

Paper D2

Education and Learning Committee

Progress Report: Successor to TLS

United Church 2017
Church 2017
Reformed Church 2017
Church 2017



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Education and Learning

Progress Report: Successor to TLS

Basic Information

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Action required	Mission Council to note the progress made and endorse the directions being taken.
Draft resolution(s)	Mission Council commends the progress made on designing a successor to “Training for Learning and Serving” (TLS) and directs the Education and Learning Committee to continue implementation as outlined in the paper.

Summary of Content

Subject and aim(s)	General Assembly 2016 endorsed the need for a vehicle for discipleship development in the United Reformed Church which starts from where we are now, and has a projected life of 15 years. This is an important strand within <i>Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today</i> .
Main points	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The successor programme to TLS will be for the people of the United Reformed Church of all ages and backgrounds. • The recommended title for the programme is <i>Stepwise</i> • It will be available as close as possible to the people who seek to engage with it, so accessible through face to face encounters where they live, and their mobile devices. • The first streams will be available from September 2018 and the full programme will be in place from September 2020 • A shared core of materials may be adapted by synods taking into account local contexts and geography
Previous relevant documents	Paper M1, Mission Council November 2015; Paper M1, Mission Council March 2016. Resolution 1, General Assembly 2016.
Consultation has taken place with...	Joint discipleship committees gathering, synod training & development officers, Synod Moderators (via e-mail), synod lay preaching commissioners, ecumenical colleagues.

Summary of Impact

Financial	Changes in staffing have been accommodated within the budget for 2018 assigned for lay development.
External (e.g. ecumenical)	The task and finish group responsible for the programme includes ecumenical representatives and there is ongoing discussion with ecumenical partners about shared use of material.

Progress report: Successor to TLS

“focused on what the church will be, rather than what it is or has been”

Executive Overview

1. The following report describes the work done by the *Successor to TLS Task and Finish Group*, setting out the approach, framework and indicative content of the successor provision, which has been given the working title of *Stepwise*.
2. This first section gives an executive overview and in particular emphasises the intentionally distinctive nature of *Stepwise*.
3. In developing *Stepwise*, the group recognised the tremendous contribution that TLS made and the heritage it has bequeathed. *Stepwise* builds upon this to provide a programme of renewal for the next 15 years. Its focus is on what the church will be rather than on what the church has been; it is a mixed ecology, fulfilling the needs of the church of tomorrow and today.
4. *Stepwise* will be a vibrant dimension of the URC discipleship development programme, and is firmly embedded within *Walking the Way: Living the Life of Jesus Today*. Its emphasis is thus on discipleship, commitment to the mission of God, and equipping both individuals and congregations with servant leadership.
5. The aim is that *Stepwise* will help bring about personal and institutional transformation. *Stepwise* is for individuals – all who are open to reflecting and developing; ready to be stimulated and challenged; and wanting to make a difference. *Stepwise* is for the Church and churches. It is designed to contribute coherently to the United Reformed Church as a learning organisation and be an integral part of its emphasis on missional discipleship. *Stepwise* development will emphasise the vital importance of individuals applying their learning in their daily lives, wherever and whoever God calls them to be.
6. *Stepwise* will be distinctively imaginative, creating the space in which the fire of discipleship and learning can burn and grow. *Stepwise* will be learner orientated, drawing on the strengths and addressing the needs of individual learners. With a commitment to promoting access to learning it will be inclusive, recognising and overcoming barriers to learning encountered by people of diverse backgrounds characterised by age, educational experience, and ethnicity. Approaches to learning will be innovative and collaborative – drawing on a range of teaching and learning styles, including mentoring, flipped learning, enquiry-led learning, and use of digital resources. Assessment will be the servant of learning, with an emphasis on recognition through the councils of the church (church meeting, synod, General Assembly) rather than external accreditation.
7. The new programme will be strategic in its approach. As well as incorporating new dynamic content it will also draw on successful elements of TLS and other discipleship development programmes where relevant. Care is being taken to ensure that as *Stepwise* develops its thinking, approach and emerging framework this is presented to key committees and feedback acted upon.

8. The task and finish group has set out the purpose of *Stepwise*, its overall format and structure and initial content. This has been shaped within a framework of theme *streams* and module *stepping stones*. It is proposed that these five streams effectively incorporate the main features of discipleship learning and development – faith-filled life; faith-filled confidence; faith-filled community; faith-filled worship; and faith-fuelled leadership.
9. In summary *Stepwise* will be recognisably Reformed; embedded within *Walking the Way*; strategic in its contribution and approach; future focussed; centred on discipleship and learning; compelling and distinctive; shaped to meet individual and church needs; creative in breadth and depth; learner led; inclusive; and designed to take the church forward and outwards.

Ben

I am a 60 year old long term church member who has lived in different parts of the country, and my wife and I are committed to the local church. I have entrepreneurial tendencies and own my own business. I love the outdoor life: boating, islands (I own properties on two), woods (I own one), campfires, adventures. I spend a lot of time with non church friends who share my love of the outdoors. I have run Alpha courses in the past. I offered to train as a lay preacher and did a course but found it didn't meet my needs in terms of helping me to change the culture of church to be more contemporary and outward looking. I want my friends to engage with God and feel they need a completely different kind of Christian community to be part of – at least as we explore faith together. I am looking for help in changing local church culture and in reaching my friends. *Stepwise* could be a short(?) 6 week experience teaching me how I can bring change to my church and how to take the next steps with my non church friends. It would need to be evening or weekends – maybe just one residential weekend would do it. I learn well from other people's stories and easily create from transferred principles. I would gain interest and affirmation/ confidence in seeking to bring change and I would hope the church would in time engage more effectively with others beyond its doors.

The task: context, scope and group membership

10. The Terms of Reference for the *Successor to TLS Task and Finish Group* were agreed by the Education & Learning Committee in September 2016, following the decision of Mission Council and General Assembly 2016 to endorse the need for a new vehicle for discipleship development in the United Reformed Church within the context of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus Today*. The successor programme to TLS has a projected life of 15 years. (See appendix 1).
11. The members of the task and finish group have been drawn from across the URC and ecumenical partners in order to support a broad-based approach:

Pete Atkins	Fresh Expressions/Mission-Shaped Ministry Board, ecumenical representative
The Revd David Downing	Children and Youth Committee nominee
The Revd Dr Jack Dyce	Resource Centre for Learning nominee
Graham Handscomb	Convenor and chair
Iain Johnston	Faith in Community Scotland, ecumenical representative
Philippa Linton	Administrator

The Revd Stuart Nixon	Mission Committee/Mission Enablers' nominee
The Revd Zaidie Orr	Global and Intercultural Ministries nominee
Simon Peters	Walking the Way Programme Manager (January 2018)
The Revd Anne Sardeson	Training and Development Officers' nominee
The Revd Fiona Thomas	Secretary for Education and Learning

12. The Group has met on five occasions, including its first meeting in February 2017. These meetings have latterly been residential for up to 48 hours. The group began by examining a number of background documents which helped in understanding fully the context and nature of the task:

- Successor to TLS Task and Finish Group *Terms of Reference* (E&L Committee, 2016)
- The report from the *Review of Training for Learning and Serving* commissioned by the Education & Learning Committee (January 2015)
- *Walking the Way: Living the Life of Jesus Today* Learning tree & other material from the Walking the Way steering group (2016)
- Background papers produced in 2016 by the Secretary for Education and Learning:
 - *Design considerations for the Successor to TLS*
 - *Record of a substantial conversation with office holders of the TLS Management Group*
 - *Compendium of Stakeholders*
 - *Key Elements for the TLS Successor Task and Finish Group*
 - *Structure of Support for the Programme*
- *Richness and Ruefulness* (Goodbourn, 2013)
- *Blended Learning Framework* (Education & Learning Blended Learning Task Group, 2016)

13. A valuable part of the group's work has been to take evidence in witness sessions where the group explored the experience, expertise and thinking of a range of individuals that could help to inform the work on the new programme. These have included so far:

- Stanley Jackson, TLS Coordinator
- John Campbell, TLS Tutor and writer, currently working with the largest group of BME students in TLS-LITE
- Pete Atkins, Team coordinator for Fresh Expressions and member of the Mission Shaped Ministry board
- David Salsbury, Training and Development Officer, Synod of Wales and member of the Blended Learning Task Group
- Philip Richter, Ministry Development Officer, Methodist Church

Programme purpose, structure, and content

14. The group began its work by considering three fundamental features of a successor programme to TLS:

- *Purpose:* What would be the essential elements of the purpose of the programme?
- *Format and structure:* What would be the way in which the programme is structured and experienced?
- *Key ingredients/content:* What would be the main components of content?

15. The following summarises the current thinking of the group related to each of these, providing headlines from the group's work. The overall direction of their thinking was presented to the joint discipleship committees meeting in June 2017 (Ministries, Children & Youth, and Education & Learning), and subjected to extensive examination by the Education & Learning Committee in June and September 2017. The outline given here is therefore the result of thorough scrutiny by appropriate bodies.

Rosanne

I am a retired school teacher and a recent church member in my 70's, who feels a need to develop my prayer life and that of my church. My church doesn't have any small groups during the week and the only prayer time that we have together is on a Sunday morning. I don't really know where to start because prayer has always been the minister's job in the past. I want prayer to be at the heart of the church and focused within and beyond the church. I would hope *Stepwise* will help me to engage with prayer in different forms and increase my understanding of what prayer is and why we do it. I would also want *Stepwise* to help me develop and encourage the prayer life of others in my church and give me the foundations for starting a group focused on prayer for the local outreach of the church.

Purpose

16. The main purposes of the new programme (referred to as *Stepwise* in the rest of this paper) will be to promote, foster and develop, within the overall context of the Reformed traditions:
- Discipleship
 - Critical thinking and engagement
 - Spiritual deepening
 - Life-long learning
 - Mission focused outlook
 - Leadership
17. *Stepwise* should be seen as set firmly within the context, ethos and intentions of *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus Today*. There is an overwhelming consensus that *Stepwise* should be a framework which is future facing, focussed on what the church will be, not on what it is or has been. This relates to both the content of the programme and to the learning approaches employed, particularly the use of on-line teaching and learning methods. *Stepwise* will aim to bring about both personal and organisational transformation. Its approach should embody creativity, breadth and depth. It should contribute coherently to the URC becoming a learning organisation with "joined-upness" between all its training and development programmes. The rich heritage and contribution of the TLS programme is recognised and, whilst *Stepwise* will aim to be a distinctive provision, it will draw on what has been learned and achieved through TLS.
18. The kinds and range of people who might be looking to participate in *Stepwise* would include those:
- who wish to reflect upon and develop their current church role/vocation
 - who are looking for stimulating, thought-provoking development
 - who are seeking a challenge
 - who have a mission to make a difference in the world for Christ's sake

Dwayne

I am a 20 year old who has recently made a commitment to following Jesus. I am new to all things Christian and some of it seems pretty weird. I have been asked by the church to help with the young people's work and although I like being around the young people, I don't feel very confident in sharing my faith with them. I didn't do very well at school and find learning difficult but I am willing to give it a go! I need *Stepwise* to help me bring my friends to Jesus and to know how to help the young people who are in the church and not in the church. I need a mentor and a small group of peers who want to do faith and life together. I will then be able to engage with young people and grow as an individual in my discipleship.

Format and structure

19. A range of issues have been considered regarding format and structure of the new programme.

19.1 **Assessment and accreditation**

The Academic Quality Assurance (AQuA) Task Group met for the first time in Autumn 2015 in order to discuss the ways in which standards are maintained by TLS. It agreed to meet again once progress had been made on the successor to TLS, and this meeting took place in September 2017. The AQuA Task Group discussed a paper which set out initial thoughts on assessment and accreditation in *Stepwise*. The overarching principle of assessment arrangements in the *Stepwise* programme is that **assessment should be the servant of learning and not the other way around.**

The other principles for assessment, derived from this fundamental assertion, are as follows:

- i) **It is the Church that is the assessment body**
All *Stepwise* engagements/elements should have recognition, and rather than pursuing external accreditation, such as through a university, recognition should primarily be through URC Church Councils (Church Meetings, Synod, Assembly).
- ii) ***Stepwise* assessment will exist to recognise the learning and development of participants.**
Given the fundamental nature of *Stepwise* as a discipleship programme involving the deepening of understanding, purpose and faith, it is important that assessment relates to both cognitive and affective achievement.
- iii) **Assessment is for learning**
Assessment offers individuals a measure of their learning. It also provides a tool for *Stepwise* tutors/facilitators to help inform and hone the teaching and learning approach.
- iv) **There will be recognition for group work**
Increasingly, some aspects of learning are facilitated collaboratively, as part of a group. *Stepwise* experience undertaken collaboratively will be assessed appropriately.

- v) **Assessment will aid the transformation of the Church.**
Stepwise contributes to transforming both individuals and the churches to which they belong. Churches need to be prepared for the enhanced ability, skills and vocational outlook of their members as they engage in *Stepwise*.
- vi) **There will be a descriptive basis for quality assurance**
 Statements of outcomes for participants will refer not only to academic gains but will also contain material that conveys the range and depth of experience explored, and the understanding and growth that has taken place.
- vii) **Assessment will offer a measure of attainment related to standards**
 Standards will be developed for the range of intended cognitive and affective learning and development outcomes, with coherence across different training settings and formats.
- viii) ***Stepwise* will have an Accreditation of Prior Learning (APL) function**
 People with insufficient GCSEs and A levels (or equivalents) to access routes to diplomas in higher education would find it helpful if their *Stepwise* engagement could contribute to evidence of prior learning. This would include participants who wish to use their involvement in *Stepwise* to help meet the United Reformed Church's pre-Assessment educational criteria in candidating for the Ministry of Word and Sacraments or Church Related Community Work ministry.

19.2 *Format for Stepwise programmes*

- i) All *Stepwise* engagements will have:
 - An in-depth 'growing in the faith' dimension;
 - Some broad, imaginative/creative element that will develop adaptable interpersonal skills;
 - Some specific role-focused skill development, to be shaped and applied contextually.
- ii) *Stepwise* should meet the needs of the church for lay ministries as well as supporting individuals to discern, explore and develop their own vocation. The learning environment should nurture innovation, imagination and the development of interpersonal skills. Learning will have a large element of being practice-based, so that each participant identifies an area of their life that is relevant to the particular stream that they are engaging with.
- iii) As well as individual work, mentored reflective practice, face to face taught sessions and group work, *Stepwise* will include a significant on-line dimension, with all programmes being created and delivered in an on-line learning format, supported by the necessary technical resourcing. Participants will be encouraged to not only engage with on-line teaching materials and interaction, but also to create on-line outcomes such as videos and blogs. All *Stepwise* programmes should incorporate at least some 'flipped learning' elements, and will incorporate the principles and practices outlined in the Blended Learning Framework offered in *Blended Lives, Blended Learning: Formation for Christian Discipleship* <http://bltgreporturc.org.uk/> (Education & Learning Committee 2017).
- iv) The group has begun to explore issues related to the merits and demerits of residential components. Many people have given very positive feedback from TLS residential weekends, and indeed the group itself has benefited from using residential events to further its work. It is also a challenge for some people to attend residential events, especially when they have to travel some distance to

reach them. Ways forward identified so far include working with Synods to make residential events more locally accessible, possibly by holding a series of smaller events sub-regionally. Such smaller study events could perhaps be complemented with larger annual residential events drawing people from a range of Stepwise programmes together, to ensure a mix from a range of backgrounds. The group will be giving further consideration to this issue as part of the design work for the first *Stepwise* streams.

- v) In the witness session with Philip Richter on the Methodist *Worship: Leading & Preaching* programme there was useful discussion of the possibility of a mutual exchange and use of elements from each other's programmes. This is being discussed further with Methodist colleagues.

Brenda

I recently took early retirement. I usually attend church, but due to work commitments I would sometimes miss the occasional Sunday worship. Now that I am retired I have started attending church more regularly and I have offered to help with some of the admin tasks. I keep fairly busy as having worked in the NHS for the past 30 years, I still volunteer to help out at the local hospice twice a week. I find working in the hospice environment quite peaceful yet challenging and I believe my faith plays a vital part in my role as a volunteer.

At the last round of nomination for Elders, I was approached by the Church Secretary who said that my organisational skills could be used as an Elder, so I found myself agreeing to stand for nomination and was voted in at the last Church meeting. One Sunday last month the lay preacher was unable to lead worship and the Elders said that they would take the service. We planned the service together and everyone said it went well. Then in a conversation with the Church Secretary, she mentioned that maybe I would be interested in following up some ideas about worship and mission. She suggested that the *Stepwise* stream on Faith-filled worship may be of interest and it would offer me a deeper understanding and some other aspects of leading worship which we may wish to explore. I believe that I would find the course interesting and I would gain the knowledge and confidence I'm looking for if I am asked as part of the Eldership to lead worship.

Possible outcome: Brenda's strengths are in administration, communication and interpersonal skills. The church would gain an Elder who is willing to lead worship and to engage in other forms of worship outside of our traditional style.

19.3 Accessibility

- i) There are issues related to the accessibility of programmes to participants, taking into account varying amounts and nature of academic experience, special educational needs, and the breadth of cultures and age groups which *Stepwise* is intended to include.
- ii) A comprehensive list of considerations and actions has been identified and will be part of the design criteria for *Stepwise* material. Amongst these are for example:
 - relating the learning to the participant's own life context;
 - individualised strengths and needs assessment arrangements;

- taking account of people's preferred learning styles, whilst providing opportunities to experience a range of learning styles;
- taking account of the family context of the participant and the extent to which it is supportive;
- providing 'learning to learn' access programmes;
- providing a warm, affirming, welcoming, collaborative, discursive learning environment.

19.4 *Resourcing the church of tomorrow and today*

As well as deepening the discipleship and nurturing the vocation of individuals it is important that *Stepwise* meets the needs of the URC as a whole and of individual churches. The programme will aim to equip people for a range of twenty-first century lay ministries. It will need to be pioneering in stimulating outward-looking, innovative mindsets, as well as providing development experiences for current church roles and functions. *Stepwise* will draw on strengths-based approaches and techniques to help participants to explore the features of their church and communities, and will be undergirded by a contextual understanding of theology.

19.5 *Financial arrangements*

- i) Being aware of the relatively complex financial arrangements with which the TLS programme had to contend, the group sees the importance for *Stepwise* of:
 - Minimising the cost to participants of engaging in *Stepwise*
 - Streamlining the process for paying any fees so that there is consistent practice across Synods;
 - Agreeing a set of principles for financial processes that are clear, consistent, user-friendly, person-focused, inclusive, viable, fair and just;
 - Establishing an appropriately supported administrative system.
- ii) The Assembly Resource Sharing Task Group has responded positively to an invitation from the education & learning committee to co-opt one of their members to the committee for the next 18 months to two years. Work being done for the lay development strategy is likely to cover the same ground when it comes to developing better financial arrangements and therefore this is a significant step in bringing people together to create a coherent system of financial support. Capacity for managing the administrative and financial systems for *Stepwise* has been built into the job descriptions of the posts related to the programme.

Key ingredients and content: Streams and Stepping stones

20. The content of *Stepwise* needs to meet two demands:

- What would be compelling and motivating to potential participants?
- What are the areas that the URC would wish to support because they are of strategic importance within the context of *Walking the Way*?

Marlene and Roy

We are a retired couple and we would describe ourselves as ‘busy grand-parents’. Our son and daughter-in-law both work full time so we have grandparenting duties built around an after school programme. We did not realise that we would be this busy, but spending time with the grandchildren has made us reflect on our life in the local church.

In our day the church would have played a greater part in the life of our family, either through Sunday school or youth group. We were talking to the Minister about this and she suggested that we explored Messy Church. We knew that we were not the only grandparents who brought the grandchildren to church, so over coffee we asked another family about Messy Church as we did not know much. One thing led to another and we talked about the *Stepwise* stream on Faith-filled Community and how we could make a difference to worship for our grandchildren.

Possible outcome: The church would gain grandparents who were confident and who felt that they could contribute to worship and exploring ways to engage the young people after school. They could use setting up Messy Church as a practical learning project as part of their *Stepwise* course.

21. The group has identified five main *streams* that would meet these two criteria, and would fulfil the aim to be an innovative programme that is future facing. Within each of these streams will be modules/units called *stepping stones*.¹ These are indicated below and described in greater detail in Table 1 found here: <https://www.urc.org.uk/resources/papers/november-2017.html> Each of the streams will have the common intentions of cathartic conversations; developing discipleship; developing the potential of leaders and teachers; opportunity for experiential learning; experiencing God in the midst of the learning experience – affective as well as cognitive; gaining through faith engagement with others and with God; faith enrichment.

Stepwise: Faith in the future – Renewal for the 21st Century

Stream	Focus	Stepping Stones
<i>Faith-filled life</i>	Personal calling and vocation	What am I on the planet for? Who is my tribe?
<i>Faith-filled confidence</i>	Faith literacy – interfaith exploration and being confident in one’s own faith	Opportunities for encounter The common thread Living the bible
<i>Faith-filled community</i>	Living church in community	Who is my neighbour? (what are my & my church’s communities?) Developing a Christ-centred community
<i>Faith-filled worship</i>	Transforming worship – transforming lives	What is worship and who is it for? How can worship make a difference?
<i>Faith-fuelled leadership</i>	Leadership of all believers	Who decides where we are going? How can we nurture leadership contribution?

¹ At this broad-brush stage of the design of the programme the Task and Finish Group has sometimes used the words “unit” and “module” interchangeably. The terminology is in the process of being clarified as the group prepares the criteria for authors and creators of the content for the first streams.

Madeline

I am thinking of taking a year out after my A 'levels. I am not sure which direction my life is going to take but I feel that I want to learn more about my faith. I attend church mainly because my parents do. Being the only young person who worships regularly my name was put forward to attend Youth Assembly. I have just survived the week and my head is still buzzing as I would like to find out more. The language that they used was fascinating because I did not understand what all the various committees and councils were about. When I shared my thoughts and offered some insights into my experience, the Minister suggested that I could go on line to search the URC website for *Stepwise* and give some thought to signing up for the Faith-filled life stream. I searched, and it looks interesting. I hope that there are other people my age who want to join in.

Last week I was asked to help out at PILOTS as one of the volunteers was having some surgery. That was enjoyable and I volunteered to cover for the next few weeks.

Possible outcome: The church would gain someone who was hungry to learn, passionate and wanting to be fed. Madeline would gain confidence and deepen her understanding of her faith. She may eventually consider the ministry when looking at her future options.

From rationale to practicalities

22. The terms of reference of the Task & Finish group in Appendix 1 include nine areas for which proposals are to be made. Attention in the early months of the group's life was largely directed to rationale, design, methodology, and assessment which have consequences for the other aspects. An interim report endorsed by the Education & Learning Committee in June 2017 was used as a starting point for direct conversations with the *Walking the Way* Steering Group, the Synod Lay Preaching Commissioners' Annual Consultation, Synod Training and Development Officers, the Church Related Community Work Programme Committee, and an e-mail exchange with the Synod Moderators. The nominated network members within the Task and Finish Group have undertaken to use *Stepwise* reports for discussion in their networks.
23. Of the network discussions so far the longest has been with the Lay Preaching Commissioners. It was suggested to them that *Faith-filled worship* is likely to be the last of the streams to be provided and they accepted the arguments for this:
 - i) there is an existing transitional arrangement for Assembly-Accreditation as a Lay Preacher through TLS LITE, Gateways into Worship, and the year of mentored reflective practice;
 - ii) it is important for *Stepwise* to be perceived from the beginning as a whole-church discipleship development programme, so it makes sense to bring the other streams in first.

- “The name and the logo are good. Important not to be reduced to acronym” (despite being provisional);
- “modern” (positively);
- “this is doing church the way things are done in the World” (positively);
- “open and imaginative”;
- “not a like-for-like replacement for TLS” (positively);
- “We’re in a resource-rich environment and our programme needs to reflect this so this does”;
- “It needs to be flexible enough to change rapidly based on basic principles defined by adherence to the 5 solas of the Reformed traditions and URC commitment to being ecumenical – good that we’re prepared to draw on existing courses that other denominations have produced.”
- “Residential weekends were always a challenge and a joy. How will this work with small numbers?”
- “Our experience of losing younger people as Lay preachers due to family pressures preventing them from taking on TLS could be overcome with the anticipated flexibility.”

Comments on *Stepwise* from Synod Lay Preaching Commissioners, July 2017

24. There is a substantial amount of work to be done in order that *Stepwise* is made available from September 2018 as planned (see Figure 1 for an indication of the timeline). This is alongside the strong call from Mission Council in May 2017 for a costed, viable strategy for lay training and congregational development.
25. The role of programme lead for *Stepwise* needs to be seen in this broader context, and therefore a job description for a Lay Development Coordinator is being taken through the proper processes with the Human Resources team at Church House. The Lay Development Coordinator will have a major role in the design cycles for *Stepwise*. Recruited to a permanent post as soon as possible, there would be an initial intensely creative phase of early 2018 to 2020 when the programme is starting up. The postholder will need to initiate and refine the design cycle along the lines already identified. They would take forward the work that the Task and Finish Group expects to initiate during late 2017, and work alongside the Group and Synods on these areas:
 - Identify and work with authors/creators of content
 - Recruit and liaise with pilot churches
 - Advocate *Stepwise* with Synods, RCLs and networks
 - Work with the Task & Finish Group to help it become, in due course, the E&L Committee’s Lay Development Sub-Committee and management body for *Stepwise*.
 - Work with Church House colleagues: discipleship and mission departments, *Walking the Way* Project Manager, communications staff, finance office
 - Take on responsibility for the TLS transitional programme for Assembly-Accreditation of Lay Preachers from mid-2018.
26. The consolidating time for *Stepwise* will start as early as September 2018 onwards, given that the first streams to start will need to be consolidated at the same times as subsequent streams are being developed. The design cycle will continue once a stream has been established, with feedback and monitoring showing the ways in which the streams need to be updated.

27. A complementary post being developed for recruitment is that of the Lay Development Assistant, who will provide the administrative back-up for *Stepwise* in conjunction with the Lay Development Coordinator and Synods. TLS relied on Synod staff and volunteers to deliver a programme that was the same throughout the URC. The difference in *Stepwise* is that the programme may end up looking different across the 13 Synods because of the way that the components are put together in the national, regional and local contexts, yet the core structure should be recognisable. The administration of such a programme will require postholders who are flexible, imaginative and build good relationships with synod colleagues.
28. Ongoing discussion about the possible appointment of an online learning enabler, or similar post, suggested in the *Blended Lives, Blended Learning* report has been particularly relevant to the work of the Task & Finish group, given the emphasis on online access to materials in *Stepwise* and therefore the importance of creating a reliable, easy to use online learning environment. It became apparent that the job title of “online learning enabler” is too broad and vague to be likely to recruit the right person, and therefore the post which is currently undergoing standard HR processes is that of Instructional Designer –the postholder will work with subject specialists to produce the online and offline instructional experiences which make the acquisition of knowledge and skill more efficient, effective, and appealing.
29. The draft education & learning committee budget for 2018 includes the cost of employing the three posts of Lay Development Coordinator, Lay Development Administrator, and Instructional Designer from January 2018. This is in addition to continuing the posts of TLS Coordinator and Deputy Coordinator until July 2018. In reality it is likely that the recruitment of the three new posts will be sequential rather than concurrent. Calculated on the earliest appointment and maximum period of overlap for the various posts it has been possible to create a budget which is within the boundaries set by the finance committee.
30. There are a number of fundamental considerations that the Task and Finish Group is using to critique its work. Amongst these are:
- i) Continuing to ask what will be distinctive in *Stepwise*;
 - ii) Preparing for the church as it will be, not for the church as it was;
 - iii) Establishing an approach of using new ways to developing existing functions.
 - iv) Identifying the attitudes, attributes and skills people need to create the church of the future.
 - v) Ensuring a mixed economy/ecology: faithfully renewing what we have whilst developing new expressions of church;
 - vi) Attracting new learners to *Stepwise* and possibly also providing progression for those who have engaged in TLS previously.
 - vii) Ensuring that the framework is coherent, clear and robust enough so that it is understood and compelling to participants, whilst at the same time flexible to adjust and change as the needs of the church and its adherents change in the future;
 - viii) Developing a range of writers/tutors who can create high quality, relevant content and adopt the pedagogical approach inherent to the blended learning framework and online learning environments.

Chris

I minister with a group of three churches. As you can imagine my time is stretched across all of them. The thing I struggle with (amongst others) is getting to know the members of the congregation, to the extent where I feel I know them well enough not to have to ask them to remind me of their names whenever we meet.

A young woman called Sara is very interested in doing work in the church. Her strengths are creativity, working with other young people, and approachability. Her family have a history with this church as I think her grand-father was a minister some years ago and he used to preach in this building. Over the past month Sara has been attending the study group which we started, based on materials from *Holy Habits*. She has made some good points and her contribution has been valued by the other members of the group. Recently she has approached me to talk about a possible vocation in the ministry. In one of our chats I noted that although she was very articulate she struggled with producing any written work. When I asked her, she explained that she was 'labelled' as having special needs in secondary school. She said that she was fine but recognised that she needed some support.

I suggested that maybe she would like to consider one of the Streams in *Stepwise*. I explained that she could study at her own pace, while being part of a local group across the three churches. Following our discussion we agreed that Sara would explore Faith-filled confidence, and that I'd help her to find a mentor. I'm looking forward to facilitating the group.

Possible outcomes: Sara would gain confidence in her work with the young people and also in helping others explore their faith. The church would benefit from having someone with the confidence to lead sessions at Junior Church. Chris will get to know a group of people in the three churches better.

Note from General Secretary:

This paper includes a great deal of information, with various appendices and ancillary documents. It may not be profitable to devote a lot of plenary time at Mission Council to matters of detail. Should members have questions about detail, they are therefore asked to contact Fiona Thomas (fiona.thomas@urc.org.uk) before we get to Swanwick, in order that discussion in Mission Council may focus as fully as possible on the most far-reaching and important aspects of the subject.

Paper D2 – Appendix 1

Terms of Reference for TLS Successor Task and Finish Group

1. The Intentions

- A. To have in place by September 2018 the beginnings of a comprehensive programme of courses through which people can be inspired and equipped for discipleship and mission as part of the United Reformed Church's commitment to *Walking the Way: Living the life of Jesus today*.
- B. To ensure that the programme is able to dovetail to a reasonable extent with local, informal congregational offerings on the one hand and externally validated courses offered through Resource Centres for Learning on the other.

2. The Guiding Educational Principles

The new programme is expected to be in tune with the principles adopted by the General Assembly for the 2006 Training Review in 2005:

- i) Integrated education and training to equip the whole people of God for mission – promoted with coherence and in tune with the policies flowing from the Equipping the Saints (2004) and Catch the Vision (2005) reports;
- ii) Ecumenical engagement at every stage;
- iii) The presentation of a distinctive Reformed Ethos and History in that ecumenical engagement;
- iv) The delivery of this policy in a manner appropriate to the circumstances of the three nations in which the United Reformed Church is situated.

In September 2009 the Education & Learning Committee drew on the report of the 2006 Training Review to reiterate the kind of adult education which the United Reformed Church endorses, and which will therefore be pursued through the new programme:

- *Integrated* – enabling different groups of learners to learn alongside each other.
- *Peer group focused* – offering learning through small groups of people working towards a common goal related to the ministry entrusted to them.
- *Offered through dispersed learning and/or distance* delivery – using the person's home context as a learning resource and/or providing study materials which can be pursued away from the institution shaping the study.
- *Residential when necessary* – including attendance at designated centres at appropriate times.
- *Offering blended learning* – incorporating a variety of modes of delivery, including supervised placements, online learning, individual mentoring, seminars, classroom settings, and participation in a learning community.
- *Offering excellence*: being committed to providing the highest quality of educational provision in whatever way the system is delivered.

3. The Tasks

1. To consult with interested parties, including Synods, Resource Centres for Learning, Assembly Committees, and relevant networks about the requirements for a programme to replace Training for Learning and Serving (TLS), and to consider the comments and representations already received by the Education and Learning Committee or its officers.
2. To maintain close contact and reporting with the *Walking the Way* Steering Group to ensure overall coherence of purposes, branding, and implementation.
3. To develop proposals for the:
 - a) rationale
 - b) design
 - c) methodology
 - d) advocacy
 - e) delivery
 - f) assessment
 - g) quality assurance
 - h) staffing
 - i) management and costing
 of the new programme, and to submit these proposals to the Education & Learning Committee for consideration at its September 2017 meeting.
4. To identify available existing resources, including TLS materials and approaches, that could be incorporated into the new programme with appropriate revision, modification or updating.
5. To commission new material and maintain timetables for writing, editing and publication.

4. Attitude, skills and knowledge needed in the group (9 attributes with equal weighting)

- i) Track record in developing discipleship through mentoring/apprenticeship
- ii) Understanding and commitment to contextual theology and lay community ministry
- iii) Proven ability to design high quality, replicable courses for a wide range of people
- iv) Ability to think boldly and creatively in tune with emerging faith communities
- v) Wisdom in maintaining credible relationships with church bodies
- vi) Theological thinking that reflects the full breadth of the United Reformed Church
- vii) Familiarity and confidence with blended learning including digital delivery
- viii) Commitment to pioneering and mission-based ways of being church
- ix) Understanding of intercultural, cross-generational, and diverse ability needs in education (i.e. age, ethnicity, class, gender, visible and invisible disabilities)

5. Membership (maximum 10 people. To be lay people wherever possible)

- Convenor
- Secretary for Education & Learning

- Secretary/admin support: PA to the Secretary for Education & Learning
- Member suggested by the Resource Centres for Learning
- Member suggested by the Synod Training & Development Officers
- Member suggested by the Mission Committee or Mission Enablers
- Member suggested by the Children & Youth Committee or CYDOs
- Ecumenical partner with relevant experience/expertise
- Up to 2 other members with relevant experience/expertise

6. Life span and time commitment of the task group

Phase 1: September 2016 to September 2018

Phase 2: September 2018 to September 2020

This phasing has been suggested as a means of enabling some potential continuity from the task group into the management structure of the new programme, without stipulating what that might look like at this stage. Active participation in Phase 1 does not imply or depend upon availability for Phase 2.

- It is anticipated that there will be a significant commitment for task group members in Phase 1.
- The Secretary for Education & Learning's workload will be rearranged to give this work priority and be available for ongoing coordination activities in Phase 1.
- It is likely that much of the task group's work will take place at residential 24 hour meetings every 6-8 weeks, with additional time being spent between meetings on specific delegated tasks according to individual expertise.

7. Timescale

There will be communication of progress by regular updates through relevant Synod committees and staff members.

The suggested timescale below is given with the understanding that work on the second year may well need to begin before Mission Council has given its feedback on the proposals.

August-end September 2016:	Agreement of Terms of Reference by the E&LC and recruitment of task group members
October 2016-August 2017:	Task group meetings and consultations, preparation of proposals for submission to E&LC
September 2017:	Submission of proposals to E&LC, including anticipated budget
October 2017:	Report of outline proposals to Mission Council
October - December 2017:	Revision of proposals in light of E&LC and Mission Council feedback
January-August 2018:	Preparation of first year's content and delivery systems
March-June 2018:	Piloting of sample module(s) with focus group(s)/congregations
March-April 2018:	Publicity through Synod meetings and the Ministers Gathering
September 2018:	Delivery of first year's programme begins preparation of subsequent years' content continues
September 2020:	New programme fully functional