



## THE WALK CONTINUES...

### News and Updates from the Steering Group

#### April 2019

**Missional Discipleship in Synods** – A virtual meeting of representatives engaged in missional discipleship development across the synods was very supportive of efforts to build on what synods are already doing. Rather than reinvent the wheel, they felt that synod-produced resources on missional discipleship should be recognised as official Walking the Way resources. The Walking the Way Steering Group wholeheartedly endorsed this proposal and the Walking the Way logo has, subsequently, been forwarded to all synods to use in their work on missional discipleship. A copy of anything which uses the logo should be made available through the Walking the Way webpages. Synods which were unable to send a representative to this meeting received the notes, to which there has been a positive response. We hope to have another similar meeting in the near future. The Steering Group is also working with the URC's Communications Office on the production of a quarterly newsletter. This will contain stories of discipleship development, updates from the Steering Group, case studies of synods and churches and podcasts and videos, to offer inspiration and encouragement to networks across the URC in their ongoing work on missional discipleship.

**Accompaniment** – Work to build a pilot accompaniment programme, in collaboration with the London Institute for Contemporary Christianity (LICC), to support local churches in exploring and implementing a culture of whole-of-life discipleship is ongoing. Southern Synod has agreed to be part of the programme and is due to begin its work with the LICC in September. Work to secure the participation of a second synod is underway. A clear agreement is needed with the LICC, detailing what is expected of the LICC and the URC in this whole process. This is being pursued as a matter of priority.

**Online Church** – As part of Walking the Way's explorations into online church as a means of promoting discipleship in these times, some members of the Steering Group attended 'Re-imagining Church', a conference organised by *Sanctuary First*, an online church run by the Church of Scotland's Falkirk Presbytery. They reported that it was an inspiring few days with people passionate about finding fresh ways to live out discipleship. There is a distinction between Church Online (a way of managing with fewer ministers) and Online Church (a way of addressing those on the edges – eg younger people who have moved away from their home church). A visit to the Netherlands is also planned to explore, amongst other things, *MyChurch.nl*, an online project of the Protestant Church in the Netherlands aimed at people in the 20-40 age group who are no longer involved with Church. In many ways, this resonates with how Stepwise is developing, as well as with the work of RCLs, so it will be interesting to see how Stepwise and RCLs might support these explorations as they develop, and vice-versa. The Faith and Order Committee is also finalising a paper on the ecclesiology of Fresh Expressions, which could have interesting implications for these explorations.

**Stepwise** – The URC's new education programme for discipleship development, being offered as part of Walking the Way, moves from strength to strength. More and more of the people in synods who will take responsibility for delivering Stepwise in their own areas are meeting with the Stepwise Programme Manager to explore how Stepwise works. The aim is to help it become part of the DNA of the church and to move away from Church House focused leadership. It is intended to produce a two minute 'taste of Stepwise' film to aid people's understanding and involvement.

**Communications** – News and resource suggestions continue to be released through the Walking the Way webpages and social media in line with our communications plan. This will take us to the end of June, with at least one church story and one individual story of discipleship development being released per month, along with at least one resource suggestion via social media per week. Additional news, resources and information and stories continue to be added as they arise. JPIT's 'Living Lent' materials have been promoted on social media, encouraging people to connect their Lent experience with everyday discipleship. The promotion of the 'Share the Miracle' Easter Egg initiative which the Children's and Youth Work Office is leading the URC in supporting offers another way of engaging with the Holy Habit of Gladness and Generosity. The search for individual and local church stories of discipleship, and to link in with the blogs, stories and other methods of sharing enjoyed by other networks and groups in the URC, continues.

**Companions on the Way** – This Bible Study resource, looking at the Road to Emmaus story, was due to be released for Lent. However, on reflection, a significant amount of work was required on the document, including the addition of real-life stories of everyday discipleship. The resource will now be prepared for release at Easter.

**Messy Church and Godly Play** – The Children's and Youth Work Office is working with the Bible Reading Fellowship (BRF) on some research into 'Messy Discipleship' to encourage further discipleship development through Messy Church. The Steering Group will be kept up to date on progress with this. Ruth Whitehead has also produced a draft Godly Play story for Walking the Way, which will be further developed alongside other similar stories which will be gathered.

**Work with Andrew and Sally Willett** – Andrew and Sally Willett have offered willingly of their time and support, in their role as Evangelism and Renewal Advocates (ERAs) with the Group for Evangelism and Renewal (GEAR) in the URC. They are available to support local congregations directly, especially in exploring the Holy Habits of Prayer and Making More Disciples, which can be especially challenging to engage with tangibly. The 'Pray the Way' website ([www.praytheway.org.uk](http://www.praytheway.org.uk)), which offers opportunities to explore various prayer resources and suggestions as well as make prayer requests an official prayer resource of WtW.

**Merchandise** – Given the success of the prayer cords and the merchandise produced by Global and Intercultural Ministries as gifts for the international guests at General Assembly (notebook and pen with memory stick), the Steering Group is currently exploring the possibility of ordering more merchandise to help promote the ethos of Walking the Way. Further updates on this will be provided in due course.