

Stepwise Introduction

Walk this Way – an introduction to Stepwise

Stepwise is the URC's discipleship development programme and is made up of several broad learning streams which include topics and themes for group or individual exploration.

It has been the expectation that people complete Stepwise Faith Filled Life before engaging with any of the other streams. We have received much feedback that says this has prevented people from accessing Stepwise. Whilst we still encourage everyone to complete Stepwise Faith Filled Life first, we have created this introduction for those who want to dive straight into other streams and offer it as the way to get familiar with the format and content of streams before starting.

Regardless of where you are in your faith journey, we warmly invite you to participate in Stepwise Faith-Filled Life.

Come Inside – Your Stepwise Journey

This is an online session/experience, but it can be formatted as a document that can be printed and used as a session by a facilitator. Stepwise happens through a mix of face-to-face local group sessions and online learning.

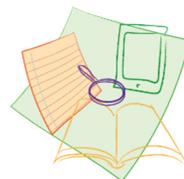
Stepwise Streams feature a variety of icons to help you navigate through each session.

Every Stepwise stream uses some of the following set of **icons to guide you** through the different activities contained in the material.

At your own pace, you **prepare for each session** with activities including:



studying a **Bible passage**



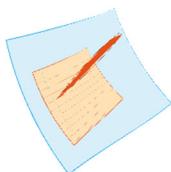
reading a short **article**



watching a **video**



or practising a **skill**.



As you go through it, you will **make notes** on some of this work,



normally including **where you have seen God** at work recently.

The online materials are designed to help you, and sometimes suggest:



How long an activity might take



An important point



Something worth thought



Reminders



Then you will be ready for the **group session**, organised by your **Facilitator**. You will bring your notes and do some further thinking together.

Alongside these individual and group activities, you will:



keep some kind of **journal** of your Stepwise journey, which can be in writing or take some other form that suits you better, and



after every few sessions, chat through what you have discovered with a **Mentor** you have chosen for yourself.

- Why have we designed it like this
- What are the aims –.
- What is a Discipleship development Journey.

This Introduction is one of two pathways into Stepwise. It offers a shorter route to introduce people to the URC's discipleship development programme which helps discover where God might be leading them and how they can make a difference in their church and the wider world. It uses a similar format to the other Stepwise streams and you work your way through the session, getting more information about the streams and experiencing how to use the URC Learning Hub.

Stepwise is a flipped and blended learning programme that relies on preparation, facilitation, personal reflection and response, as well as group discussion. As followers of Jesus, we are on a lifelong journey of learning and growing as disciples. Stepwise was developed to nourish, challenge, and encourage us as we walk and grow in faith.

This Introduction will help you understand more about Stepwise and give you a taste of how it works. If you are keen to grow in your Christian faith, ready to be challenged and inspired, and want to make a difference in your life and the lives of others, then Stepwise is for you.

Discipleship development is nurturing faith and personal growth, encouraging individuals to deepen their understanding of God and their faith journey. Developing discipleship through Stepwise emphasizes lifelong learning and equipping people to live out their faith in their daily lives. Through engaging in the Stepwise streams you will find opportunities to think, pray, reflect, discuss, write and draw. All these things will help you to learn more about yourself, about your relationship with God, and inspire and enable you as you follow Jesus. Disciples are learners, and doing this learning alongside others, in community, brings a richness and a wider perspective.

This is the beginning of your Stepwise journey!

Stepwise....what does it mean for you.

Stepwise will help you to explore and enrich your personal faith, see where God is at work in your life and listen for Gods call moving forward.

Stepwise will help you develop your discipleship and contribute to wider church and community transformation. This is a programme for all, whatever your age or background.

Stepwise focuses on what the Church can be and gives individuals and congregations the tools to share God's love with the world.

If you are keen to reflect on, and develop, your Christian faith, ready to be stimulated and challenged – and want to make a difference in your own life and the lives of others – then Stepwise is just what you're looking for.

Are there areas in your faith and life that you find challenging? Pause for Self-Reflection. Make some notes on how this feel.

This is for your personal contemplation. This is the sort of open-ended question that you would encounter in a Stepwise stream when doing Stepwise in a group, led by a Facilitator.

(Sometimes questions may trigger complex responses. At times like this we encourage you to speak with a trusted friend in faith.)

How does it work and what is available

Stepwise is shaped around your strengths and needs, in the context of your own community and church. It emphasises the importance of learning from your daily life – wherever and whoever God might be calling you to be. Stepwise happens by learning alongside with and from others. Each stream is divided into a number of sessions.

Six broad learning ‘streams’ include topics for individuals, and groups, to explore:

- [Faith-filled Life](#) – personal calling and purpose
- [Faith-fuelled leadership](#) – we all have part to play
- [Faith-filled Community](#) – being a church shaped by God’s mission acting for justice in God’s name
- [Faith-filled Conversations](#)- encouraging thinking around talking faith
- [Faith-filled Worship](#)- exploring the depths and breadth of Christian worship and worship leading
- [Faith-filled Environment](#)- exploring the challenges of the environmental crises facing the Earth and all her peoples

Step into a sample session – this is a familiar format for a Stepwise session and gives you a taste of what to expect.

Please view the latest Stepwise video

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3B4p4mYi2Xg>

Where have you seen God at work in your personal faith journey?

Prayer

God who stepped into creation through the presence of Jesus, human and yet divine we come to you as we journey with other disciples. We thank you that you are at work in our lives and the world. Help us to live each day in step (in tune) with you, giving thanks for all that you have given and anticipating all that you will give as we enter, this time of sharing and learning together.

Show us where you would have us serve and help us to learn and to work with you for the growth of your kingdom. Gracious Spirit inspire us, give us the wisdom to understand your will in our lives.

We once more commit to a life of service and we pray that the Holy Spirit will continue to guide and empower us to live a faith-filled life and therefore we have hope through Jesus our Saviour. Amen.

Bible Study: Journeying in Faith

Opening Prayer

"Gracious God, as I stop to reflect and study Your Word, may I ask for Your guidance and wisdom. Help me to gain new insights for my journey of faith and to grow closer to You. Amen."

Scripture Reading

Genesis 12:1-4 (NIV)

"The Lord had said to Abram, 'Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you.' So Abram went, as the Lord had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he set out from Harran."

Discussion Questions

1. What does this passage tell us about Abram's faith? Does it encourage you or scare you?
2. How do you think Abram felt when God asked him to leave everything behind?
3. Can you recall a time when you felt called to step out in faith? How did that make you feel?
4. What are some challenges you face or have faced in your faith journey?

Activity: Faith Journey Map

Materials Needed:

- Large sheets of paper
- Markers or coloured pencils

Instructions:

1. **Create Your Map:** Create a "Faith Journey Map" or "Timeline" on a large sheet of paper. This map will represent your personal journey of faith.
2. **Mark Significant Moments:** Mark significant moments in your faith journey on the map. These could include times of joy, challenges, growth, and learning.
3. **Add Symbols and Decorations:** If it is helpful for you, use markers, stickers, and other decorative items to make the map visually appealing and meaningful. Symbols can represent different aspects of their journey (e.g., a cross for a significant spiritual moment, a heart for a time of love and support).
4. **Share Your Journey:** Once you have completed your map or timeline, you might want to share your map with a friend you trust or your minister. Try to explain the significance of the different points on your map and how you have recognised where God has been in that part of your journey.

Reflection - Listen to this and reflect on the words of the Psalm:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pN4tPkX0MG0>

Psalm 23:1-4 (NIV)

"The Lord is my shepherd, I lack nothing. He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside quiet waters, he refreshes my soul. He guides me along the right path for his name's sake. Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff they comfort me. You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.

You anoint my head with oil, my cup overflows. Surely your goodness and love will follow me all the days of my life, and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

How did you experience this activity and this reflection? Share your thoughts.

Share the Grace

Share the Grace: May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all, now and evermore. Amen.

This ‘taster’ session is complete.

See the next page for FAQs and more information.

Stepwise Introductory Session Support FAQ to go through

How will I be supported?

Participants will be supported by their facilitator, mentor, and their group as they learn from one another.

I'm interested in beginning my Stepwise journey but am not sure which stream would be best. What should I do?

Faith Filled Life is the best starting point if you are uncertain where to start, but why not have a chat with your Minister, or Synod Stepwise contact? They'll be able to help you.

Do I need to be able to access the internet to participate in Stepwise?

Materials for all the Stepwise streams are accessed via the URC Learning Hub. However, we want to make sure that everyone who wants to can access Stepwise. If you are uncertain about online learning, don't worry – your facilitator or Synod contact will be able to help you access extra support if you need it. If you are unable to, or don't want to access the materials online, your group facilitator or Synod contact will be able to help you.

What is a mentor and why do I need one?

Mentors are an integral part of Stepwise. Your mentor will be a person you trust and someone you can talk to and reflect on your Stepwise journey with. They will listen to you and pray for and with you as you progress through your chosen Stepwise stream(s). Engaging with your mentor will allow you to get the most out of your involvement with Stepwise.

Can I choose my own mentor?

Yes – choosing your own mentor will ensure that you are supported by someone you trust and who knows you well. Your mentor could be a trusted friend or someone from within your church community. The important thing is that you choose someone you feel has the qualities and gifts needed to provide you with the support you need. A handy guide explaining what the role is and how it works is available here ([link](#)). You can give this to your chosen mentor to help them understand what they are being asked to do.

I can't think of anyone to ask to be my mentor. What should I do?

Don't worry, your group facilitator or Synod Stepwise representative will be able to help you – just get in touch.

Who will be my group facilitator and what is their role?

Your group facilitator will be appointed by your church or local Synod. They will guide and support your group through the materials, facilitate discussions, and be your main contact as you work through the stream. While they are not a traditional tutor, they will walk alongside you and your group as you journey together. We encourage groups to be led by two people, with one being the group facilitator and the other as a support.

What support is available through my Synod?

Each Synod should have a named person who looks after Stepwise in your area. This could be the Training & Development Officer (or equivalent), or it could be a volunteer. Your Synod office will be able to point you in the right direction if you aren't sure who to contact.

Who will be in my group and how will we support each other?

In some cases, your group may be made up of people from within your own church community who you know well. In others, your group may consist of a range of people from across your Synod or even further afield! Through engaging in reflective discussion, you will encourage and support each other – sharing ideas, thoughts and reflections on the materials you encounter. You will most likely come with different views and perspectives which, through facilitated conversations, will enrich your experience along the journey.

Who can I contact if I have any other questions?

In the first instance, you should get in touch with your facilitator or Synod contact with any questions you have. You can always contact the Stepwise contact too – email: stepwise@urc.org.uk.

Let's get started on your wider Stepwise journey. Here are other streams you might wish to explore.

Faith-Filled Community	Being a church shaped by God's mission. Looking with fresh eyes at your neighbourhood and communities and exploring how your church can serve and bear witness to Gods love within them.
Faith-Filled Conversation	Reflecting on your faith journey so far and grow in confidence as you learn how to share your story with others.
Faith-Filled Environment	Explore the challenges of the environmental crises facing the Earth and all her peoples and how this affects you, your faith, your church, and how you can respond.
Faith-Fuelled Leadership	Learning how to lead effectively and sustainably, with faith and vision.
Faith-Filled Worship	Exploring the breadth and depth of Christian worship, building confidence and equipping you for leading and participating in worship.

You may wish to do so with your discipler or the Stepwise representative in your synod.

If you have any queries, email: stepwise@urc.org.uk