

root &  
branch



r e f o r m  
is needed  
*in our Catholic church!*

# Lay-Led Inclusive Synod

5-12 September 2021

On-line and in Bristol

Root & Branch began in January 2020 before the pandemic. We were responding to journalist Joanna Moorhead's challenge in *The Tablet* that the Catholic Church needed 'a synod that starts with women' rather than tagging them on the end or ignoring them altogether. Very soon, as the name suggests, we understood that we needed to look at all areas of reform in the Church. If we succeeded in attracting support we would make it clear that Root & Branch is not a single-issue movement. Women may have started it, but it would not end there.

The pandemic lockdown and the rise in online forums allowed us to embark, in October 2020, on an on-line Journey of Discernment towards an inclusive, lay-led synod. We have listened to speakers from all over the world. Both on-line, and quietly in correspondence, we have been open to – we have actively sought out – opinion from all sections of the Church. We have been accompanied by prayer and, we trust, the guiding inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Our thinking has matured and deepened. We have become more inclusive at the same time as learning to be more bravely challenging.

For months we have been preparing The Bristol Text to Reform. It is a document that embodies at least some of the discoveries we have made. It exists both in a readily accessible and in more complex, learned forms. It is intended to give ordinary Catholics the reassurance that there are changes we can make in our practice that are in keeping with the best of Catholic tradition and have the endorsement of deep, pastorally sensitive and well-informed thinkers and theologians, including many who are clergy. It also offers practical and often challenging visions for the Church, calling it to be Christ-like in its structures, its thinking and its practice.

This week is the culmination of that year-long journey: the presentation by international panels of thinkers of The Bristol Text, and the wonderful firework display of speakers for the final Friday and Saturday, led by Mary McAleese, Helena Kennedy and James Carroll. We will end on the second Sunday with a Celebration of Word and Communion, followed by lunch in an Agape of Inclusion.

Root & Branchers, as the people who've joined us along the way have begun to call themselves, have been asking us 'what next'? This movement has become too big, too important to many people, to stop here. With the help of all your prayers we know the Holy Spirit will bring inspiration this week – and also fresh volunteers - to carry us forward.

# Creating the Bristol Text to Reform 5-8 September 2021

*The Bristol Text is offered as a contribution to the Bishops' Synodal Process and to Catholics around the world as part of our common preparation for Rome in 2023.*

*It is also intended to give confidence to individual Catholics, to form our own thinking, learning, decision-making, conscience and practice.*

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On-line only:

## Sunday 5 September

**18.30-18.45**

**Inner Room**

*join us as we pray for the Spirit to guide the final week of our inclusive Synod*

**19.00-20.30**

## **Redefining and Reclaiming Liturgical Ministry**

*Introduction by* **Colm Holmes**, R&B

**Martha Heizer**, co-founder of We Are Church Austria and We Are Church International

**Kate McElwee**, activist, Executive Director Women's Ordination Conference

**Revd Diarmuid O'Murchu**, social psychologist and author of *Doing Theology in an Evolutionary Way*, pastoral care for HIV-Aids, homeless and refugees

**Patricia Rumsey**, abbess of a Poor Clare monastery, associate professor at Nottingham University, and author of *Lest She Pollute the Sanctuary*

**Kathleen Gibbons Schuck**, facilitator, executive coach, and member of Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP)

*Chair:* **Katharine Salmon**, teacher, feminist, theologian



On-line only:

## Monday 6 September

16.00-16.15

**Inner Room**

*join us as we pray for the Spirit to guide the final week of our inclusive Synod*

16.30-18.00

## Embracing Diversity

Introduction by **Colm Holmes**, R&B

**Dr Kochurani Abraham**, feminist theologian, author, and Co-ordinator of the Indian Christian Women's Movement for Kerala, India

**Dr James Alison**, Catholic theologian, priest and author

**Dr Nontando Hadebe**, previously teaching African, Pastoral, Feminist and Liberation Theology at St Augustine College, South Africa, she is now International Co-ordinator of Side by Side: Faith Movement for Gender Justice

**Dr Claire Jenkins**, trans woman, Senior Fellow Margaret Beaufort Institute, University of Cambridge, pastoral care to LGBT Catholics and Muslim asylum seekers and refugees

Chair: **Ruby Almeida**, co-chair Global Network of Rainbow Catholics



## Tuesday 7 September

18.30-18.45

**Inner Room**

*join us as we pray for the Spirit to guide the final week of our inclusive Synod*

19.00-20.30

## Rethinking Moral Theology

Introduction by **Colm Holmes**, R&B

**Tina Beattie**, theologian, novelist and former Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Roehampton

**Gina Menzies**, Irish broadcaster and theologian specializing in Moral Theology and Feminism, currently lecturing on Healthcare Ethics at The Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin

**Thomas O'Loughlin**, author and Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology at the University of Nottingham, and the Director of Studia Traditionis Theologiae

**John O'Loughlin Kennedy**, economist, social entrepreneur, author of *The Curia is the Pope*

Chair: **Joanna Moorhead**, journalist and author, arts editor *The Tablet*

On-line only:

## Wednesday 8 September

16.00-16.15

*Inner Room*

*join us as we pray for the Spirit to guide the final few days of our inclusive Synod*

16.30-18.00

## Insisting on Sharing Authority

*Introduction by Colm Holmes, R&B*

**Dr Luca Badini Confalonieri**, Executive Director at the Wijngaards Institute with a long-standing interest in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church

**Revd Anthony Cassidy**, Parochial Administrator at St Matthew's Catholic Church, West Norwood, London

**Christina Rees CBE**, former member of the General Synod of the Church of England, writer, broadcaster and applied theologian

**Baroness Helena Kennedy QC**, one of Britain's most distinguished lawyers championing civil liberties and promoting human rights

*Chair: Virginia Saldanha*, writer and feminist theologian; former Executive Secretary of the Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) Women's Desk, and Office of Laity & Family



## Thursday 9 September

20.30 – 21.30

*Inner Room*

*join Revd Sr Victoria Chester as we pray for the Spirit  
to guide the final few days of our inclusive Synod*

# **Casting Out Our Fear – the Way Forward**

## **10-11 September 2021**

**Friday 10 September**

**St Michael's Centre, Stoke Gifford, Bristol and on-line**

*11.30-13.00 Registration followed by lunch for those physically attending*

Live and On-line:

**13.00**

### **PRAYER AND SETTING THE SYNOD IN CONTEXT**

**Myra Poole SND**, co-founder of Catholic Women's Ordination

**Derek Reeve**, co-founder of A Call To Action

**Bishop Declan Lang**, Bishop of Clifton

**Ursula King**, Professor Emerita, Theology and Religious Studies, University of Bristol

*chair: Mary Ring, R&B*

*followed by the blessing of the synod*

**Revd Richard McKay and parishioners from St Nicholas of Tolentino, Bristol**



**14.00-14.45**

### **KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

**Professor Mary McAleese**, former President of Ireland

## **NO SYNODALITY WITHOUT FREEDOM OF SPEECH**

**Canon law must acknowledge the human rights of Church members**

**14.50-15.25**

**Q&A**

with **Joanna Moorhead**, journalist and author



**15.30**

### **WELCOME TO BRISTOL**

**Bishop Vivienne Faull**, Bishop of Bristol

*Tea break*

Friday 10 September

16.10-16.35

**LITURGICAL MINISTRY**

**a personal experience**

**Dr Martha Heizer**, co-founder of We Are Church Austria  
and We Are Church International



16.35-17.00

**KNOCKING ON CLOSED DOORS**

**The Persistent Witness for Women's Ordination**

**Kate McElwee**, Executive Director Women's Ordination Conference



17.05-17.30

**BELONGING & BEING CHURCH**

**What's Catholicism all about?**

**Dr James Alison**, theologian and priest



17.35-18.00

**INCLUSIVITY**

**At what price?**

**Ruby Almeida**, former broadcaster and lecturer,  
always seeking productive conversations that bring about change



18.05-18.30

**PRAYERFUL CLOSE**

**Eleanor Flynn**, co-founder of Women's Wisdom in the Church, Australia  
and co-convenor of Australasian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform

**Soline Humbert Vatinel**, spiritual director and advocate for women's ordination, Ireland



*19.00 Those attending must have left the centre please*

On-line only:

21.00-21.30

**NIGHT PRAYER**

**Dave Lucas**, gives the background to The Ordinary Office,  
a praying online weekly community of disabled and dispersed people  
and finishes with a Night Prayer

Live and On-line:

## **Saturday 11 September**

**St Michael's Centre, Stoke Gifford, Bristol and On-line**

*08.30-09.00 Coffee*

**09.15-09.35**

**THE WORD**

**The Gospel reading and homily**

**Shanon Sterringer**, Director, Hildegard Haus, Ohio



**09.45-10.00**

**AIMS OF THE DAY**

**Pamela Perry**, R&B and **Mary Ring**, R&B



**10.00-10.25**

**VISION & VOICE**

**Breaking the sound barrier of fear**

**Christina Rees CBE**, campaign for Anglican women's ordination for over 25 years,  
leader of the campaign for women bishops

**Christina will then chair the synod today**



**10.30-11.00**

**THE ASIAN BISHOPS' VISION OF A CO-RESPONSIBLE CHURCH  
IS NO MORE. WHY?**

**Virginia Saldanha**, writer and feminist theologian; former Executive Secretary, Federation of Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) Women's Desk, and Office of Laity & Family



*11.00 Coffee Break*

**Saturday 11 September**

**11.30-11.55**

**CATALYTIC CONVERSIONS**

**transforming the Church's gender politics beyond 'add women and stir'**

**Tina Beattie**, Professor Emerita, Catholic Studies, University of Roehampton



**12.00-12.30**

**WOMEN & MEN AT THE TABLE, EARLY CHRISTIAN ERA**

**Dr Ally Kateusz**, specialist in women and religion in Early Christian art and text,

research associate Wijngaards Institute of Catholic Research

**12.30-13.00**

**Q&A**

with **Miriam Duignan**, activist for reform in the Catholic church



*13.00-13.45 Lunch Break*

**14.00-14.30**

**JUSTICE IN THE CATHOLIC CHURCH**

**Baroness Helena Kennedy QC**

Director of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute

**14.35-14.55**

**Q&A**

with **Penelope Middelboe**, R&B and **Sue Williamson**, R&B



**14.55-15.05**

**PERSONAL REFLECTION**

**Eve Rose-Keenan**, Anglican priest, Labour councillor for Rotherham

and survivor of child sexual exploitation



**Saturday 11 September**

**15.10-15.40**

## **THE FUTURE CHURCH IS A CHOICE**

**James Carroll**, award-winning American author and journalist.

His latest book is *The Truth at the Heart of the Lie: How the Catholic Church Lost its Soul*.

**15.40-16.10**

### **Q&A**

with **Pamela Perry**, R&B



*16.15 Tea Break*

**16.45-17.35**

## **INTERCONNECTED**

### **Panel of inter-faith networks**

**Christine Clinch**, Lead, Ammerdown Centre, Bristol, enabling people of differing views or religions to engage in dialogue and pursue journeys of prayer, faith or enquiry

**Revd Richard McKay**, parish priest at St Nicholas of Tolentino, Bristol, influenced by Charismatic Renewal and Liberation Theology

**Dr Zainab Mai-Bornu**, lecturer at the University of Leicester, a Muslim from Nigeria

**Revd Dr Catherine Okoronkwo**, Vicar of All Saints and St Barnabas Church, Swindon, Bishop of Bristol's Adviser on Racial Justice, author of *Blood and Water/obara na mmiri*

**Iris Segall**, council member of the Bristol & West Progressive Jewish Congregation (BWPJC) with a long-standing experience of interfaith dialogue and activity

**Rabbi Alexandra Wright**, UK's first female senior rabbi, and active in the Council of Christians and Jews

*Chair: Rhiannon Parry Thompson*, R&B



**17.45-18.15**

## **WHERE NOW**

### **with the Bristol Text to Reform?**

**Tom O'Loughlin**, Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology, University of Nottingham

with **Penelope Middelboe**, R&B



## **18.20-18.30 FAREWELL, INVITATION TO SUNDAY LITURGIES, BLESSING**

**Pamela Perry**, R&B, **Mary Ring**, R&B, **Katharine Salmon**, R&B

*19.00 Those attending must have left the centre please*

Live and on-line:

**Sunday 12 September**  
**Sequoia Room, Holiday Inn, Filton, Bristol**

**10.30**

**CLOSING LITURGY**

**Celebration of the Word and Communion**

*Shared liturgy that fulfils our Sunday obligation*

**11.30**

**BREAKING OF BREAD**

**An Agape of Inclusion**

*Come to a celebration of our friendship and peace  
sharing a light lunch to see us on our way*

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**Acknowledgments**

Huge thanks to **Rev Canon Julie Bradley**, Associate Minister at **St Michael's, Stoke Gifford**, for her support for the Synod even from before the beginning. In July 2018, Pam went to chat with Julie about her being a speaker at a Parishioners' Call gathering in Salisbury alongside Bishop Crispian Hollis. When Julie led Pam out of St Michael's friendly, cottage coffee shop and into its magnificent state-of-the-art auditorium the seed of Root & Branch Synod was planted as Pam visualised the space full of lively, reforming Catholics. From that first inspirational moment right until now, even through the anxious time of the pandemic, Julie and St Michael's team could not have been more encouraging, welcoming or hospitable to us. We are so grateful.

Big thank you also to the parishioners at **St Nicholas of Tolentino** Roman Catholic Church in Easton. All are welcome there. **Rev Richard McKay** has ministered in the poorest parts of Bristol for nearly fifty years. His parishioners say they see him, day in day out, rising to the challenge he puts to them — to exclude no-one from Christ's love and care. Traumatized people, whether from inner city Bristol or from war-torn corners of the world arrive at St Nick's doorstep and the community tries to patch them up with practical care and love, striving to be a 'field hospital' church. One of the founders of Root & Branch, Catholic Women's Ordination, has been privileged to share in this kindly beneficence. We're blessed to have St Nick's support, friendship - and magnificent music - in our Synod.

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**Biographies for panellists and speakers**

**Dr Kochurani Abraham** is an Indian feminist theologian, researcher, writer, and trainer on issues related to gender, sexuality, spirituality, and ecology. She is currently Vice President of the Indian Theological Association and is active in the Indian Women Theologians' Forum. She is author of *Persisting Patriarchy: Intersectionalities, Negotiations, Subversions*.

**Dr James Alison** is a Catholic theologian, priest, and author. He has a mission to bring the work of French historian and polymath Rene Girard to a wider public. His books include *Faith Beyond Resentment: Fragments Catholic and Gay*. He is known for his pastoral outreach in the LGBTQ+ community.

**Ruby Almeida** was born in Jodhpur, India. She was brought up with an Almeida identity that was both strongly Catholic and Indian from an early age. After moving to England and attending a Catholic school she embarked on a decades long career in the media industry. This included making documentaries for the Indian Space Organisation; working primarily with the community sector, NGOs and colleges in India under her own video production company; and being Senior Lecturer in Film and Broadcast at London Metropolitan University. Ruby has worked for many years on LGBTQ+ rights. She was Chair of Quest for 8 years, and is the Co-Chair of the Global Network of Rainbow Catholics. She set up Rainbow Catholic India and Bridge and Embrace, the first LGBT groups in India; and is on the LGBT+ Catholics Westminster Pastoral Council. Ruby works for Landings, a programme to support baptised Catholics, who, once distanced from their faith, now wish to return to it.

**Dr Luca Badini Confalonieri** is Director of Research at the Wijngaards Institute, has a special interest in the governance of the Roman Catholic Church, and is author of *Democracy in the Christian Church – A Historical, Theological and Political Case*. He is also the lead author of the report 'Christian Objections to Same Sex Relationships: An Academic Assessment', and its accompanying 'Academic Statement on the Ethics of Free and Faithful Same-Sex Relationships', which have achieved substantial international media coverage recently.

**Tina Beattie** is one of the familiar voices on *Thought for the Day* on BBC Radio 4. She is Emerita Professor of Catholic Studies at the University of Roehampton and an independent researcher and writer. She is also Director of Catherine of Siena College, at the University of Roehampton, offering online courses in theology, gender and social justice. In addition to her many academic publications, Tina is the author of a novel *The Good Priest*. A second novel *Between Two Rivers* is due for publication later this year. Her academic and media interests are in the areas of sacramentality, mysticism, gender and psychoanalytic theories of desire; Marian theology and devotion; theology and art, and women's sexual and reproductive health and rights.

**James Carroll** was born and raised in America, studied to MA level, and following his vocation to become a Roman Catholic priest, was ordained in 1969. He served as Catholic chaplain at Boston University during which time he wrote passionately against the Vietnam war. Disillusioned with the church, he left the priesthood in 1974 to become a deeply thoughtful and incisive author. In 2001, he wrote a book, *Constantine's Sword*, about Christian anti-semitism. His most recent book, *The Truth at the Heart of the Lie* is a deeply personal exploration of what he says has 'broken' the modern Catholic Church.

**Rev Anthony Cassidy** is Parochial Administrator at St Matthew's Catholic Church in West Norwood, London. He trained in biblical studies at the Biblical Institute in Rome, although most of his theological studies were in mixed-sex classes at the University of Kent at Canterbury; an experience of education which he says

was 'not typical of many (or most) of my clerical brethren'. He has a special interest in 'creeping infallibility' something about which he says, 'we should all be aware'.

**Rev Sr Victoria Chester N.SSC** trained as a lawyer and practiced in the United States and the UK before moving into charity management within the wildlife conservation sector, the Prince's Foundation for Building Community, and latterly with the RSPCA. Victoria was a lay minister in the Church of England for 20 years before being ordained in 2020 and moving to Wales in 2021 to join the Anglican community of the Society of the Sacred Cross at Tymawr Convent near Monmouth as a novice.

**Christine Clinch** trained as a Religious Education teacher in Bristol before teaching in multi-faith Birmingham, after which she taught in Africa, Nepal, Australia and Indonesia for about 30 years. She is now Lead Manager of Ammerdown Conference and Retreat Centre in Somerset. The Centre provides a safe environment for conversation and reflection for people from diverse backgrounds (of all faiths and none). They meet and learn about one another, casting out fear and building bridges.

**Miriam Duignan** is Director of Communications at the Wijngaards Institute, and is a passionate advocate of its purpose in advancing Gender Equality, Sexual Ethics and Decision Making in the Catholic Church. The Institute focuses on cutting-edge theological research by co-ordinating leading academics worldwide to collaborate on reports tackling the Church's officially un-comfortable, difficult and disputed areas.

**Bishop Vivienne Faull** is the 56th Bishop of Bristol. After leaving Oxford, doing youth work, and teaching with the Church Mission Society in North India, she trained for ministry. She began cathedral ministry in 1990 as Chaplain at Gloucester Cathedral. She also married there, and was ordained priest in 1994. In 1994 she moved to become Canon Pastor, and later Vice Provost, at Coventry Cathedral. She became the first woman to lead a Church of England Cathedral as Provost and then Dean of Leicester in 2000, focussing on local areas of deprivation. In 2012 she was appointed Dean of York. She is serving her second term on the English Anglican Roman Catholic committee for ecumenical conversations and was elected as one of the female representatives in the House of Bishops in 2013.

**Dr Eleanor Flynn** retired in 2019 from the University of Melbourne Medical School where she was associate professor involved in teaching palliative care, communication and ethics, working also as a hospital and community Palliative Care specialist. She has a Masters in Theology on the images accompanying the office of the dead in late medieval books of hours. With colleagues in Melbourne, she founded Women's Wisdom in the Church (WWITCH) initially to challenge the bishops on their poor response to the Australian Royal Commission into The Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse. WWITCH is one of the 19 members of the Australian Catholic Coalition for Church Reform (ACCCR), and she has recently become the co-convenor of ACCCR. She is a co-opted

board member of the Spiritual Health Association and co-teaches a course on death, dying and grief through art and spirituality at the University of Divinity in Australia.

**Dr Nontando Hadebe** is a woman theologian based in Johannesburg, South Africa and has recently been appointed as International Co-ordinator for Side by Side: Faith Movement for Gender Justice. Her membership includes The Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, Future Church and Catholic Women Speak/Preach. She hosts a weekly radio program on Radio Veritas; facilitates an ecumenical programme with Fellowship of Christian Councils in South Africa that brings church leaders into dialogue with LGBTQ+ persons. She's co-editor of *A Time like No Other: Covid-19 in Women's Voices*.

**Dr Martha Heizer** is an educationalist and psychologist at the University of Innsbruck whose special interest is in Feminist Theology. She was co-founder of the Austrian Kirchenvolks-Begehren, the initiative which led to the establishment of We Are Church International, and has been Chair of We are Church - Austria since 2014. She and her husband also received notice of excommunication from the Archdiocese of Innsbruck in 2014.

**Dr Claire Jenkins** is a trans woman and convert to the Catholic Church. She was married with four children until in 1999 she transitioned from male to female, aged 50. Prior to this Claire was a deputy headteacher of a secondary school. She has a PhD from the University of Sheffield for her research into the effect of transitioning on the family members of transsexual people; has advised a number of research projects; and spoken at Catholic and university conferences. Currently she's actively involved in the pastoral care to LGBTQ+ Catholics where she co-ordinates a team (lay and ordained) within her diocese. She also gives ongoing support to LGBTQ+ Muslim asylum seekers and refugees some of whom have become her close friends. She belongs to a small working party advising the Catholic Bishops of England and Wales on transgender issues. In May 2020 Claire was awarded a Senior Fellowship at Margaret Beaufort Institute, Cambridge, where she is researching Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming (TGNC) young people in schools.

**Dr Ally Kateusz** is a cultural historian specializing in the intersection of women and religion in Early Christian art and texts. Research Associate at the Wijngaards Institute for Catholic Research, she has published peer reviewed articles in the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, *the Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*, *The Priscilla Papers*, *Theologia*, and other venues. Her most recent book is *Maria, Marianne, and Miriam: Rediscovering the Marys*, co-edited with Mary Ann Beavis. Her 2019 illustrated book is *Mary and Early Christian Women: Hidden Leadership*.

**Baroness Helena Kennedy QC** is one of Britain's most distinguished lawyers and a Labour peer, renowned for championing civil liberties and promoting human rights. She has published two books on how the justice system is failing women. Helena is the founding force behind the establishment of the Bonavero Institute of Human Rights at the University of

Oxford. She is currently Director of the International Bar Association's Human Rights Institute, directing the Institute's work in upholding the rule of law and human rights globally.

**Prof Emerita Ursula King** is a German theologian and scholar of religion specialising in gender and religion, feminist theology and Pierre Teilhard de Chardin. Apart from multiple visiting appointments at universities including in India, Cambridge and Oslo, she was Professor of Theology and Religious Studies at Bristol University, then President of Catherine of Siena College at Roehampton University. She signed the Catholic Scholars Declaration on Authority in the Church: 'Catholic women need to be able to hold positions of authority in the church authority.'

**Bishop Declan Lang** was appointed bishop to the Roman Catholic Clifton diocese of Bristol in 2001. He has worked on such diverse projects as Clerical Appraisal, Adult Religious Education and Parish direction planning. On the ecumenical front he is Co-Chair of the Anglican-Roman Catholic Committee and also Co-Chair for the Roman Catholic and United Reform Church dialogue in England. He is Chair of Somerset Churches Together. Within the Bishops' Conference of England and Wales he is also Chair of the Department of International Affairs.

**Dr Zainab Mai-Bornu** is a Lecturer at the University of Leicester. She is a Muslim and from Nigeria. Her work focuses on resources, inequalities, marginalisation, conflict, gender and development. Much of her current work is concerned with amplifying marginalised voices within the context of vernacular security.

**Prof Mary McAleese** was elected the eighth President of Ireland in 1997, becoming the second female President of Ireland and the first woman in the world to succeed another as President. Since 2019 she has been Chancellor of Trinity College Dublin, where in 1975 she was appointed to the post of Professor of Criminal Law, Criminology and Penology. After retiring from political life, she gained a licentiate and doctorate in Canon Law. When a young Mary McAleese told a priest she planned to become a lawyer, the priest dismissed the idea: she knew no one in the law and she was female. The reality of what she went on to achieve - despite those obstacles and despite a sectarian attack that forced her family to flee their home is remarkable. In her recent book *Here's the Story: A memoir of family, war, peace and politics* she traces that astonishing arc: from the tight streets of north Belfast, to a professorship in Dublin while still in her twenties, behind-the-scenes work on the peace process, before her two terms as President of Ireland. She writes of her encounters with prime ministers, popes and royalty with the same easy candour and intimacy with which she describes her childhood. And her account of the latest act in her remarkable career - quietly pursuing a doctorate, and loudly opposing the misogyny she perceives in the Catholic Church - has been inspiring to many.

**Kate McElwee** is Executive Director of the Women's Ordination Conference (WOC), the oldest and largest organisation working to ordain women as deacons, priests, and bishops into an inclusive

and accountable Roman Catholic Church. WOC is a grassroots movement that promotes activism, dialogue, and prayerful witness to call for women's full equality in the Church. Kate, recently based in Rome, has an MA in International Human Rights from SOAS (London) and is also a member of the leadership circle of Women's Ordination Worldwide

**Rev Richard McKay** is a Catholic priest from Scotland. Richard has worked in the Bristol diocese for 49 years, most of that time in very impoverished parts of Bristol. At St Nicholas of Tolentino, where he is parish priest, there are more than 60 nationalities represented. The community is known for its active inclusivity. A major part of Richard's pastoral work is in support of those seeking safe asylum and refuge. When women were first ordained as priests in the Church of England in 1994 Richard spoke robustly and publicly for the same to happen in the Catholic Church - and has continued to do so. The reality of oppression and poverty is the source for his theology and mission.

**Gina Menzies** is a B BD from the Milltown Institute, Dublin with post graduate studies in Feminism and Moral Theology, and a MSc in Ethics and Law from the Royal College of Surgeons, Dublin, where she currently lectures in Healthcare Ethics. She served as Chair of the Irish Government Taskforce on Women in Sport and is a frequent guest on the Irish Broadcaster RTE

**Joanna Moorhead** was deputy editor of the *Catholic Herald* 30 years ago and around the same time joined a Catholic feminist group. As a freelance journalist she has written for the major UK newspapers, especially *The Guardian* and *The Observer*, as well as writing books. *The Surreal Life of Leonora Carrington* was recently Book of the Week on BBC R4. Joanna is Arts Editor of *The Tablet*, in which last year she wrote an article calling for a synod 'that starts with women....'

**Rev Catherine Okoronkwo** was born in Nigeria but brought up in Israel and has studied in the USA and Britain. She became a Deacon in 2016 and was ordained a priest in 2017. She has experience of Arab World Ministries and her interest in interfaith dialogue runs deep. As well as being the Racial Justice Advisor to the Anglican Diocese of Bristol, she's Vicar of All Saints and St Barnabas, Swindon. As Bristol is the only Anglican Diocese with a racial justice advisor her remit includes work outside the diocese. About her recent book, *Blood and Water/ obara na mmiri*, Rose Hudson-Wilkin, Bishop of Dover, wrote: 'It draws you in to confront the subjects that no one wants to talk about and yet it is real and right in our midst. I dare you to read this and share its meanings to you with others.'

**Thomas O'Loughlin** is Professor Emeritus of Historical Theology at the University of Nottingham, and the Director of Studia Traditionis Theologiae. He is a presbyter of the Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton. A sought-after speaker, Tom is the author of *Eating Together, Becoming One*, and *The Rites and Wrongs of Liturgy - Why Good Liturgy Matters*, amongst others.

**John O'Loughlin Kennedy** is a retired economist, 'serial social entrepreneur', and author. His book *The Curia is the Pope*,

examines what he calls the 'self-serving bureaucracy that manages the Pope and controls access to him'. He proposes some remedies for the problems which he says the Church, as currently managed, is chronically unable to deal with.

**Diarmuid O'Murchu** is a member of the Sacred Heart Missionary Order, a social psychologist, and an author. A graduate of Trinity College Dublin, most of his working life has been spent in social ministry in London, most recently with homeless people and refugees. His latest book is *Doing Theology in an Evolutionary Way*.

**Myra Poole** SND was a convert to Catholicism in her 20s and has been a sister of Notre Dame de Namur for over 60 years. She served as a teacher and head teacher in Northampton and Southwark until her mid 50s when she resigned to focus on feminist theology and spirituality, and in particular the role of women in the Catholic Church. She and Lala Winkley started the movement Catholic Women's Ordination (CWO) in 1993, following the vote for women priests in the Anglican Church in November 1992. She is author of *Prayer, Protest, Power: The Spirituality of Julie Billiart Today*, and co-author with Dorothea McEwan of *Women's Ordination: A Catalyst for Change in the Roman Catholic Church*. Her most recent book, written with Pippa Bonner, is *Awakening - Catholic Women's Ordination from the Public Square* developing a theology of protest from the Westminster piazza. She emphasises the connection between the poverty of women and girls and institutional misogyny.

**Christina Rees CBE** is a writer, broadcaster and practical theologian, specializing in women and religion. She was a leading campaigner and spokeswoman for women bishops and Chair of WATCH (Women and the Church) for over 13 years. She was a lay member of the Church of England's General Synod for 25 years and a founder member of the Archbishops' Council, the body that advises the Archbishops of Canterbury and York on matters of policy and resources. She has sat on numerous national church committees and is an Honorary Fellow of Ripon College Cuddesdon, a leading Anglican theological college. In 2016 she was made CBE for services to the Church of England. She is a school chaplain and will be ordained this month, September 2021.

**Derek Reeve** is a co-founder of A Call To Action (ACTA). He found faith in the Church of England and after passing through extreme Anglo-Catholicism was received into the Roman Communion at the age of 15. He served his National Service as Nurse in the RAF before being accepted for training for the priesthood. This included time at Saint Sulpice seminary in Paris where they were experiencing the renewal in the French church at the time. This prepared him for the second Vatican Council. As parish priest of a small urban parish in Portsmouth he sought to implement the findings of the Council and to create a community where the people of the parish directed and controlled everything, even to paying him a monthly salary. He was there for 37 years. He honestly believes this was because the bishop did

not want him to do the same sort of thing anywhere else. When he retired, everything they had created together as a community was demolished, the parish subsumed into its original mother parish. He does not preside at Mass apart from with a small group of ACTA people who meet twice a month and it is the daily prayer of the Church that sustains him, together with the friend with whom he lives and his dog. About Root & Branch he says 'you give me hope.'

**Eve Rose-Keenan** has been a priest in the Church of England for 20 years. She is the Labour councillor for Rotherham West. She is a survivor of child sexual exploitation.

**Dr Patricia Rumsey** is Abbess of a Poor Clare Monastery and has a PhD in Historical Theology. Her areas of expertise include the history of religious life for women and the history and spirituality of the Franciscan Order. She is the author of *Lest She Pollute the Sanctuary* in which she examines the perception of women in Christianity through the centuries.

**Virginia Saldanha** is a woman activist, writer and theologian, living in Mumbai, India. She is the founder member of the Indian Women Theologians Forum and was executive secretary of the Commission for Women in the Catholic Bishops' Conference of India and Secretary of the Asian Bishops' Conferences (FABC) Women's Desk/Office of Laity & Family. She has campaigned to bring attention to abuse of women within the Catholic Church.

**Iris Segall**, Council member of the Bristol & West Progressive Jewish Congregation (BWPJC) with a long-standing experience of interfaith dialogue and activity in Bath and West Wilts. Iris delivers faith and cultural awareness training for all age groups.

**Kathleen Gibbons Shuck** serves on the pastoral team at the intentional community of St Mary Magdalene in south-eastern Pennsylvania. She has been a member of Roman Catholic Women Priests (RCWP) since 2015. Kathleen was previously Director of International Marketing for the Sisters of the Holy Child, raising awareness and funds to build a clinic and organic farm in West Africa.

**Shanon Sterring** has been a member of the Association of Roman Catholic Women Priests (ARCWP) since 2019. She is an avid scholar with multiple degrees culminating in a PhD in Ethical and Creative Leadership focussed on the leadership example of Saint Hildegard of Bingen. Her CV has included work as a certified lay ecclesial minister and master catechist in the Diocese of Cleveland, supporting missionary work in India, and giving seminars in India and the Holy Land on women and ecclesial leadership. She is author of *30 day Journey with St Hildegard of Bingen* and her new book, *Forbidden Grace*, about her call to ministry is about to be published. Latterly, she has founded and is Director of Hildegard Haus and the developing Community of St Hildegard in Fairport Harbor, Ohio. She is a mother of three.

**Soline Humbert Vatinel** is a life-long advocate for equality for women in the Roman Catholic Church. She cofounded Brothers And Sisters in Christ (BASIC) in Ireland in 1993 to open all

ministries to women and was spokesperson for Women's Ordination Worldwide first international Conference in Dublin in 2001. She has an MPhil in Ecumenics and is an accredited spiritual director.

**Rabbi Alexandra Wright** was appointed as the first female senior rabbi in England in 2004, as Rabbi of the Liberal Jewish Synagogue in St John's Wood, London. She is a significant figure within British Liberal Judaism. She is active in the Council of Christians and Jews and for 5 years served as the North London Hospice's Jewish chaplain on their multi-faith chaplaincy team.

## Root & Branch Core Team, all volunteers

**Colm Holmes** is Chair of We Are Church International.

**Francis Hunter** is a late-comer to the core team and a committed Catholic. The Church has been a huge part of his life, from giving an excellent education to his four children, to incredible support when he lost his son Robert to Cystic Fibrosis. Sadly, he believes the current position of the Church on many issues is toxic and has resulted in his family rejecting it. He believes the Root & Branch Synod presents a wonderful opportunity to encourage much needed change, so that future generations can benefit from the many things the Church does so well.

**Penelope Middelboe** has a long career in film-making and script editing, and was CEO of large youth charity, Shakespeare Schools Foundation. She left in 2014 to write with her second husband Jon Rosebank, an historian. This has turned into a podcast HistoryCafe.org, focussed on how and why we all believe misleading narratives about important historical events. Brought up Catholic by her mother, she felt unable to bring her own children up as Catholics because she disagreed with too much of what was being said in her parish church. She is therefore immensely grateful that the combination of pandemic-lockdown and the internet has utterly transformed the ability of reform-minded Catholics to meet and support, explore and learn and pray together.

**Pamela Perry** joined the Church in 1962 after seeing God in the work of Abbé Pierre with the homeless of Paris. Her CV includes teaching, writing, running a business, chairing a property company and volunteering for CAFOD, Jubilee Debt Campaign, Make Poverty History and with refugees. Pam co-founded Parishioners' Call which encourages discussion within parishes. Now a grandmother, she lives in Salisbury with a loving husband.

**Kerry Poole** is a retired English teacher who has been involved in leading music in parishes for most of her life. Having believed she was part of a silent minority lamenting the injustices of the Catholic Church, she was thrilled to find Root & Branch and to take her place among the vociferous growing majority who are now actively working for much-needed reform.

**Mary Ring** says she has 'led an ordinary and uneventful life as a mother, grandmother and teacher'. Her earliest memories recall her brothers being praised as altar boys by the sacristan nuns, whilst girls were taught obedience and self-sacrifice. She works for a healthy, safe and welcoming Church, where deep institutional damage to its own members - not only women - is addressed and redressed. She currently serves on the Leadership Circle of Women's Ordination Worldwide.

**Katharine Salmon** is a Theology teacher and lecturer in Sheffield, Yorkshire. She was involved in the campaign for women priests and women bishops in the Anglican Church, and is a long-time campaigner for women's ordination in the Roman Catholic Church. She has served on the Boards of Women's Ordination Worldwide and Catholic Women's Ordination. She writes and conducts liturgies for life events.

**Rhiannon Parry Thompson** is a former National Childbirth Trust Trustee and Honorary Secretary. She's an active environmentalist, a Green trade union branch rep and a member of Catholic Concern for Animals. She has a strong commitment to interfaith relations and is the Catholic Church representative on her local Christian Aid Committee. She has an interest in regional and indigenous languages and cultures and is a Welsh and Cornish languages learner. She is a university and an adult education teacher.

**Mary Varley** is a recent recruit to the core team and a former social worker who is appalled by the extent to which the abuse of power is endemic in the worldwide institutional church. She is deeply ashamed to be part of a church where the betrayal of children, young people and adults violates everything that Jesus teaches us. She joined Root & Branch to work for the transformation of structures and culture to make the church a place of safety for all.

**Sue Williamson** is a retired prison and university tutor. Her specialism has been working with those who struggle with basic literacy skills in schools and prisons and those who have neurodiversity issues at university. Sue felt called to priesthood in her teens, influenced by radical theological friends and inspired by Therese of Lisieux. Her particular interest is in feminist theology, participative liturgy and in the theology of the Eucharist, and her spirituality is now focused around the Lay Fraternities of Charles de Foucauld. She has been an editor of *All Year Round*, an ecumenical worship publication funded by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland, is a founder member of Catholic Women's Ordination (CWO) and their delegate for Women's Ordination Worldwide (WOW). Having attended various national and international Women's Synods, Sue believes strongly in synodality and in working ecumenically. She welcomes the way in which Root & Branch has opened so many avenues to so many who feel on the fringes of the Church.

## Thanks

Our huge thanks to all those who've donated so generously since we began our Journey of Discernment back in October 2020, and to all our families for supporting us. We could not have done it without you. Particular thanks to Penelope's husband **Jon Rosebank** for his thinking, writing and design, also to **Geoffrey Thompson** and **Tony Ring** and to the few core team members who feel too humble to be on this programme.

We wouldn't have managed to get this hybrid Root & Branch Synod off the ground without our technical wizard. **Peter Agius** has a life-long connection to the Benedictines of Downside and Worth Abbeys, and a family connection going back to the monks in Ramsgate in 1870. In the 1970s he discovered the Worth Abbey Lay Community and at the same time started a near 50-year friendship with Mary Ring. He was a resident in the community 1976-77, leaving to settle in Havant after marrying in the Abbey Church. Then he rediscovered the Lay Community in the 90s before it became the Lay Community of St Benedict (LCSB) in 2003. A career in electronics and software, coupled with being webmaster for the LCSB for 8 years, has taken an unexpected direction through lockdown as he helped develop an ecumenical and inclusive on-line Divine Office for the LCSB, which now sees many members meeting four times a day on-line for prayer. He is now Administrator for the LCSB and currently balancing that role with IT Management of the Root & Branch Synod. After 40 years in electronics he is looking forward to taking the message of St Benedict to the world and to working in conference and website management in his twilight years.

Special thanks to designer **Valentina Ring**, website manager **Vanessa Labrie** and video editor **Annie Edwards**. **Jade Strain's** assistance with Mailchimp and **Jillian Dempsey's** eye on accounting have also been invaluable. **Nikki Gwatin** at the Holiday Inn, Filton, has been supportive throughout.

**Finally thank you to the many, many people (far more than we realise, we're told) who have been praying for us.** We will continue to need your prayers as we take The Bristol Text forward and as Root & Branch continues to reach out, to listen and to grow. It's been a privilege.