

Table 1: Stepwise Streams and Stepping Stones

Stream	Focus	Stepping Stones
Faith-filled life	Personal calling and vocation	<p>What am I on the planet for?</p> <p><i>This unit focuses first on issues of overall purpose, personal motivation, and God’s plan and embrace. It considers questions of self, direction and fulfilment; exploring who you are; what makes you who you are and how God sees you.</i></p> <p><i>It examines the relationship between vision and vocation and provides facilitation to enable participants to discern their gifts and skills; the source of their strengths and areas for development.</i></p> <p><i>The unit aims to equip people with tools to address and deal with life’s challenges and setbacks; developing resilience through discovering a sense of God’s purpose. It may involve retreat experiences and non-expensive placements.</i></p> <p>Who is my tribe?</p> <p><i>This stepping stone unit considers issues related to identity, community and belonging. It involves mapping the groups people are involved with and the identity adopted within different “tribes.”</i></p> <p><i>It also explores the commitment that we share as all being members of the body of Christ and the mission outlook of you, the group, the world, the kingdom of God and the vocation to bring about the kingdom.</i></p> <p><i>The unit brings all this together through a focus on making meaning through others and in Christ. This involves developing an increased understanding of seeking individual purpose and meaning through our encounter/meeting point with others; accepting the humanity of others and everyone made in God’s image. Gaining a sense of identity in Christ. This approach will draw on Appreciative Inquiry and exploration which entails it is not all about the individual.</i></p>

Stream	Focus	Stepping Stones
Faith-filled confidence	<p>Faith literacy Interfaith exploration and being confident in one's own faith</p>	<p>Opportunities for encounter</p> <p><i>The unit will explore a range of inter-faith issues. It will examine faith in contemporary terms, within and between faith cultures; between Christians and non-churched and non-Christians. Rites of passage – births, marriages, deaths, festivals – will be explored, reflecting on meanings, similarities & differences.</i></p> <p><i>This stepping stone will also explore the contribution of faith in modern day culture. This will involve looking at modern day problems and perceptions of the role of religion including such issues as fundamentalism, terrorism; what does it mean to hold passionately to one's faith; religion and state and the right to dissent; the non-conformist tradition. The relationship between religion and culture will be explored, together with examining social issues and customs; relationship of family and religion; pastoral care in times of human need. What does it mean to walk with Christ amidst the challenges of the modern day world?</i></p> <p>The common thread</p> <p><i>This unit will explore what is shared across religious traditions regarding the relationship between religion and morality. Issues explored will include: what does it take to be good; different religious perspectives and alternatives such as humanism; the place of religion being contested in modern day society; social justice challenges; the concept of grace.</i></p> <p><i>This study will also examine what is distinctive, particularly within the Christian outlook and faith. This will include the following: Gaining an understanding of Christianity and other religions encompassing a range of traditions, denominations, and sects. Exploring theological beliefs and outlooks which are shared and distinctive. Facing up to differences and their significance. Considering religion in relation to other modern outlooks, beliefs, commitments – literature; modern myths etc. Being a Christian compared with other traditions & religions – the centrality of Christ. The distinctive reformed tradition; the five solas, approach and characteristics of the URC.</i></p>

		<p>Living the Bible</p> <p><i>This unit will first address the status of scripture. This includes considering what part the Bible plays in the Christian faith and in my faith; what part do religious texts play in other faiths; and different views of the authority of scripture.</i></p> <p><i>Then there will be a focus on putting the Bible to work which will look at ways of reading and using the Bible; and applying the Bible in everyday life – practical habits. There will be a particular emphasis on challenging people’s theological perspectives and taking them out of their comfort zones, but in an affirmative context.</i></p>
Stream	Focus	Stepping Stone
Faith-filled community	Living church in community	<p>Who is my neighbour? (what are my & my church’s communities?)</p> <p><i>The unit will first focus on discovering the community. This will entail: providing tools to discover what is going on in the church and wider community & to identify the range of communities to which students belong; considering challenging questions like what does my church contribute & would the community notice if my church did not exist; and does your community know you.</i></p> <p><i>Then the focus will shift to engaging with the community. This will equip people to be in conversation with their communities, drawing on approaches such as Appreciative Inquiry and Asset Based Community Development. There will an exploration of perspectives/challenges related to engaging with communities in the modern age, e.g.: many layers of community and belonging; horizontal and vertical communities; social media & virtual communities; 7 days a week church; second home diaspora; global, regional and local; new ways of expressing democratic community – church and political engagement. These considerations will then be brought within the context of the core concept of discovering meaningful community through fellowship in Christ.</i></p> <p><i>The unit then looks at contributing to community, and helps people identify the range of opportunities through which they can contribute to the work of the church, and through the church, to the wider community. This includes being clear about ways in which they can lay the ground for their church community appreciating and understanding the Stepwise journey they have experienced and what they now have to offer.</i></p>

		<p>Developing a Christ-centred community</p> <p><i>The unit will first consider what comprises a Christ-centred community. This includes the following: Centring our community, its action, direction and development on Christ, not ourselves; understanding that God, through Christ, tells us to seek the welfare of those around us and to be both salt and light; encountering God in unusual places; seeking new ways of modelling how to live as a Christ-centred community; ensuring discipleship lies at the foundation of our community.</i></p> <p><i>Then there is a focus on being a Christ-centred community, which entails exploring the following: being open & responsive and hearing and reaching out to the marginalised; engaging with LGBT communities and other communities; dealing with conflict rather than avoidance or working around conflict; prayer stations & spaces that reflect strengths and needs of the community; engaging with environmental issues; addressing modern day social injustices and issues such as the gig economy; engaging with the “precariate” – those whose lives are precarious & on the edge and creating communities stable enough to enable people to cope; modelling how we can serve others – e.g. foodbanks; homeless shelters; developing effective ways of praying for the community without paternalism and condescension – e.g. starting with AI based approaches; returning to the template model of Christ to stake stock on our direction and actions.</i></p>
<p>Faith-filled worship</p>	<p>Transforming worship – transforming lives</p>	<p>What is worship and who is it for?</p> <p><i>The unit begins by looking at the main characteristics of worship. This will include reflection upon: worship as a human need & part of the human condition; biblical perspectives on worship, including the Jewish heritage; the sacraments in the URC – baptism & communion – and in other traditions; the patterns of worship in the Reformed tradition and their significance; preparation to preside at communion- the role of elders, ministers and the ministry of all believers; issues of choice and preference.</i></p> <p><i>The study will then consider the development of worship approaches. Whose responsibility is it to ensure enrichment from worship; considering the strengths and needs that the worshipper brings to worship; new forms of worship – their relevance; potential and applications; format and liturgy of worship – considering the potential and limitations of formats; worship for adherents and reaching out to non-adherents; relationship between Sunday worship and 7 day a week worship.</i></p>

		<p>How can worship make a difference?</p> <p><i>This unit will explore the implications of the heritage of worship traditions, including the non-conformist dissenting tradition & gathering for worship as an act of dissent; the charismatic tradition with its expectation that worship will change you; personal and congregational worship and devotional contemplative traditions; apt liturgy – shaping worship for a particular context; the Reformed tradition and what it teaches about the use of worship to make a difference. There will clearly be discussion about world church, cultural traditions and inter-cultural ministry.</i></p> <p><i>The unit then focusses on utilising the power of worship. This includes exploring: Christ’s example and modelling of prayer & worship; lessons and learning from Paul’s teaching and the Early Church’s experience; worship makes a difference when it is something we do rather than what is done to us – the power of genuine engagement & participation; the opportunities and challenges of worship for young people & of all age worship; worship sought as a recourse in times of need, personal & national crises-implications & significance; worship as a way of tapping into the spirituality of all people and through this to open a way to God; worship as a way of life & its relationship to communal worship; exploring the sacred realm & the sacred/secular divide; do we have to go to special places of worship; losing God in the hubbub and finding God in the silence.</i></p>
<p>Faith-fuelled leadership</p>	<p>Leadership of all believers</p>	<p>Who decides where we are going?</p> <p><i>The initial focus is on how we understand the nature of leadership, particularly in terms of Christ and discipleship. It will examine the distinction between a theocracy and democracy - Christ as head of the Church and we are the active body of Christ.</i></p> <p><i>The unit will explore the relationship between leaders and followers; the formal leadership role of people in authority positions and the informal leadership of “influencers;” working alongside good role models.</i></p> <p><i>There will be an ultimate focus on examining and following Jesus’ example of leadership. This will involve exploring the Christ worldview – inverse power relations; servant leadership; last shall be first; Isaiah’s suffering servant and remnant. Humble ordinary, unusual people to be disciple leaders. Asking challenging questions – how do leaders ensure they listen to God and set the vision and direction?</i></p> <p><i>The unit will entail use of coaching and mentoring.</i></p>

How can we nurture leadership contribution?

*There will be an initial focus on **recognising and utilising the leadership that is already being exercised** in the church and in life. Participants will be provided with tools and approaches to acknowledge the leadership they exercise; how to make the most of this potential and being willing to let it go where appropriate. This will involve developing dialogue and language to discuss leadership issues and where the leadership power lies. People will also be equipped in skills to map & profile the leadership of the church and to reflect on this in terms of gender, ethnicity etc.*

*The unit will help address **developing a culture which fosters leadership within the church**, embracing issues including the distribution of responsibility; nurturing a non-hierarchy community and no-blame ethos; and placing equivalent value on the varied contributions people make. A range of strategies will be explored which values people's strengths but also equips and empowers those not used to leading.*

***Participants will be encouraged in their leadership through the example of Christ.** Emphasis will be made on the qualities of vulnerability and humility in leadership; being prepared to take on the consequences when things go wrong; leading as "host" rather than "hero" – facilitating others rather exercising control.*