

## **Recovering a Churches Together Group**

In 2024 there were no volunteers willing to take on the roles of chair and secretary of our local Churches Together. This had been preceded by low attendance at committee meetings and the ministers' lunchtime meetings had also stopped. Some of this was due to COVID. Just five years earlier there had been an efficient Secretary, full agendas, work in schools, a credit union and liaison with the Council re the developing town and its new housing areas. In the last two years, there had been two significant events, namely seminars on poverty in the town, which Churches Together had coordinated and which were well attended and appreciated.

But in November 2024 it looked as if we would cease to exist as Churches Together. In the end, after consulting with the Ecumenical Facilitator, Dawn, we decided to 'hibernate', that is, do nothing for the next six months. We would see what, if any, consequences there would be. We did arrange for the Good Friday Walk of Witness to go ahead and received an offer from one of the churches in the town to ensure that this would go ahead, and it did.

During this time of dormancy, two people offered to meet with church leaders and talk with them about what would be helpful to their ministry and mission. It was hoped this would help develop relationships and stir interest again in working together. It became clear from the initial meetings that the lunchtime meetings were missed. So a date was arranged just after Easter 2025, at which fifteen of us met representing ten churches.

After the six months of dormancy, a special meeting over lunch was arranged in June, just after Pentecost. The format was prepared with Dawn, and twenty people came. There was agreement and some enthusiasm for having a new approach to cooperation. Perhaps three significant events per year with a small task group to facilitate them. A Core Group was formed of four members. They met to prepare the Annual General Meeting in October. This was the time to elect new officers and agree a way forward.

It seemed a good idea to make this an open meeting and the Mayor of the town was invited to speak about the links between the Council's plans for the expanding town and the work of the churches. This went well, with new ideas arising from those present about three events for the following year. This included the suggestion of a pilgrimage around the new housing areas. The members of the Core Group were appointed as officers and a request for a nominal subscription was sent to the churches to help rebuild the financial resources. .

Since then, a new Facebook page has been set up by one of the local churches to help inform and coordinate events. A draft new constitution has been circulated and work on updating the bank account signatories is underway. Ongoing church leaders lunches and Core Group meetings will, hopefully, embed this process of recovery. It still feels a little fragile. But the signs are hopeful.