

Limerick Diocese

Synod 2016

Training Manual for Hunter-gatherers

- Skills for Hunting-gathering
- Eight Models of Listening and Discernment (including Topic Guide and Questions)



SKILLS FOR HUNTING-GATHERING

Listening

“A group can never become a community unless it develops the habit of deep, respectful listening to one another”.

When listening:

DO

- Show interest/look at the person/adopt a relaxed posture/be natural, but sincere and genuine
- Concentrate/give full attention
- Decide to be interested/be aware of body language
- Try to make the person feel listened to
- Reflect, summarise if necessary

AVOID

- Interrupting the speaker/arguing
- Passing judgement too quickly in advance
- Jumping to conclusions
- Being over concerned about what your own response will be
- Showing irritation/annoyance

Personal Exercise

Complete the following exercise for yourself

- I find it easy to listen when.....
- I find it hard to listen when.....
- The type of people I find it hard to listen to are.....
- I really like listening to people who.....
- I don't bother listening when.....
- It is good to listen when.....
- It is better not to listen when.....

“Listening is an art, a skill, and a discipline”

Facilitation

- “makes easy” a discussion/meeting
- Tries to be neutral/objective about the content and outcome of the discussion/meeting
- Is mainly concerned about the PROCESS of the discussion i.e. how best to enable useful or fruitful discussion rather than what is said
- The danger of the facilitator focussing too much on the content is that he or she will silence other people in the group by spending too much time voicing his/her own opinions or will give more air-time to people whose opinions are the same as his/her own. If the main role of the facilitator is to help the group to have a discussion, then it is important that he/she doesn't talk too much.
- Do not be drawn into personal agendas - or giving answers!

These are three main areas that need to be kept in mind when facilitating small groups. They are the needs of the individual, the needs of the group and the task you are trying to accomplish. The job of a small group facilitator is to help each of these things to happen in the group meeting.

The facilitator needs to try to keep three things in mind when facilitating a discussion:

- a. The needs of individuals
 - b. The task
 - c. The needs of the group
- a.) Needs of individuals
 - To feel safe
 - To feel accepted
 - To feel valued
 - To feel appreciated
 - To feel useful
- b.) Task
 - Getting the job done by keeping the group focussed on the questions that are being discussed.
 - Being aware of the time
 - Clarifying any doubts/questions of group participants

Note: if the group was an ongoing one then another part of the task would be to work towards achieving aims and objectives set by the group and to work for consensus.
- c.) Needs of the Group
 - To have a unity of purpose
 - To co-operate
 - To ensure that all participants are heard and feel understood

Think of an experience you have had where any of these elements were missing. What happened as a result? Which of these elements would you feel most comfortable with? Which would you find the hardest?

MODELS FOR LISTENING

1. Large Assemblies

The following steps can be used as a guide-line for planning the large assembly:

1. Decide on a suitable venue for the assembly. It needs to be big enough to accommodate the numbers expected. There may be a need for smaller rooms for group discussion if the hall is not big enough.
2. Publicity. It is really important to plan this element well as experience has shown that if the assembly is not well publicised, the turn-out could be low. It includes giving notice to the parish, through announcements at Mass, through posters in the church and in the parish newsletter and through flyers distributed to the homes of the parish. People in the parish who are creative or artistic could be invited to prepare publicity material.
3. Identifying and approaching parishioners who will call to the homes in the parish to extend a personal invitation to the assembly. They can bring a flyer or invitation card with them with information about it.
4. Training of the facilitators for the group discussions at the assembly. It is also useful to have people who will act as reporters (note-takers) for the small groups. They would also benefit from participating in the training.
5. Forming a welcome group to greet people when they arrive at the assembly. This group will take care of registration, distributing name-tags, arranging the seating and organising tea/coffee.
6. Plan the preaching at the Masses on the two Sundays leading into the assembly. The first of these nights to be done by the priests of the parish. Delegates might be invited to do the second.
7. The facilitators will not have the chance at the assembly to voice their own views and concerns so their training could be accompanied by a mini-assembly for them specifically. Whatever emerges from this can be fed into the processing of the assembly itself.
8. Organise a few people who will prepare the prayer at the beginning of the assembly. This deserves some care. Ten to fifteen minutes of prayer, creatively prepared, sets the mood for all that follows.

NOTE: Eight people is a good size for the small group discussions. If a rough estimate is made of the number of people expected, name tags can be prepared in advance with group numbers already written on them. For example, if approximately 100 people are expected, that is around 12 groups of eight. Number one can be written on the first 8 name tags and so on up to 12. The first person who arrives has their name written on a tag with number 1, the second on a tag with number 2, the third on a tag with number 3 and so on. If numbers are lower than expected, groups can be asked to merge when they actually form. If they are higher than expected, group number 13 can be formed etc. Have the number of each group written on a large piece of paper and stick these up around the hall.

CHECKLIST

- Check materials – flip chart, markers, large sheets and markers for each group, PA system.
- Materials for the prayer – sacred space, flowers, paschal candle, prayer sheets etc.
- Tea/coffee organised, and sweets to bring to the groups to create a warm atmosphere.
- Pens and stickers/name-badges for registration.
- Take names and addresses at registration so as to circulate reports afterwards.

Outline of the Assembly

8.00 p.m. Welcome by the parish priest or delegates. Hand over to the coordinator/chairperson.

8.05 p.m. Prayer

8.15 p.m. Break up into small groups. Direct people to the place in the hall where the number on their name-tag is placed.

The three questions to be addressed during the assembly are:

- I. (A question around where we see God at work, the Spirit active, the Kingdom of God breaking in – this needs to be broken down and named simply but it might help to introduce the question and frame it in the words of Kavanagh: *God is in the bits and pieces of Everyday - A kiss here and a laugh again, and sometimes tears, A pearl necklace round the neck of poverty*
Where do we experience love, truth, goodness, hope, joy?
- II. What can be done to be inclusive of those who don't feel connected to the faith community? Why do you continue to participate or why do you not continue to participate?
- III. What are the most important religious/social issues facing the Diocese of Limerick? (What are the issues you would like to see on the agenda of the Synod in 2016?)

The reporter, with the help of the facilitator, writes the responses to the questions on large sheets of paper.

9.00 p.m.: Reporter and facilitator from each group comes up and very briefly reports back on question one. Once this has been completed, the same happens for question two and three. What is being requested is a summary. The co-ordinator can explain that all that has been said in each group has been written down and a group will be coming together to go through what each group has said and to compile a detailed report.

9.40 p.m. The parish priest thanks everyone for coming and concludes the meeting.

9.50 p.m. Brief review by delegates and facilitators:
1. What went well?
2. What would we change if doing this again?

Preparing the Report:

If possible, all the facilitators and /or reporters need to come together to collate the findings from the assembly.

2. Small Group Meetings

Check list for Facilitators

- The role of the facilitator is to enable each person on the small group to have the opportunity to express their ideas and hopes. Each person's contribution is important and even if you do not agree with what they are saying it is important to allow them to express their view without feeling that you are critical of it.
- Make sure you have the questions
- Invite people to introduce themselves and try to help them to relax
- Read the first question out
- Let the group know that it is important that everyone gets a chance to speak
- Try to keep them focussed on the question
- Listen carefully to people and check that you understand what was said
- Ensure that everyone gets an opportunity to speak. This will mean restraining some and encouraging others
- Keep an eye on the time and move on to the second question
- Do not be drawn into personal agendas - or giving answers!
- Ask the reporter to give a quick summary at the end
- Thank your group for their participation

Preparation:

1. A planning group divides the parish into appropriate small units or groups of houses
2. "Host houses" are identified and approached. These could be people who have previously hosted Station Masses.
3. Once people have agreed to host the meetings, confirm the exact division of houses in the parish. If it is not possible to find somebody to host the house meeting in a particular area, the gathering can be held in the parish centre. It is a good idea to have a meeting with the hosts to go through what is involved.
4. Provide two training sessions for the facilitators.
5. Identify and approach a group of people (including some who have artistic gifts) for the purpose of publicising the house meetings and generating interest. This includes:-
 - invitation cards to be handed in personally to each house by the hosts
 - announcements at Masses and in the parish newsletter
 - preaching by priests of the parish and by members of the planning group
 - posters in the church porch and around the parish
 - flyers to be distributed by a team of people to all houses

Outline of a Small Group Meeting

8.00 p.m. Welcome, Outline of the Meeting

8.10 p.m. Prayer

8:15 p.m. Break into small groups of 4-6 people and take the following questions

The three questions are:

- I. (A question around where we see God at work, the Spirit active, the Kingdom of God breaking in – this needs to be broken down and named simply but it might help to introduce the question and frame it in the words of Kavanagh:

*God is in the bits and pieces of Everyday - A kiss here and a laugh again,
and sometimes tears, A pearl necklace round the neck of poverty*

Where do we experience love, truth, goodness, hope, joy?

- II. What can be done to be inclusive of those who don't feel connected to the faith community? Why do you continue to participate or why do you not continue to participate?
- III. What are the most important religious/social issues facing the Diocese of Limerick? (What are the issues you would like to see on the agenda of the Synod in 2016?)

8.55 p.m. Tea Break

9.15 p.m. Feedback from small groups, noted on flipchart and brief general discussion

9.30 p.m. End the meeting with prayer, possibly based on 1 Corinthians 12 (The Body of Christ)

9.45 p.m. Brief review for delegates and facilitators:
1. What went well?
2. What would we change if doing this again?

3. Informal Listening Survey

This is based on the Brazilian educator, Paulo Freire's psycho-social method of education. His concern was with people, who because of their poverty, had very little access to education and could not read or write. This in turn made it impossible for them to have an influence on the social and economic decision-making which directly affected their lives.

The steps for putting the method into practice are:-

1. finding out what people feel strongly about, what is relevant to them now, by conducting a listening survey.
2. Analysing the findings that come out of the survey and establishing what the main themes seem to be (generative themes). Once these have been identified, there is an attempt to work out the causes of the problems that have been expressed

1. Listening Survey:

The first step involves forming a team of people who are perceptive and very involved in the area. The team listens actively for any issues, problems, situations that people in the community are talking about with strong feelings. What are people:

- Happy about?
- Hopeful about?
- Worried about?
- Sad about?
- Angry about
- Afraid of?

The team chooses places to listen where they normally come in contact with people during the course of their daily lives, including shops, school, clinic, pub, waiting for the bus, meetings, church, neighbours etc.

While they are listening they need to be careful that they are not just hearing things that fit in with their own concerns, they need to particularly listen for things that concern the community/parish as a whole. They need to keep a daily record of what they have heard and the context in which they heard it, without naming specific people, but mentioning age, gender etc.

2. Weekly meetings are held where members of the team give feedback on what they have been hearing. This can be done in small groups if numbers are large. Ideally there should be a facilitator and a recorder in each small group. The feedback can be written on large charts and/or tape-recorded. The main facilitator needs to listen for key themes, summarise what has been said and can ask people to comment on the themes that seem to be emerging. Between meetings, the facilitator brings together what has been said by the small groups and represents it at the next meeting.

Six Areas of Life: (from Training for Transformation Book 1 page 38)

The team listens for themes that cover the following areas of life.

- 1: Meeting basic needs. Food, clothing, shelter, water, health & care
- 2: Relationships between people. Social relationships between men and women, husbands and wives, parents and children, lay people and clergy, wealthy and those on low income. The tensions or harmonies that exist in these relationships. Community and family rituals such as birth, marriage, child-care and death.
- 3: Community decision making structures. What are the structures for involving people? What are the rules of the community/parish? Who makes them? Who enforces them? Who has power? What lets some people have a say and others not? How do people feel about the decisions that are made which affect their lives and the way the decisions are made? How do people feel about decision-making in the parish?
- 4: Education and socialisation. People are taught values, skills and acceptable ways of behaving as members of a community. What are they? Are there changes taking place? What tensions occur through these changes?
- 5: Recreation. What do members of the parish/community do to relax and enjoy themselves? Sports (watching/playing), pubs, discos/clubs, groups (youth/active retirement/gardening etc.), getting out etc.
- 6: Beliefs and Values. All communities have a basic set of beliefs, an ideology or religion through which they express their understanding of human life, death, the world, relationship with God etc. This provides them with a frame of reference through which they determine what is important in life. What are the important values of the community? What are their attitudes to religion, to God, to worship, to the Church, to the parish? What are the traditions that mean something to them?

Note:

Whichever method of listening survey is chosen it is important to put together a report at the end, identifying the key themes and listing some of the comments and suggestions under each thematic heading. At a later stage, if it is decided to continue using this method, the listening team will undertake a deeper analysis of the findings of the survey and decide how to present them to the parish in a problem-posing way.

4. Questionnaires

There are many different types of questionnaires, but unless a method is chosen that includes some form of interview where people actually voice their opinions to a person that is sitting in front of them, they will often not feel listened to or heard. Just filling in a form is very impersonal and people may not experience it as an actual process of consultation.

The three questions are:

1. What can be done to be inclusive of those who don't feel connected to the faith community? Why do you continue to participate or why do you not continue to participate?
2. What are the most important religious/social issues facing the Diocese of Limerick? (What are the issues you would like to see on the agenda of the Synod in 2016?)
3. (A question around where we see God at work, the Spirit active, the Kingdom of God breaking in – this needs to be broken down and named simply but it might help to introduce the question and frame it in the words of Kavanagh:

God is in the bits and pieces of Everyday - A kiss here and a laugh again, and sometimes tears, A pearl necklace round the neck of poverty)

Where do we experience love, truth, goodness, hope, joy?

5.The Focus Group

A focus group is a common research technique used by companies for marketing purposes. A focus group typically consists of a small number of participants, usually around six to 12.

Although group interviews are often used simply as a quick and convenient way to collect data from several people simultaneously, focus groups explicitly use group interaction as part of the method. This means that instead of the researcher asking each person to respond to a question in turn, people are encouraged to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes and commenting on each other's experiences and points of view.

Advantages of using Focus Groups

- Takes advantage of the fact that people naturally interact and are influenced by others.
- May be one of the few research tools available for obtaining data from children or from individuals who are not particularly literate
- Provide data more quickly and at lower cost than if individuals interviewed separately; groups can be assembled on shorter notice than for a more systematic survey.
- Generally requires less preparation and is comparatively easy to conduct.
- Researcher can interact directly with respondents (allows clarification, follow-up questions, probing). Can gain information from non-verbal responses to supplement (or even contradict) verbal responses.
- Data uses respondents' own words; can obtain deeper levels of meaning, make important connections, identify subtle nuances
- Very flexible; can be used with wide range of topics, individuals, and settings
- Results are easy to understand and more accessible to lay audiences or decision-makers than complex statistical analyses of survey data

Disadvantages of using Focus Groups

- Have less control over group; less able to control what information will be produced.
- Produces relatively chaotic data making data analysis more difficult.
- Moderator may knowingly or unknowingly bias results by providing cues about what types of responses are desirable
- Uncertainty about accuracy of what participants say. Results may be biased by presence of a very dominant or opinionated member; more reserved members may be hesitant to talk.

How to conduct a Focus Group

Determining whom to study: Who can provide the needed information? Consider special groups (e.g., advisory board, employees, clients). Demographic characteristics such as age, gender, occupation, education, etc. become key in determining who should be invited.

Developing the questions: Questions should be carefully planned but appear spontaneous during the interview. For best results, a focus group session should include around **five or six questions**. It should always include less than ten questions. Use open-ended questions and avoid "yes" or "no" questions.

Moderating skills: Moderators (interviewers) play a key role in the success of focus groups. Moderators should have characteristics that are similar to participants and be skilled in group processes. Their role is to keep discussions flowing and on track, guide discussions back from irrelevant topics, make transitions into another question, and be sensitive to mood of the group.

Know when to move onto another question. Moderators should also have some background knowledge about the topic being discussed. One should consider using a **moderator team** with divided tasks. The main moderator should direct the discussion and take minimal notes. The assistant can take comprehensive notes and respond to unexpected interruptions (e.g., late comers, children someone brought, etc.). Be mentally prepared. Moderators should be mentally alert, listen well, and think quickly on their feet. Questions should be memorized. Small talk is essential just prior to group discussion. The moderator should greet the participants and begin small talk while avoiding issues to be discussed during the focus group session. This time will allow a moderator to observe the interaction. Name tents can be strategically placed around the table after observing participants. For example, you may want to strategically place those who are extremely shy or those who may dominate the discussion. Record the discussion. Discussions should be recorded via tape recording or note taking. Notes are essential. Notes should be so complete that it can be used even if the tape recorder did not work. One should never rely completely on a tape recorder. Someone, other than the moderator should take detailed notes.

Begin the discussion. The recommended pattern of discussion is **welcome, overview and topic, ground rules, first question**. The overview should provide an honest discussion about the purpose of the study and the importance of the topic of group discussion. Ground rules are suggestions that will help guide the discussion and include rules such as: minimize or eliminate side conversations, one person will speak at a time, don't criticize what others have to say, and treat everyone's ideas with respect. The first question should be one that "breaks the ice" and encourages everyone to talk.

Pause and Probe. As a general rule, a moderator should pause for five seconds after a participant talks before beginning to talk. This five second pause gives other participants a chance to jump in. Probes, such as "would you explain that further?" or "Would you give me an example?" should be used to request additional information. Responding to participant comments. Moderators should avoid head nodding, and short verbal responses such as "ok", "yes", "uh huh", "correct", "that's good" etc.

Be aware of group dynamics. Moderators should watch for the expert, the dominant talker, the shy participant, the rambler, etc. Selecting the focus group location. Locations should be easy to get to. Participants should sit facing each other. A table should be available for participants to sit around. The room should also be accessible for setting up tape recorders.

Being prepared for the unexpected. Moderators should be prepared for unexpected events such as no one showing up, only a few showing up (hold group anyway), meeting place inadequate, group does not want to talk (ask individuals questions, go around the room and everyone answers specific question, the group gets involved and don't want to leave (have formal ending). Concluding the focus group. Thank the group for participating. The moderator may choose to summarize what was said and ask if anything was missed.

Participants: Focus group participants should be systematically and purposefully selected. The following provides some guidelines in selecting potential participants:

- a. Purpose of study should guide who to invite.
- b. Focus group participants should be characterized by homogeneity, but with sufficient variation to allow for contrasting opinions.
- c. Participants should not be familiar with each other (those who know each other tend to form small group discussions).
- d. Size of the group is typically around 7-10. Groups of over twelve have often proven to be too big while under four have shown that not enough total experiences exist.

6 Online Survey

On the Synod website a link will be developed which will allow people to participate in an online survey. This will enable us to create a means by which many people can easily participate in this phase of the Synod. It is a method which will particularly appeal to young people and also to those who wish to participate anonymously. The challenge is to ensure that there is widespread knowledge of this facility and that a wide constituency feel welcome to take part.

7 Amarach Research

“Our highly trained field force of over 300 interviewers nationwide enables us to find and research large or small groups of consumers – whoever and wherever they are. We can then compile accurate and comprehensive opinion polls and surveys. Whether you need to talk to a sample of adults across Ireland, or simply to 18-24s beer drinkers, or even to a cross section of the people visiting your stores or branches, then we have the capacity to find them and interview them.

We also conduct telephone market research surveys of businesses and customers – working off customer lists if available or ‘free finding’ respondents when required.”

8 Open Space

While the mechanics of Open Space provide a simple means to self-organize, it is the underlying principles that make it effective both for meetings and as a guidepost for individual and collective effectiveness. The Law of Two Feet — a foot of passion and a foot of responsibility — expresses the core idea of taking responsibility for what you love. In practical terms, the law says that if you’re neither contributing nor getting value where you are, use your two feet (or available form of mobility) and go somewhere where you can. It is also a reminder to stand up for your passion. From the law flow four principles:

- Whoever comes is the right people
- Whatever happens is the only thing that could have
- Whenever it starts is the right time
- When it’s over, it’s over

Opening:

1. Show the timeline, how the meeting breaks down into Opening, Marketplace of ideas, Break-out sessions, Closing.
2. Sponsor introduces the theme. Briefly. One or two minutes max. Long openings drain the energy of the meeting quickly. Get participants to work ASAP.
3. Facilitators introduce the principles and the format. Explain how the marketplace of ideas works.

Marketplace of ideas:

1. Participants write 'issues' on pieces of paper. Preferably with bold markers, so they are easy to read from a distance.
2. Participants choose a timeslot for their topic on the agenda wall.
3. One by one, participants explain their issue to the others, with the aim of drawing the right people to their break-out-session.

Break-out sessions:

Once people do not come up with new issues (wait a little bit, and ask 'are we done?'). I find the silence that often happens at the beginning and end of the marketplace the scariest. However, this silence seems to be very productive.

You may ask people to put their name on sessions they want to attend. More than one session per slot is OK... (law of two feet). This gives conveners an idea of how busy their session is going to be. It gives participants an image of how the break-out session is going.

People may shuffle sessions around, or merge sessions as they are deciding where to go. The facilitators' role in this bit of the conference is to answer questions, and make sure everyone has the materials they need to run their break-out session. They do not (in principle) intervene in the sessions - the participants are supposed to self-organize.

Closing:

Have everyone back in the circle.