synodality is not a romanticized but realistic and therapeutic vision of finding agreement and purpose in the midst of hardship and confusion and the corresponding need for discernment.
- The journey on the road to Emmaus is a journey of discovering, if not re-discovering, the vision of the church that began with the gospel of Jesus Christ but that has encountered a path confronted with misunderstanding, unbelief, and a restrained vision. Synodality in this context includes a rediscovering of Jesus and of the church’s own self in light of a more complete understanding of the gospel granted by the Holy Spirit. It is a journey that leads from Easter to Pentecost, from Christ to the Spirit.
- The council of Jerusalem shows a journey of change and transformation from what the church was at Pentecost on the way towards a renewed and revised vision for the nature and mission of the church beyond the people of Israel. Synodality after Pentecost includes a ‘stretching of foundations’ and ‘enlarging of the tent’ through a vision of God that challenges the identity of the body of Christ. That the Spirit is poured out ‘on all flesh’ (Acts 2:17) leads to a renewed promise of salvation for ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord’ (v. 21). This new way of the church ‘seemed good’ to the Holy Spirit and the church even after ‘much disagreement’ and ‘debate’. It is a journey that leads from disagreement to agreement, from exclusion to embrace.

The history of classical Pentecostals shows a careful, if not hesitant, attitude towards institutionalizing, formalizing, or ritualizing the forms of synodality. However, the biblical

pragmatism of many Pentecostal groups, not the least in the United Kingdom, tends to see the different journeys as incomplete when disassociated from the day of Pentecost. That is, synodality can be found both when Christians have lost their way and when their ways are firmly established in institutional structures as long as either path is led by the Spirit. However, the Pentecostals slogans ‘Back to Pentecost!’ or ‘Forward to Pentecost!’ express an experiential emphasis often packaged in a restorationist attitude toward the apostolic age. Central to this desire is the role of experience, or more precisely, the communal discernment of the Spirit’s leading in the present. The practice of synodality is both the result of a shared experience derived from the encounter with God and an intentional effort towards that encounter.

Pentecostals hesitate to conceptualize the experience of the Spirit contained in the biblical records of Pentecost into potentially restrictive forms of doctrine. The closest form of synodality derived from the texts is arguably the perspective of the New Testament on the idea of fellowship or ‘koinonia’ in the summary of Pentecost (Acts 2:42) and articulated more formally in the final report of the Dialogue between the Roman Catholic Church and Some Classical Pentecostal Leaders and Churches (1985-1989).¹ The Holy Spirit is the source of this fellowship (2 Cor. 13:13) in a variety of ways reflecting the experiential and revivalist history of Pentecostals: because the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of unity, the Spirit brings together what is not united so that there can be a shared expression of fellowship. The community-forming work of the Spirit includes conviction of sin, repentance and faith, sanctification, forgiveness, assurance, comfort, and guidance on both a personal and communal level. The church’s experience of koinonia relies on the mutuality of action, not only of Christians in accordance with the Spirit but with each other (and vice versa). Hence, synodality can be the result of the inbreaking of the Spirit in unexpected and unplanned ways as much as a call to the invocation of the Spirit in the life of the believer and the community to ‘keep in step with the Spirit’ (Gal. 5:25).

3. Synods, Structures, and Style

The Pentecostal tradition exists broadly speaking in two ecclesiastical forms: congregational and episcopal. Historically a revivalist cluster-movement, the tradition lacks an authoritative, juridical, and administrative supra-local structure. As a consequence, among the congregational groups, synodality (in its fundamental sense of koinonia) starts traditionally from below and is based on the local assembly. Historically, this mentality has been maintained in Pentecostal ecclesiology with a primary self-understanding as a movement rather than a church or denomination. Only with the consolidation of Pentecostal revivals and the growth of the movement combined with internal adjustments and ecumenical associations during the twentieth century do we find formal denominational structures. There are no authoritative supra-denominational arrangements among Pentecostals, although the Pentecostal World Fellowship and the Pentecostal European Fellowship have brought various

¹ <http://www.christianunity.va/content/unitacristiani/en/dialoghi/sezione-occidentale/pentecostali/dialogo/documenti-di-dialogo/testo-in-inglese1.html>

groups together in conversation even if without authoritative influence. The episcopal stream follows more traditional hierarchical patterns with emphasis on office and gift. The theological basis is generally observed in biblical texts but frequently filtered with patterns derived from modern Evangelicalism, particularly the sense of the ‘priesthood’ or ‘prophethood’ of all believers. The dominant patterns for both fellowships on different ecclesiastical levels derives from Pentecostal readings of the apostolic church in the New Testament, often based on the variety of congregational ministries and structures noted in Romans 12, 1 Corinthians 12, and Ephesians 4. The contributing forms of this pluriform synodality are both offices and ministries, including apostles, bishops, pastors, elders, and deacons, on the one hand, and prophets, teachers, evangelists, and exhorters, on the other. These terms are not always understood in the same way, and not all groups place the same authority on the use of various offices or ministries designated with the same name. Key-decision making structures in the United Kingdom are determined by the historical origins and influences on particular Pentecostal groups, prevalent contextual socio-religious patterns of organisation, and the pragmatic social embodiment of revivalist meetings, denominational alliances, and forms of institutionalisation.

The history of classical Pentecostalism in the UK signals that fellowship among Pentecostals relies often on individual and shared communal discernment (agreements and disagreements) emerging from spiritual experiences. The dominant British denominations, including the Apostolic Faith Church, Elim Pentecostal Church, and the Assemblies of God, can trace their original leadership from the Welsh revival 1904-1905 and the Sunderland convention on Pentecostal topics held by Alexander Boddy from 1908-1914. Yet, in response, the Apostolic Faith Church confirmed the government of local assemblies with apostles and prophets operating in combination, while in disagreement with this practice, George Jeffreys founded the Elim Pentecostal Church in 1915 with pastors in charge of congregations and eventually governed through a ministerial conference. In contrast, the Assemblies of God emerged from a combination of independent congregations in disagreement with the Apostolic Church as well as the dominance of Jeffrey’s centralizing efforts. Both the Assemblies of God and Elim followed, at least initially, more closely established forms of democratic polity and allowed congregational leaders to debate and vote for collective decisions during an annual ministerial assembly. Until the World Pentecostal Conference came to London in 1952, British Pentecostals remained generally sectarian and avoided the mainstream of theological and ecumenical debate, which also protected their own denominational teachings and contained synodal structures. Churches within the different denominations remained revivalist in orientation, and regular ‘tent meetings’ (revival meetings, conferences, healing services etc.) formed opportunities for shared agreement of spiritual and denominational matters before taking those to the official platforms unique to each group.

With the unexpected arrival of the Charismatic Movement in Britain during the 1960s, however, local forms of finding agreement shifted towards house churches, prayer meetings, and the exercise of charismata that had no immediately corresponding ecclesiastical structures. While classical Pentecostals continued in denominational policy and procedures, new Pentecostal and Charismatic congregations started networking in their homes or in public halls often in an attempt to simplify governmental structures. This development also

became known as the ‘new churches’ movement. The apostolic networks of these new churches arguably have had the greatest impact, often coupled with large public events and the rise of megachurches. Some of the networks established national conferences and joined the Evangelical Alliance. Yet, not all networks operate the same, some remaining sectarian, insisting on a reformation of the church, while others operate with an ecumenical and interdenominational vision, and again others followed denominational ties less closely and embraced more congregational forms.

A third influence on Pentecostal forms of *koinonia* are the immigrant churches, particularly from the Caribbean, Ghana, Nigeria and West Africa. These churches arrived sometimes as a result of reverse missionary efforts to plant churches in the UK or simply from individuals and small prayer groups, not seldom house churches and loosely organised fellowships. A fellowship between groups under the leadership of Jamaican immigrants Oliver A. Lyseight and Herman D. Brown and others led to the establishment of the New Testament Church of God, UK, in 1955. Efforts to build bridges between African and Caribbean churches were maintained for many decades, although the second generation of immigrant Pentecostals in the UK tends to network with less focus on ethnic identity and the use of mainstream media and technology more broadly.

A final influence is a general shift among Pentecostals towards the public sphere, humanitarian concerns, and interaction with national and interdenominational agencies. Increasing ecumenical participation has also shifted sectarian tendencies among many Pentecostal groups towards interdenominational cooperation although with little impact on internal decision-making. This shift has expanded the general ethos of networking among Pentecostals in order to allow in principle for the multiplicity of clusters or centres to be linked with others. That means, networking among churches today operates no longer exclusively along ecclesiastical structures but within church networks, between different church networks, and between church and secular networks. While these network partnerships have become prominent in joint efforts of mission and evangelization and models of charity and social justice, many Pentecostal groups have criticised the dominance of policies, structures, and ideologies from outside the Pentecostal (and Christian) ethos. While some Pentecostal churches and leaders have learned to speak in the terms and voice of other ecclesial traditions, there is a growing tendency to develop forms of learning and discerning genuine to Pentecostal sensitivities.

4. Discernment and Difference

The biblical ethos and its challenges derived from the variegated history of Pentecostal groups highlights that the injunction to ‘listen to what the Spirit is saying to the churches’ relies on the complex realisation of seemingly universal biblical principles. Disagreement, confrontation, and tensions are not the exception of ecclesial life but belong to the nature of the spiritual community that has encountered God from different sociocultural backgrounds, experiences, languages, ideologies, and expectations. Hence, synodality is not a mould for uniformity but an expression of the centrifugal and centripetal diversity experienced in the

unity of the Spirit. The lived experience of this messy reality relies on the shared experience of koinonia. Put more abstractly, the praxis of koinonia depends on the communal discernment of what seems good to the Holy Spirit and to the church. The concrete practices of negotiating discernment and difference among Pentecostals are therefore primarily concerned with the environment conducive to the encounter with God: prayer, song, worship, preaching, praise, thanksgiving, and sacraments are all means of entering into God's presence. The immediate goal is a shared encounter rather than a learning or dialoguing. The outcome of this experience is possible reconciliation and agreement albeit only as a consequence of the revelatory occurrences confirmed by charismatic manifestations among those who have encountered God. Prophecy, speaking in tongues, and interpretation, and in other biblical expressions, words of wisdom or knowledge, are the media of the Spirit to speak to the congregations. In the terms of the biblical stories of Emmaus and Jerusalem, the participants must be accompanied both on the way towards this shared encounter and from this encounter towards agreement and decision-making. Key to this dual pathway is the gift of spiritual discernment or the discernment of spirits.

In view of their underlying charismatic spirituality, the discernment of spirits among Pentecostals is considered a 'charismatic' if not 'supernatural' gift of the Holy Spirit. When active, the discernment process generally follows a biblically guided process of judging what is the ultimate source of the congregational experience of revelation (i.e., utterance, action, or effect). This discernment process is seen as a spiritual enquiry that can be operated in principle by any Spirit-baptized Christian. Yet, despite its individual activation, discernment relies on a collective inner witness of the Spirit that allows the community to arrive at consensus. The process is intended as a judgment of spirits based on a 'deliberate' use of charismatic gifts including an awareness of and sensitivity to the work of the Spirit through prophetic words or tongues and other forms of testing and discerning (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess. 5:19-21). The dominant criteria for discernment (including the utterance of the discerners) is alignment with Scripture with particular focus on attention to Jesus Christ, the gospel, and the spiritual and moral quality of those involved, often along affective and intuitive lines but also through rational discussion. The act of discernment is a communal process in which some prophesy and others join through different words. Yet, synodality is not just a speaking and listening but also a seeing of visions and dreaming of dreams (Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28). The congregation filled with the Spirit may engage in communal prayer, testimonies, preaching, communion, and gathering around the altar. In other words, the discernment process is a cooperation of 'spiritual' (initiated by the Holy Spirit) and 'human' (personal experience, wisdom, reason, and abilities) aspects. In this communal sharing of koinonia the operation of the charismata in dependence on the divine Spirit relies on the development of individuals and community in a sensitive environment that invites all the signs and gifts of the Spirit for the common good. Some Pentecostal groups in the UK have embraced the 'conference' model of worship focused on local leaders rather than congregational participation, different styles can be observed in immigrant churches between first and second generation, and differences also appear between the more dramatic liturgical worship of established denominations and the younger generation that favours simpler gatherings. Pentecostals often discern the desires and differences in the moment, and the diversification of congregational life, not the least with the effects of the pandemic, poses greater demands on the leadership.

What can be ‘limited, difficult, and frustrating’ in this exercise of discernment is generally perceived in terms of the recognition of any formative changes resulting from the process. It can be difficult to identify an outcome of the spiritual discernment in terms of concrete steps of encouraging or discouraging a particular behaviour. Especially elements of corrective church discipline tend to be carried out in private rather than in public, and congregations rarely witness prohibitive discipline. In contrast, positive encouragement of practices tends to be publicly initiated in order to provide formative influence on congregations. The suppression of difficult decision-making procedures can have divisive influence on congregations and avoid confrontation with prominent problems more visible to the outsider than the members of the local assembly. There is also no discernment process beyond the local congregation so that problematic denominational patterns are often not easily identifiable.

If the term synodality is applied to this process of discernment, it designates less a structure or style than an indirect learning process ‘along the way’. Because it is a shared act of discernment, the conclusion can only ‘seem’ good (Acts 15:25, 28) to the churches—it is a *sensus* and *consensus fidelium* that requires the continual discernment and affirmation of the entire community. The practice of extended revivals among Pentecostals allows for such spiritual formation on the congregational level and between congregations and churches. In some Pentecostal groups, authoritative leadership has a stronger influence on the process and consequently on the outcome of the discernment, while in episcopal groups the process tends to be governed more hierarchically. On a practical level, discernment is often the result of agreement derived from the affections and confirmed in prayer, worship, and fellowship of those assembled together.

5. Mission

Since any Pentecostal forms of synodality are formed by Pentecost, there is no strict separation between the life of the church and its evangelising mission. From the outset, Pentecostals viewed themselves as a ‘missionary fellowship’ in which the ‘fellowship’ (*koinonia*) is subject to the ‘mission’. The way to Pentecost (centrifugal mission) and from Pentecost (centripetal mission) points beyond the church into the world and to the ends of the earth. The unrestricted exhibition of charismatic discernment in community even among those outside of the church has traditionally informed Pentecostal attitudes towards evangelizing the lost. Because this way of engagement has been informed also by an apocalyptic eschatology, Pentecostals have originally relied little on training and education (with some holding to a more radical, eschatologically motivated anti-intellectualism). The gradual rise of Pentecostal Bible schools and missionary training schools during the twentieth century placed the primary emphasis on biblical and charismatic equipping of ministers and church leaders. This emphasis can be understood as a form of spiritual formation that deemphasizes institutional structures and formal governance in preference for personal agency, charismatic endowment, and vocation. Still, the expectation in light of Pentecost is that the Holy Spirit never speaks through just one person in a gathering of a hundred but that

the *sensus fidei* of the Spirit is confirmed by the consensus of many tongues and voices. The missional fellowship is therefore primarily pneumatological in its orientation so that only the church baptized in the Spirit can also evangelize the world in the Spirit. However, this pneumatological synodality is always a pathway from and to Christ, who baptizes with the Spirit, so that the Pentecostal mission has remained closely informed by the proclamation of the gospel.

The dominant theological pattern of evangelisation among classical Pentecostals is the so-called ‘full gospel’ and its specific emphasis on the experience of salvation, sanctification, Spirit baptism, divine healing, and the coming of the kingdom. Many classical Pentecostals follow a similar pattern in doctrine and praxis because of shared experiences and gradually established rituals across denominational boundaries. Neo-pentecostal groups tend to identify some or all of the patterns among other teachings. Rather than a formulaic summary of a Pentecostal order of salvation, the four- or five-fold gospel can be understood as an experiential expression of the encounter with God that also identifies a form of synodality. The altar call and response rite is an appropriate metaphor for this journey: synodality as an expression of the church’s mission begins with the call to the altar (conversion), continues with a tarrying at the altar (sanctification), culminates with a transformation at the altar (Spirit baptism), and concludes by taking the altar into the world (divine healing), and bringing the world back to the altar (mission). The importance of the altar call and response is not primarily on each stage of the ‘journey’ but on arriving within any moment at a possible encounter with God. Entrance to this pathway and the encounter with God can happen at any stage so that the whole process holds the church accountable for common discernment of the divine presence. Formed in the image of Pentecost, each step is an invitation to young and old, men and women, sons and daughters from all classes and abilities to whom God’s Spirit is promised (Acts 2:17-18). Along this path, mission is not only democratizing but also empowering others to encounter and recognize Christ and respond to the gospel. At the same time, synodality in this process is inclusive only insofar as it is redemptive (seeking conversion rather than initiation), transformative (sanctifying and consecrating rather than tolerating), empowering (renewing rather than confirming), and liberating (delivering rather than perpetuating existing patterns of life). In this sense of the full gospel narrative, Pentecostal synodality is performative and directive, receptive and proactive, confronting and reconciling, transformed and transformative as an expression of the community led by the Spirit.

6. Catholic Learning

The experiential pattern of the altar call and response rite can serve as a metaphor for a form of Pentecostal synodality that challenges the Catholic Church to ‘enlarge its tent’ beyond traditional ideas of conversion and the corresponding liturgical and sacramental patterns of the Tradition. While synodality for Pentecostals is soteriologically oriented, conversion forms but one entrance to the shared journey of the Spirit. Salvation for Pentecostals is not simply one moment (or even the beginning) of synodality but its underlying rationale built on the expectation that the way together is always redemptive, transforming, convicting, converting,

and delivering. Hence, synodality requires a corresponding soteriology that is ecclesial in as much as it is individual, communal, familial, social, material, cosmic, and eschatological. Catholic soteriology, especially for Pentecostals, is often perceived as showing little concern for repentance, deliverance, and transformation. The structure of the Catholic Liturgy holds little room for implementing forms of new evangelization, and the altar is typically not accessible by the faithful but restricted to sacerdotal ministry.

The shared journey among Pentecostals also includes the stage of consecration and sanctification, that is, an opportunity for the transformation of attitudes and behaviour, including repentance that leads to conversion and reconciliation. An appropriate ritual for this stage among Pentecostals is the practice of tarrying at the altar. This stage of the journey is formed by a waiting together for the presence of God and a shared lingering in the divine presence that can dismantle stereotypes of race, age, or gender, as much as religious belonging or denominational barriers. Every church has the responsibility to provide the faithful with the means to find God's presence but also to remain there. The result of a 'waiting' or 'remaining' together is a shared turning of hearts and minds toward God so that the faithful can walk together on the way and in the same direction. The emphasis classical Pentecostals placed on waiting at the altar is less recognisable in some majority white churches today which tend to redirect the altar ministry towards more therapeutic ends. Still, this stage identifies synodality as a way together that includes a stopping and waiting for one another as a means to allow those who have fallen behind to meet up with those who have gone ahead and for all to wait for the transforming presence of God. Tarrying together at the altar (including the eucharistic sense of the Catholic tradition) opens room for listening and speaking with God and with one another, a way to see the other in light of the encounter with God. While Catholic spirituality teaches sanctification and consecration, there seems to be a considerable lack of implementing and promoting the principles in the life of the believer. In addition, the pursuit of holiness can be viewed as primarily aimed at the individual, and there are few visible liturgical structures that aim at communal and congregational formation.

Another stage of synodality patterned after the altar call and response is the transformation and empowerment of the faithful, both of the Church and the churches, individually and communally. Spirit baptism functions as a central Pentecostal metaphor for receiving holiness and power to walk the way together in new directions because it acknowledges that the straight and narrow path of the Christian requires a divine nourishment for the journey that exceeds the resources and abilities of the church. An appropriate ritual for this stage among Pentecostals is the ancient Christian ritual of the laying on of hands as well as the practice of 'praying through' to a new and elevating encounter with God. Arguably the most notable manifestation of this stage are the Pentecostal practices of prophesying and speaking in tongues, exuberant manifestations of the gifts of the Spirit. With the baptism in the Spirit, the synodality of the church arrives at a turning point where the passive-receptive community is transformed into active agents of the Spirit. Rather than a celebration, the groaning of tongues and the uttering of prophecies are an expressions of solidarity with the suffering of creation for the fullness of redemption. More rational expressions of testimonies, prayer, and preaching can confirm the communal discernment of the way forward. Because the gift of this stage is the empowerment of the church, Spirit baptism signals the enablement of the

church to walk together. As on the day of Pentecost, the baptism with the Spirit cannot be contained within the church but leads the church into the streets and temples of the world. The history of Pentecostal Catholics showed the difficulty to integrate the altar call into traditional Catholic mass, and the practice was quickly abandoned along with the nomenclature ‘Pentecostal’ for Catholic charismatics. The challenge remains particularly for Catholic charismatic spirituality to reconcile the Eucharist perceived as the summit of the Liturgy with the altar perceived as the experiential centre of the divine presence. Especially absent from the official Catholic documents in this regard is the reconciliation of synodality and charisms, or for that matter, a clear identification of the role of the charisms in the synodal process.

The next stage of synodality among Pentecostals is formed by the question ‘where do we go’ after conversion, transformation, and empowerment? This stage admonishes the church to expand synodality beyond a way experienced only on the inside of the church and to take the way together into the world. The metaphor of ‘divine healing’ speaks to the variety of paths the church can take for the healing of the world, the reconciliation with others, and the confrontation with the public and social life. Divine healing is a broad metaphor for conversion that is attentive to suffering, including the wounds inflicted by the church. Yet for Pentecostals, because of the shared experiences of conversion, sanctification, and empowerment, the emphasis on divine healing is not meant metaphorically but existentially, that is, in the physical, material, and embodied experience of human life. An appropriate ritual among Pentecostals is the anointing with oil and the prayer for the sick so that they may be healed. Deliverance and exorcism are metaphors for a broad range of walking together into the world in confrontation with principalities and powers, psychophysiological manifestations and spiritual realities that stand in contrast to God and the church. This stage of synodality alerts the Church that the path of restoration and liberation is a path of spiritual warfare manifested in the body of Christ. The challenge of divine healing is the expansion of the church’s ministry and mission to all forms of ‘illness’ including the healing of the wounds of bigotry, racism, family violence, marital conflict, unemployment, poverty, nationalism, natural and environmental disasters. The goal of this stage of the way is to direct those who have found healing to the church and to enable them to walk the way together. Put differently, synodality as a way of healing leads the church into the world but also leads the world into the church. Congregational Catholic liturgy does not easily integrate with the care for the sick and the dying except in dedicated rituals. The dominance of disease, physical and mental illness, particularly among the poor, has directed many away from the Catholic tradition and to the care of Pentecostal and Charismatic churches.

A ‘final’ stage of the Pentecostal vision of synodality may be called its eschatological direction: the way of the church together must be open beyond concerns for the here and now to the way of God’s kingdom. The centrifugal and centripetal direction of Pentecostal mission emphasizes both the coming of the kingdom and the journey of the church toward the end. Yet, God’s kingdom is not considered the ‘end’ of synodality (or the church). Rather, an eschatological synodality speaks of the ‘end’ always in light of the current stage of the journey. In other words, an eschatological urgency penetrates every stage of the way together by drawing the church from a preoccupation with itself to its mission for the salvation of the

world and urging the church to return from the ends of the earth to the altars of the church. The Church must therefore cultivate the entire synodal process as an eschatological expressions of the journey together. An eschatological synodality transforms the liturgy of the church, the sacraments, and worship of the faithful into signposts of the 'end' of the journey. It is a reminder that synodality in this world is a transitory voyage guided by a vision of the end of the world, even though we may take the image of synodality also as an indication for the way of the faithful in the eternal life to come.

7. Practical and theological questions

- Do we recognize each other as participants on a shared journey because synodality is an expression of the Christian life or do we consider the synodal path to be 'our' journey rather than the journey of everyone?
- How do we recognize others on the journey? Are there common identifiers for synodal pilgrims?
- Do we make room for those on the journey who have fallen behind (or gone ahead)?
- Do we integrate the communal and individual aspects, the institutional and private forms of synodality?
- What is role of the charisms (spiritual gifts) for synodality?
- How do we measure progress on the synodal path? Do we arrive at any stage of the journey or at a final destination?