



## 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 discipleship development programme created by the United Reformed Church. It is designed for people of all ages and backgrounds and aims to deepen discipleship and help people grow in faith as they walk the way of Jesus together with others.

As a programme of learning and discipleship development Stepwise participants will be exploring and enriching their personal faith journey, 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 visit [www.urc.org.uk/stepwise](http://www.urc.org.uk/stepwise).

Group Facilitators are central to how participants experience Stepwise and progress through the programme. At the heart of their role is creating a hospitable environment 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 have done all of the following:

- be a member of a Stepwise group, either locally or online;
- follow guided material online via the URC Learning Hub; as well as
- have meetings with a Stepwise mentor.

Reflection is an important aspect of Stepwise and participants are actively encouraged to keep a reflective journal. The different forms this can take are detailed in the participant notes and it will be helpful if facilitators can encourage participants in this work.

Faith-filled Life, the opening Stepwise stream, takes 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 are part of a Stepwise group which will either be local to where the participant lives or hosted online using Zoom or another video conferencing tool. Each group has 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 seven themes. It will normally take about three months to complete this stream depending on how frequently the 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 but this can be adapted to the needs of the group.

In the other Stepwise streams there will be more group sessions, 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 also be possible to bring groups together to form larger groups for these depending on location. This could potentially be done online too.

Stepwise is designed as a programme where participants use a variety of learning methods as they navigate the course. They will find access to material, ideas and resources online via the URC Learning 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 Stepwise 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 Learning 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 already 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 in liaison with the Stepwise team in Church House and 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 Learning 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 Learning 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. There is also an extensive set of

guidance notes in the Come Inside section for each stream in the Hub. It's important that facilitators refer to this as they prepare to facilitate their group.

#### *How much preparation will facilitators need to do?*

It is important for facilitators to read through the facilitators guide in the Learning Hub 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 being followed participants will need to be able to show that they have:

1. Logged into the URC Learning 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. Kept a reflective journal and completed the Spiders Web diagram (or equivalent) regularly.

The group facilitator may 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:

David Salisbury, Stepwise Programme Manager: [david.salsbury@urc.org.uk](mailto:david.salsbury@urc.org.uk)

Marion Brown, Stepwise Programme Assistant (Tue – Thurs): [marion.brown@urc.org.uk](mailto:marion.brown@urc.org.uk)

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