



Stepwise Facilitator's Guide

Thank you for your willingness to consider being a Group Facilitator for Stepwise. This guide will help you to understand more about Stepwise and how it works, the place of the Facilitated Group sessions within the programme and the role of the facilitator.

Introducing Stepwise

Stepwise is a specific programme for discipleship development within the United Reformed Church's focus on whole-life discipleship and mission, Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today. It is designed for people of all ages and backgrounds.

As a programme of learning and discipleship development, Stepwise participants will be exploring and enriching their personal faith life, discerning where God's call on their life may be leading, preparing for a new direction, or developing a specific role within their community or church. For further information about Stepwise go to www.urc.org.uk/stepwise.

As a facilitator you are central to how participants experience Stepwise and progress through the programme. At the heart of your role is creating a hospitable atmosphere in which people can explore their faith and grow in their discipleship. The emphasis is very much on facilitating learning opportunities and development experiences rather than that of a tutor on a traditional course.

How Stepwise works.

Stepwise works by combining different kinds of activities.

In order to complete any Stepwise stream participants will do all of the following:

- Be a member of a local Stepwise group;
- follow guided material online via the Stepwise Hub; as well as
- have meetings with a Stepwise mentor.

Faith-filled Life, the opening Stepwise stream, will take about three months to complete. The other streams contain more material and may take up to 12 months each.

Facilitated Group Sessions in Stepwise

All Stepwise participants will be part of a Stepwise group which, as far as possible, will be local to where the participant lives. Each group will have a facilitator whose role is to coordinate the group and help participants to get the most out of their Stepwise experience.

Faith-filled life is made up of six themes. It will normally take about three months to complete this stream depending on how frequently the local group sessions take place and whether the group takes more than one session to



work through each theme. It is suggested that each group session lasts about two hours.

There will be more group sessions in the other streams, but it may be possible, depending on the group, to have a combination of two-hour sessions and organised study days. In the case of study days, it might be possible to bring groups together to form larger groups for these depending on location.

Stepwise is designed as a programme where participants will use a variety of learning methods as they navigate the course. They will find access to material, ideas and resources online via the Stepwise Hub and through the group sessions. Although some of the content that they encounter in the group session will be new to them, most of the material will not be. This is because the Stepwise programme places great value on what participants bring to the sessions from their own experience and their prior preparation. So they will have done some activities, reading and thinking through the Stepwise Hub in preparation for the group meeting. This should enable the group facilitator to make the most of discussions and group interaction as each participant should arrive with some notes, discussion points and questions already in their notebooks.

The facilitator's role is not like that of a tutor but is to host the group sessions and to draw out from the group what they know - from existing experience and knowledge, from the preparation participants will have done for the group sessions, and from their participation in the group sessions. They help set the tone and create the space for encounter with one another and with God.

In practical terms what will a facilitator have to do?

Facilitators will be allocated participants who have registered for Stepwise. This will be done by the Stepwise team in Church House in liaison with Synods who have local knowledge of churches and people.

Facilitators may be asked to find a venue for the group to meet, but again this can be done with support from Synods and the Stepwise team. The venue needs to be conducive to group learning in a comfortable environment. It needs to be Wi-Fi enabled with a reliable internet connection.

Once facilitators have the details of who will be in their group they will need to make contact with them to arrange the meetings and guide them as to what they will need to do before the first meeting. If participants need assistance with the Stepwise Hub then facilitators may need to direct them to the Stepwise team or give them details of an IT buddy who can help.

All the material for facilitators is contained within the Stepwise Hub, for which they will be given a special facilitators account. This will give them access to the facilitators guide for each group session as well as the participant's material.

How much preparation will facilitators need to do?

It will be important for facilitators to read through the facilitators guide and do the things that it suggests in preparation for each session. This will involve looking through the participant material to see what participants have been doing themselves, noting down anything in particular that participants have been asked to bring or prepare for the session. There may also be specific activities or tasks that they will need to prepare for the group session as outlined in the guide.

Tracking the progress of participants

In order to receive a certificate of completion for the Stepwise stream that a participant is following they will need to be able to show that they have:

1. Logged into the Stepwise Hub and done the preparation work for each session
2. Attended 80% of the group sessions for the stream (measured by the Facilitator)
3. Taken part in the group project.
4. Met with their mentor as required.
5. Completed the Spiders Web diagram regularly.

The group facilitator will be asked to give feedback on whether the participant has completed these five steps at the end of the stream.

What support will be available for facilitators?

Facilitators will be supported locally by those responsible for Stepwise in each Synod. This might include local meetings of facilitators for support and encouragement. There will also be support available through the Stepwise team at URC Church House.

Where can I find out more?

Contact the Stepwise team at Church House -

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