

## Appendix A

### Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today Evaluation Methodology, Analysis, Commentary and Conclusions

#### 1. Methodology

- 1.1 The starting point for the *Walking the Way* steering group in the evaluation process was to ask: 'What would not have happened within our churches had *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* not been in place?' Although stated negatively, the question actually focuses attention on the impact of the focus and its many different positive outcomes.
- 1.2 Alongside this, the group faced the challenge of trying to measure much that is not immediately quantifiable. Nevertheless, in the words of the sociologist David Silverman, 'simple counting techniques can offer a means to survey the whole corpus of data ordinarily lost in intensive, qualitative research.' While what follows does not claim to be the result of rigorous field research, it is an attempt to do precisely what Silverman advocates.
- 1.3 The spreadsheet at [Appendix B](#) contains data extracted from the 2018 annual church returns and shows churches' level of engagement with 'Holy Habits' (HH), this being the main initial emphasis of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* at the time. Fifteen returns from each synod were randomly selected, giving a total of 195 responses from the total number of 1,197 returns, equating to a sample size of just over 16%.
- 1.4 In this spreadsheet, columns C and I simply give a count for statistical purposes. Column D asked churches to say whether or not they had heard of HH (0 = no; 1 = yes), while column E asked those answering 'yes' at D to indicate how HH had been used. Column F asked for an indication of what other discipleship resources were being used, while columns G and H asked for respondents to indicate whether they were positive (shown as a 1) or not (shown as a 0) to either HH or such other resources as had been identified.
- 1.5 [Appendix C](#) shows data from the 2019 annual church returns, by which time we were able to enquire about churches' level of engagement with *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* across an entire spectrum of activity. At the time of writing returns were only available from six synods, with ten forms for each being randomly selected from each.
- 1.6 A '1' in column E indicates a church was aware that *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* focuses upon whole-of-life discipleship, rather than being an initiative or focus, while a '1' under any of columns F to K shows ways in which churches have engaged with aspects of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*. Column L captures the answers to the question: 'What does your church think about efforts to encourage whole-of-life discipleship across your synod?' Column N gives responses to the final question about *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* in the 2019 returns: 'In what other ways has your church engaged with whole-of-life discipleship?'

- 1.7 **Appendix D** is an attempt to capture more qualitative data, including data about how churches used the materials they ordered, data from email queries and data from requests to use the logo which were submitted during 2019. Please note that the spreadsheets in this appendix do not note everything, only significant comments or feedback. For examples of the real-life stories which have been gathered and shared, visit the [news page](#).

## 2. Analysis

- 2.1 Starting with appendix B, of the 195 returns examined 115 or 59% had heard of HH, with 63 of that 115 (55%) being positive about HH. 63 out of the total sample of 195 equates to just under a third overall.
- 2.2 Given that the returns in question were submitted in January 2018, within just a few months of the HH emphasis being truly launched in September 2017, this is quite encouraging, especially when some had simply not heard of it, some were yet to use it, and others were currently utilising other discipleship resources. Indeed, adding together the unique positive responses to either HH or other discipleship resources, (i.e. showing positive in either column G or H, but not both) the figure rises to 87 out of 195, or 45%.
- 2.3 Just 20 or 10% of the total sample, having heard of HH (showing 1 under column D), also gave a negative response under both G and H. However, 6 of those 20 gave as a response under E that they had simply 'not yet' used HH, or that the subject was 'under discussion'. In other words, no fewer than 181 churches from the sample total of 195 (91%) were either positively inclined towards HH or some other resource, or at least not resistant to HH.
- 2.4 As for how churches had used HH (column E), by far the main context was that of worship and/or study groups. Other uses involved mission planning, leadership team away days, synod events and private use, while some responses indicated an emphasis upon one or more specific habits, such as gladness and generosity, or eating together.
- 2.5 Turning to appendix C, of the 60 returns examined, 52 (87%) had heard of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*, shown by a figure 1 in column D. Of the remaining eight samples, one church had used HH, another had used both HH and daily devotions, and a third thought that the synod's advocacy of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* was a 'great idea'. That same church also mentioned an emphasis being placed on prayer and prayerfulness. It is reasonable to suggest, therefore, that no fewer than 55 of the 60 churches involved (or 92%) were either aware of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* or directly engaged in the very kind of activity engendered by it.
- 2.6 Where churches had consciously identified engagement with *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* (columns F – K), 28 of the 60 sampled indicated their involvement with at least one aspect as shown, whether through social media, the resource map, HH, the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC) accompaniment pilot, Stepwise, or Daily Devotions. While this represents just under half (47%), of the remaining 32 churches 14 mentioned using other resources (column N), and/or commented positively regarding their synods' efforts to promote *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*. To put this another way, 42 of those sampled (70%) indicated some kind of positive engagement with

the URC's current emphasis on whole-of-life discipleship, whether or not consciously attributed to *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*.

- 2.7 Other discipleship resources given under column F of appendix B and column N of appendix C revealed a huge range of focus, activities and ideas, from the locally devised to large-scale, national initiatives. Examples include various Bible-based study materials, Alpha, Leading Your Church into Growth, and Discipleship Explored, as well as creative, community-focused activities. Many of these resources or events were used or experienced ecumenically. *Stepwise* was also mentioned as the URC's programmatic element of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*. More churches are likely to take up *Stepwise* as it becomes more embedded in the life of our synods.
- 2.8 Considering qualitative data, in addition to appendix D, people are urged to visit the [news page](#). There you will find stories of individuals growing in faith and confidence, of churches engaging with their communities in new and exciting ways, of seemingly chance encounters leading to a life-changing experience for someone and, through it all, of a new vigour as people and churches enthusiastically embrace new forms of discipleship relevant for the 21st century.

### 3. Commentary

- 3.1 Members of the Steering Group have done some analysis, a little of it statistical, on the data above. Particular thanks to Jim Coleman, Elizabeth Gray King and John Proctor who have helped in this area. From the data shown in the appendices and the analysis offered above it seems reasonable to suggest that the theme of whole-of-life discipleship, captured under the *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* banner, is gaining a firm foothold in the life of the URC. Within a few short months of the focus going 'live' many of our churches were already embarking upon activities sparked by HH, or considering ideas and plans centred on one or more of the specific ten habits. That momentum continued throughout 2019 as *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* increased its exposure and breadth of focus.
- 3.2 Even in those churches which had not yet heard of HH or *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*, most readily offered comments on what they were doing to promote discipleship. Given that one of the key motivations for this entire focus was to encourage more intentional thinking around discipleship, this must count as a success. Quite simply, where before many were reluctant to use the language of missional discipleship, such reservations are now much less as people rediscover what it actually means to be 'living the life of Jesus today'.
- 3.3 While it is difficult to know precisely how far the sampled responses are indicative of the entire URC, there is no good reason to suppose that these results would not be replicated across the Church. That being said, the following paragraphs, by John Proctor, comment specifically on the margin for error in two of these figures:
- 3.4 *Here is a brief assessment of the accuracy of a couple of the figures above. We see in appendix B that 42 out of 60 churches exhibit some positive engagement with the URC's emphasis on whole-of-life discipleship. That's 70%. Certainly there is a margin for error (some 'give') in this estimate, but with 42 'hits' out of 60 sampled, we can be confident that the true proportion across the whole church is not very far away from 70% – in fact between 58% and 82%. However, that range may be a little optimistic, as it appears that around a tenth of our churches do not*

send in their annual return at all. If we assume, cautiously, that these are among the least active of our churches, then they may not engage much as congregations with the emphasis on whole-of-life discipleship. If we therefore scale down the figures above by a tenth, to allow for this missing tenth, we find that between 52% and 74% of local churches – between half and three quarters – are engaged in some way as a congregation with whole-of-life discipleship.

3.5 In appendix C, the figure using some discipleship resource was 87 out of 195 (45%). The amount of 'give' here is a bit tighter, as the sample is bigger than it was above, so we can be confident that the proportion across the whole Church of congregations using some discipleship resource is between 38% and 52%. But again there is a missing tenth – congregations that did not respond at all. If, cautiously, we suppose that these churches do not use such resources, we still find that between 35% and 47% of our churches – clearly between a third and a half – are using some discipleship resource.

## 4. Conclusions

- 4.1 As stated above, the starting point for evaluation was: 'What would not have happened within our churches had *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* not been in place?' Quite apart from the raw data given in appendices B and C, strengthened by the qualitative picture which emerges from appendix D and the associated web page, we can now suggest that without the emphasis and momentum generated by *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*, many would still be struggling to articulate what it means to be a disciple today, how to engage meaningfully with our local communities, and how to maintain a resilient and relevant Christian faith in the 21st century.
- 4.2 Of course, we are not there yet (wherever 'there' may be!), and much remains to be done, but the growing confidence to which the data attests is cause to celebrate and give thanks.
- 4.3 One urgent challenge now facing the URC is to decide where we go from here and, specifically, how to continue *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* once its Council for World Mission (CWM) funding runs out.
- 4.4 The need for a full-time project manager was noted at an early stage of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today's* development, and that need has only grown with the commensurate growth in awareness of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*. Much of that is due to the enthusiasm and dedication of the current project manager, allied to his willingness to visit as many synods and local churches as possible.
- 4.5 *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* has also reminded many they are part of a wider whole, which has brought encouragement and a recognition they are not alone. This in itself is a serendipitous benefit, but it is of as much value as any resources highlighted by the focus. Anything which both strengthens the body of Christ and deepens a life of discipleship is to be prized and safeguarded, and *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today* seems to be doing precisely this.