

Termly News

Step

Spring 2026



SJL Step Day and our Christmas Wonderland

This year marked an exciting new chapter as we welcomed Year 10 students from Sir John Lawes (SJL) to Verso for the very first time. From the moment they arrived, the day promised to be both engaging and thought-provoking, beginning with an immersive session created by Open Doors called Secret Church.

As students entered the youth room, they were met with a striking scene: police tape stretched across the space, tables overturned, and Bibles scattered across the floor. The room appeared as though it had been raided, immediately drawing students into the reality of the persecuted church around the world. Through this powerful experience, students learned that in some countries Christians are imprisoned or even killed simply for owning a Bible. This sobering insight set a meaningful foundation for the rest of the day and sparked a new level of curiosity and engagement.

Following this, students explored key Christian themes of the Resurrection and religious experiences, while also enjoying our brand new Christmas Wonderland.

With ten Christmas-themed activities, it's been a highlight of recent Step Days. Students rotated every five minutes, engaging with a wide variety of creative and interactive experiences.



Thank you!

We are so grateful to Westhill Endowment for giving us a grant of £6,000 towards refreshing our Step Days. We will be hard at work over the coming weeks to make these days even better for the young people, ensuring each one has a moment of awe and wonder and a specific next step to another Step activity. Westhill have also provided us our very own page on their website, which you can access at www.westhillendowment.org/step



The activities ranged from designing a bauble themed around joy to matching Old Testament prophecies about Jesus with their New Testament fulfilments. Other stations invited students to explore the gifts brought by the Magi or to match familiar Christmas traditions with their countries of origin.

Alongside the fun and creativity, the space encouraged deeper reflection on the meaning of Christmas, with students asking meaningful questions such as, "What does the name Immanuel mean?" This allowed volunteers to share that Immanuel means "God with us," a central message of Christianity.

One particularly moving element was an activity where students wrote heartfelt messages to care home residents, asylum seekers, and food bank guests. These messages were written with genuine compassion and as the feedback below shows, brought light and hope to those who received them.

"In December, I had the amazing privilege to sing carols in 12 care homes. It was lovely spending time with residents, staff and visitors. There was such a good atmosphere. One of the highlights was at the end of every session when I read out the messages from the young people. They touched the residents and many took the cards to their rooms or put them by the Christmas tree. The love they felt was awesome. I want to thank everyone who wrote a message. They made Christmas special for so many people and made a difference to how they felt about themselves." (Sue, one of our supporters)

We are excited to be working with the same students soon as we continue exploring faith together, next focusing on Christian worship.



"Thank you so much for organising the retreats with your team, they really are amazing. It's such a shame that this was the last one, and while I know I'll see you again, I wanted to say thank you for all your help. Thank you for all the retreats, all the way from year 7, up until today; they've all been memorable and life changing. And thank you for all your help and support along the way. It means more than you can imagine. Step has helped me become the person I am today, and I am so grateful to you and the Step team for everything you've done. Thank you for being you."

(Year 13 student from a school we run Step Days with each year group)

Transformation House Involvement

We are extremely excited about our growing connection with Transformation House (TH). Below is a reflection from Temi (pictured here), who is on their Leadership Team, volunteers with us and is TH's Step Rep. We also have the thoughts of their Pastor, Ayo, pictured below on the left with Geoff (middle) and Laolu also a Pastor at TH (right) as we promoted our Love Your Enemy for Step campaign at the church.

I was asked by my church to speak with Geoff about Step and from the very first conversation I knew we had to get involved. I've spent the last few years of my legal career working in compliance for youth charities so I am very aware of the challenges young people face and the interventions that can be impactful. After attending the celebration evening I went back to our Leadership Team passionately sharing everything that happened and why we had to partner with Step. It was easy to get buy-in because Step's faith-centred work with young people aligns closely with our vision.

I eagerly completed the volunteer application and became a mentor on the Leadership Foundations Course. It has been hugely rewarding. I've enjoyed meeting my groups and watching them grow in confidence over six weeks. It has also been beneficial for me as I now continually reflect on my leadership skills in the different areas where I am called to lead. As the link person for Step at TH, my experience has made it easier to keep our church members informed and I'm sure in the coming months we will have more of us supporting Step on a regular basis. (Temi)

As a Pastor at TH, one of my greatest privileges is seeing our church form meaningful partnerships that reflect our heart for mission, discipleship, and serving our wider community. It has therefore been a real joy to develop a relationship with Step and to see that connection grow so quickly and naturally. Step's vision strongly resonated with us at TH and aligns deeply with our conviction that the church must actively engage beyond its walls.

On a personal level, I felt drawn to Step because of its strong focus on youth work and the opportunities it creates for deep, honest conversations with young people about faith. I have always believed in the importance of investing in the next generation, particularly as they navigate the complexity, challenge and uncertainty associated with this stage of their lives. Step's presence in schools, and the consistency and compassion shown by Schools Coordinators, are a powerful and practical expression of this.

As a result, I felt encouraged to volunteer on Step's Leadership Foundations Course. This not only represents a personal commitment, but an opportunity to model and cultivate a culture within our church of serving, leading and investing beyond our church gatherings.

From my experience of volunteering, I have found it deeply rewarding. My hope is that the relationship between TH and Step continues to deepen, creating further opportunities to serve and impact more young lives. (Ayo)



Journeying with Young People through Mentoring

Mentoring at Step takes many forms, from using our wellbeing iMatter Journal, discipleship relationships using our 'Next Steps' resource or general mentoring for issues identified by a young person, parent or school. Claire, one of our mentors reflects below on her experience.

How are you sleeping these days? We have the promise of sleep for 'those He loves' (Psalm 127), however I believe there is an art to receiving the love of Father God in order for our minds to be able to rest properly. Coupled with the temptation to be on a screen until late in the evening, I have discovered in my mentoring role that the inability to sleep well is one of the most prominent factors affecting our young people today. One of the basic needs in wellbeing is being eroded in our time.

I have found Step's iMatter Journal to be so effective in raising these wellbeing foundations. It's like a fun 'health check' booklet which leads gently and easily to the foundations of faith in each element. Mostly, the students I have mentored have previously experienced a Step lesson and therefore know that I put my faith in God so they often bring it up in conversations about the challenges they face.

It is honestly a privilege to walk with these students, exploring self-esteem, confidence, friendship issues, anxiety, grief, identity, communication skills among other. It is heartwarming when they feel seen and believed in, as together, we celebrate who they are and how far they've come. Sometimes though, just being a listening ear and hearing them out is a large part of what they need, giving them strength to face their world stronger and more confidently.

There have been times when my heart has wept over what some of them have had to face while seeing the courage they have displayed when there is very little I can do to actually help their situation.

That's where prayer has been my 'go to'. It has provided relief as I am reminded how much God is with them, watching them, loving them and I am reminded of the privilege of being a part of Him revealing that love to them.

We are looking to recruit and train new volunteer mentors so please get in touch if you are interested in joining Claire on the Step team.

We're Growing

This spring, we are advertising for an additional Schools Coordinator to join the staff team!

Our hope is that this will open doors in new schools, deepen our relationships in existing schools, develop our mental wellbeing provision, establish further 'next steps' for those exploring following Jesus, and provide more young people the opportunity to hear about the Christian faith!

In order to make this post a long-term success, we need to grow our income so if you can donate to our Spring Appeal, we'd really appreciate it. simply use the form on p7, visit our website or scan the QR code.



Love Your Enemy- More Than Just a Fundraiser!

This term, we have had several people wear their rival's football kit for the day to raise money for Step, with a few examples pictured here. So far, it's raised over £6,000, which we are delighted with. You can still sponsor the team (or join in) using the QR Code here.



However, what started as a fundraising idea has swiftly become a theme for the year. Jesus' powerful words of 'loving your enemy' have made their way into a Parade Service for the uniform groups that meet at St Albans URC, an Abbey Service with the whole of Verulam School, a sixth form event with the Oxford Centre for Christian Apologetics (OCCA), and much more. It also was the theme of our annual article in the Herts Advertiser and it's proving to be a fantastic hook for conversations with young people about the how Jesus' words could be applied to our lives.

Explore Groups Bearing Fruit

We are continually encouraged by the impact our Explore Groups are having on young people. Each week, students are given a safe and welcoming space to explore the Christian faith, ask honest questions, and consider what they believe about God.

Once a year, we invite the students who attend to complete a simple 'spiritual health check'. These forms are a valuable opportunity for young people to reflect on where they see themselves in relation to God, while also helping us understand how they are growing in their faith so we can support them well. From the most recent set of forms, we were excited to see clear evidence of spiritual growth. One boy moved from previously disagreeing that he was a Christian to now partly agreeing, and one girl shifted from agreeing that God exists to totally agreeing. These small but significant steps point to hearts that are opening to God.

The forms also revealed how many students view God as loving and deeply caring for His people, and we were encouraged to see that more young people are praying regularly compared to last year. At the same time, the feedback highlighted areas where we can offer further support, with more students saying they pray more often than they read the Bible. This has given us a clear and helpful focus to encourage Bible reading alongside prayer.

One particularly encouraging story comes from a non-Christian boy who began attending Explore after being captivated by our "Arguments for the Existence of God" session. Using a Kinder Surprise chocolate to introduce the teleological (design) argument sparked his curiosity, and he has since attended every week for the past couple of months, asking thoughtful and insightful questions.

We would love to invite you to our **End of Year Celebration** on Thursday 16th July from 7.30pm at Verso Vineyard Church to hear more stories and find out about our vision for the next academic year. It also includes worship and a light buffet!



Financial Gift Form

Your Details (must be filled in for standing orders or for us to claim gift aid)

Title _____ Forename/s _____ Surname _____

Address _____

Postcode _____

Email _____ Phone _____

Church you attend if any (optional) _____

Gift Aid Declaration

Please treat as Gift Aid donations all qualifying gifts of money made to Step (charity no 1091290)

Today In the past 4 years In the future (tick all relevant boxes)

I confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each tax year (6 April- 5 April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. I understand the charity will reclaim 28p of tax on every £1 that I gave up to 5 April 2008 and will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after 6 April 2008. I confirm that I am a UK tax payer, resident in the UK for tax purposes and that I will advise Step if I wish to cancel this declaration; I change my name or home address or I no longer pay sufficient tax on my income and/or capital gains. I understand that if I pay less tax in the current fiscal year than the amount of the gift aid claimed on all my donations, it is my responsibility to pay the difference.

Signed _____ Date _____

PLEASE ENSURE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS ARE ABOVE SO WE CAN CLAIM GIFT AID

I would like to make a financial gift to Step

I have made a bank transfer to 01338536 (30-97-25)/enclosed cash/enclosed a cheque made payable to 'Step' for the amount of £ _____ (please delete where appropriate)

I would like to set up a standing order to support Step I have set it up online

Either set one up through your online banking or fill in below and return to us at Step c/o Verso Church, 7 Brick Knoll Park, St Albans, Herts, AL1 5UG. Please **DO NOT** send it directly to your bank

To: The Manager of _____ Bank Sort code ____/____/____

Bank Address: _____

Postcode _____

Please pay Lloyds Bank (sort code 30-97-25), 36 Chequer Street, St Albans AL1 3YQ for the account of St Albans and Harpenden Christian Education Project (account no 01338536)

From my account number _____ please pay the sum of £ _____

(amount in words) _____ on the _____ (day) of

_____ (month) 20____ (year) and monthly/quarterly/annually* until further notice.

(*delete as appropriate)

Signed _____ Date _____

I would like to increase my existing standing order

As it's a standing order, this must be done by yourself through your bank. However, if you'd like to tell us your intentions to do this, please say how much you plan to increase it by: £ _____

Receive Updates or Volunteer with Step

Your Details

Title _____ Forename/s _____ Surname _____
Address _____
_____ Postcode _____
Email _____ Phone _____
Church you attend if any _____

Receive Updates

Please add me to Step's general mailing list

By signing up to our mailing list, we will send you updates such as invitations to events, annual report and fundraising initiatives and you confirm that you are 13 or over and accept Step's Supporter Privacy Notice which can be found online at www.stepschoolswork.org.uk/sign-up-to-updates or by requesting a copy from Step.

Please also add me to the following specific mailing lists

Weekly Prayer Calendar (email) Termly News (email) Termly News (post)

If you are under 13, your parent/guardian needs to consent on your behalf for you receive updates from Step by signing below

Parent/Guardian Signature (for those under 13) _____

Volunteer with Step

I am interested in the following volunteering opportunities so please contact me

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|--------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Lessons | <input type="checkbox"/> | Haven Hope Course (Anxiety) | <input type="checkbox"/> | Set Up/Pack Down | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Step Days | <input type="checkbox"/> | Mentoring | <input type="checkbox"/> | Serving Refreshments | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Lunchtime Clubs | <input type="checkbox"/> | Leadership Foundations Course | <input type="checkbox"/> | Photography | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Explore Groups/CUs | <input type="checkbox"/> | Alpha Youth Course | <input type="checkbox"/> | Writing Resources | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Year 6 Step Up Days | <input type="checkbox"/> | Sixth Form Enrichment | <input type="checkbox"/> | Admin Team | <input type="checkbox"/> |



Step c/o Verso Vineyard Church, 7 Brick Knoll Park, St Albans, AL1 5UG

www.stepschoolswork.org.uk

step@stepschoolswork.org.uk

01727 893540

Charity Number 1091290



stepschoolswork

Scan QR code to
download the Step
App

