

The May meeting of the Next Steps Group welcomed the Co-Chairs of the Archbishops' Commission on Families and Households and invited Professor Janet Walker OBE and The Bishop of Durham, the Revd Paul Butler, to provide an overview of the work of the Commission.

The Co-Chairs discussed the results of the Commission's recent Call for Evidence, the Call for Reflections currently underway with Children and Young People, and highlighted in particular the work of the Couple Relationships workstream. Both groups agreed that it would be important for the Commission and Next Steps to stay closely in touch over the next few months as their respective work progressed.

Looking ahead to the House of Bishops meeting the following week, the Next Steps Group suggested that this provided a good opportunity to ask Bishops to contribute their suggestions and reflections regarding the LLF discernment process that would begin in September. In particular, bishops would be invited to think about how best to involve the Reference Group that will be accompanying the bishops during parts of their meetings, and how to make the process of discernment as transparent and prayerful as possible.

The window for responding to taking part in LLF closed on 30 April 2022. The meeting was updated on the numbers of people who had responded via the questionnaire, by participating in focus groups, and by submitting creative contributions. The group was given an overview of the qualitative and quantitative work that is now underway for reporting the responses. The emphasis is on reporting what people said, without attempting to offer interpretations or draw conclusions. The group was encouraged to hear about the high level of responses and the breadth of voices that had contributed. It was agreed that the numbers should be publicised as soon as final figures are known. The group also discussed the presentation of creative contributions at General Synod in July.

The group made suggestions about the membership of the new Pastoral Consultative Group which would be taken to the Archbishops for their consideration. They also agreed to connect with the Ministry Team regarding aspects of LLF that are likely to have a bearing on formation and the discernment of vocations, and to continue to pursue the possibility of engaging with ecumenical partners during the discernment phase.

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