



# **Churches Together in South Yorkshire**

## **Local formal and informal ecumenical activity Survey 2016-17**

**May 2017**

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## Summary of findings of CTSY research into local ecumenical activity

### 1. Aim

A key current aim of the Area Church Leaders in membership of CTSY is to see the growth of joint missional activity at a local level (mission meaning proclamation, practical service, and prophetic action for peace and justice).

The survey undertaken between the summer of 2016 and early 2017, was to identify all groups where people from three or more churches are engaged in some sort of joint activity together, and to get a sense of what that activity is. We needed to look in much more depth at what they were doing, to get a sense of the missional activity being done jointly across the Christian traditions, and to inform the denominations of where it needed to be stimulated.

The reference point was the list of 45 groups listed in a CTSY database in 2011. All but 7 of these identified as Councils of Churches or Churches Together groups. Twelve of the groups were already known either not to be active or for which we had no active contact. Some other groups were known to have started since 2011. Thirty one groups responded within the time scale.

### Different sorts of joint activity not surveyed

None of this captures the fact that individuals from one church may well volunteer to help at another church's activities on an informal basis where there is no joint group in their area.

It also doesn't include joint missional projects where several churches formally or informally collaborate on a local project. These may grow out of a Churches Together group which then ceases, or in the absence of any sort of regular meeting – e.g. the Terminus Project in Low Edges, Sheffield and Manna Café in Bentley, nr. Doncaster, respectively.

Nor are we aiming to capture those activities like Street Pastors where Christians of many denominations are active irrespective of tradition, which are sometimes set up with no participants from the churches based in the area where they are serving.

### 2. Overall Results (see p.4 for summary chart)

The range of activity, the range of denominations joining in, and the sorts of groups across S Yorkshire have grown much more varied than in 2012, but the number we know to be active has greatly reduced – from 45 groups to 31, of which 10 are not traditional CT Groups. We would welcome hearing from more groups where we've not been able to make contact.

The greatest shift in the range of activities is the larger than expected growth in those who are doing some sort of outward facing activities in terms of things like family fundays, services or events that mark different seasons of the Christian year, and more groups praying together for their area and/or doing prayer walks. The two most frequent activities with over 70% of groups doing them regularly or sometimes – are prayer for the area and some form of Joint Worship or Witness (external) – this latter often a Walk of Witness or prayers round a cross on Good Friday or a Remembrance Day event.

The greatest shift in denominational involvement is the growing participation by Pentecostal churches – mostly the white-led denominations. At the moment the Chair of Churches Together in Rotherham (borough-wide group) is a Pentecostal representative, and one of the local church leaders in Barnsley has been the most enthusiastic about exploring how to engage well across the traditions and work together despite theological differences.

In addition to Churches Together and clergy/pastors gatherings there are more prayer-based groups – most for the local area – including N Sheffield Estates Prayer Group begun in 2016, Rotherham Leaders Prayer Breakfasts and the recent change in Central Churches Doncaster to be primarily praying for the town centre.



### **3. More detail** (see p.9 if you want the full record)

#### **3.1 Community service (see p.5 top)**

32% of groups are doing this regularly or sometimes. The most common activity is a community café. Less than five provide foodbanks, job clubs or similar as a jointly run (as opposed to jointly delivered) activity. Stocksbridge and District has a joint club for mentally vulnerable people. The occasional litterpicks still happen in a few areas. It will be interesting to see how much HOPE18 impacts on this sort of activity.

#### **3.2 Social/fun events (see p.5 bottom)**

Ten groups (32%) have put on some sort of fun event - from a hog roast in Herringthorpe, to a series of art and fun things at Pentecost in Hoyland, to the local churches active engagement in the Broomhill and Broomhall Festival.

#### **3.3 Regular social clubs etc. (see p.6 top)**

The least popular joint activities are running some sort of regular social or youth club – 77% never do this. This may be because many churches do that individually.

#### **3.4 Prayer-related activities (see p.6 bottom)**

The most common prayer activity is praying together about the area, but nearly a third have no regular clergy meetings for prayer. There have been a few experiments with things like Healing on the streets and Prayer rooms – Woodseats in Sheffield has one of the longest established ones.

#### **3.5 Prophetic and campaigning activity (see p.7 top)**

This is the area that many churches find difficult to take on board as an area of mission. The majority, 55% have done nothing under this category. The most common regular area of work is on Fairtrade (five groups), followed by climate change, and five have held hustings at some point for a General Election.

#### **3.6 Joint worship (internal) (see p.7 bottom)**

Most of the groups that identify as Churches Together groups or similar do this, but not all of them which is perhaps surprising, or reflects the lack of energy to put on joint services in some communities where there is not a resident minister for each church.

Where they do happen they include Joint Christmas services, Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and Pentecost Services.

#### **3.7 Joint worship or witness (external) (see p.8 top)**

This is more popular than internal services and is the most popular activity after prayer – 74% of groups do it. This is because the custom of a Walk of Witness or an event around the Cross on Good Friday seems to resonate most strongly with all traditions and also happens in communities where there is no other ecumenical activity and no group meeting at all.

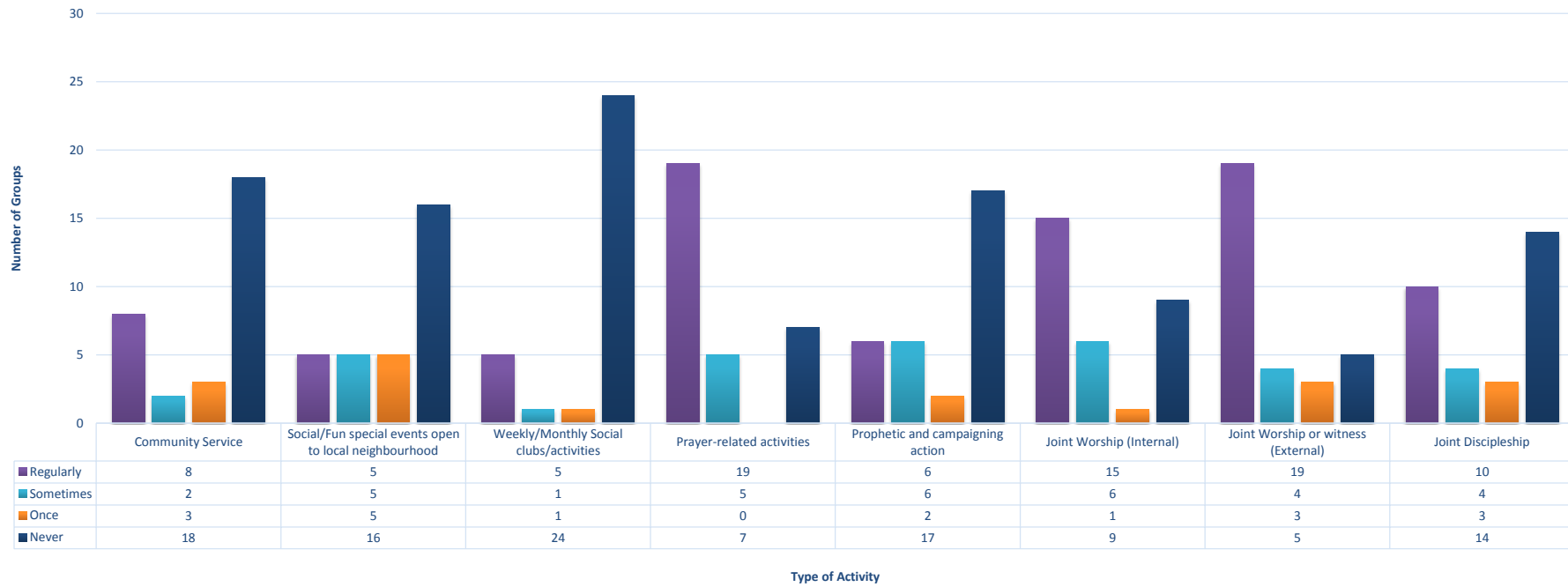
There are an increasing number of outside events at other times of year. Christmas is also popular with outdoor carols or processions e.g. Christmas – including in Darnall and Oughtibridge, and Barnsley, Rotherham and Sheffield City Centres. The Pentecost event in Hoyland has a strong intention of witness. Few do invitation speaker events. Chapeltown is an exception and hold a yearly event, and the Conisbrough Harvest Supper also has some missional content. The Rotherham Leaders in Prayer are planning a Mega Carol sing at Magna which will be hosted by the evangelist J John. Stocksbridge has made contact with people outside the main shops on Saturdays for a significant time.

Four coordinate school assemblies or Open the Book sessions.

The range of and imagination in the events has grown and this activity was pleasingly more common than anticipated when the research was begun – the next task is to spread joint mission to more areas.



Together Groups Survey Chart

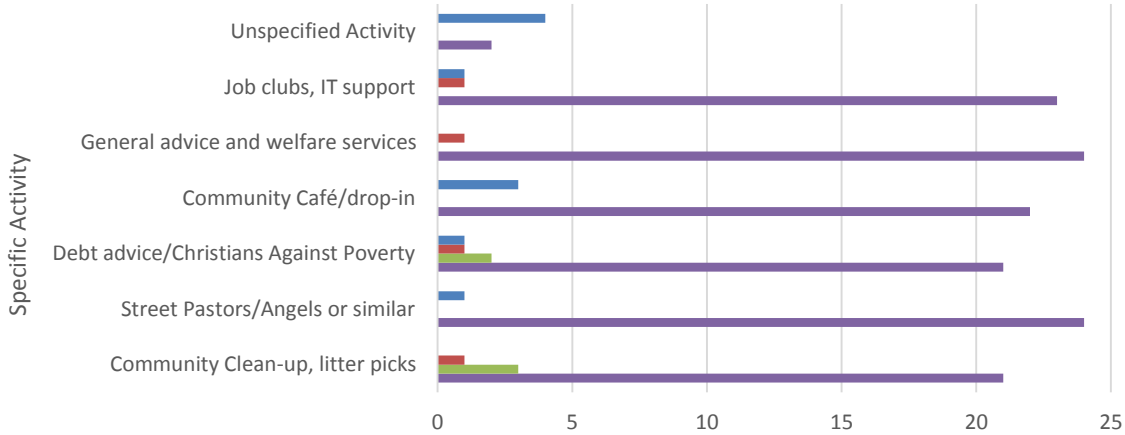


Activities in %

	Community Service	Social/fun special events open to local neighbourhood	Weekly/Monthly social clubs/activities	Prayer-related activities	Prophetic and campaigning action	Joint worship (Internal)	Joint worship or witness (External)	Joint Discipleship
Total	31	31	31	31	31	31	31	31
Regularly	26	16	16	61	19	48	61	32
Sometimes	6	16	16	3	16	19	13	13
Once	10	16	16	3	0	6	3	10
Never	58	52	52	77	23	55	29	16
Reg + Sometimes	32	32	32	19	77	39	68	45
Total %	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100



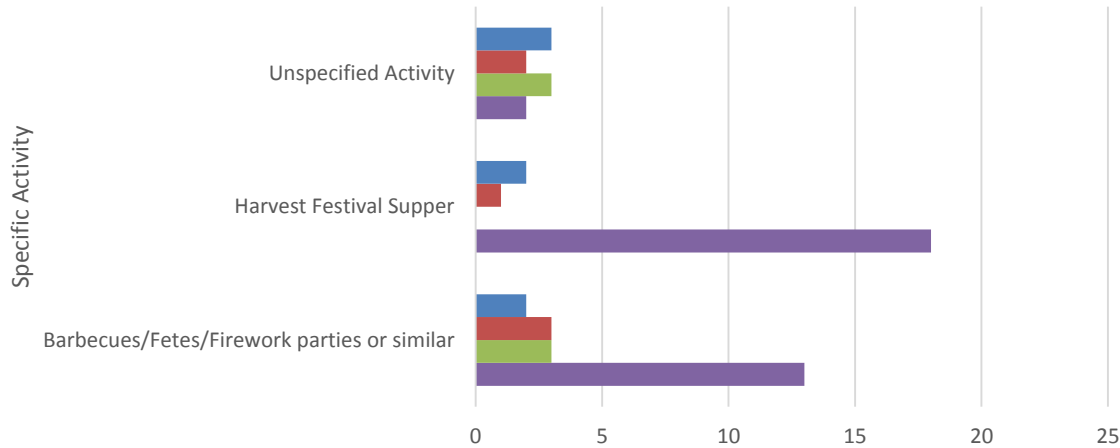
### Community Service



	Community Clean-up, litter picks	Street Pastors/Angels or similar	Debt advice/Christians Against Poverty	Community Café/drop-in	General advice and welfare services	Job clubs, IT support	Unspecified Activity
Regularly	0	1	1	3	0	1	4
Sometimes	1	0	1	0	1	1	0
Once	3	0	2	0	0	0	0
Never	21	24	21	22	24	23	2

Number of Groups

### Social/fun special events open to local neighbourhood

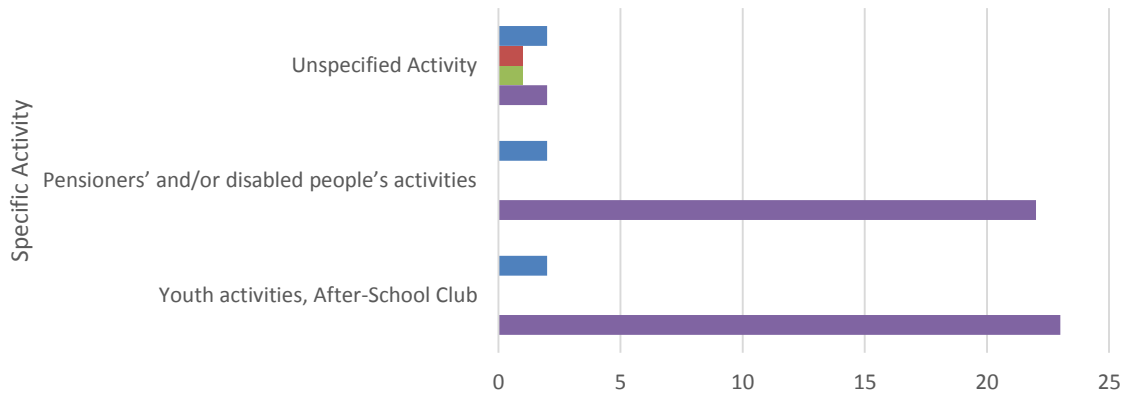


	Barbecues/Fetes/Firework parties or similar	Harvest Festival Supper	Unspecified Activity
Regularly	2	2	3
Sometimes	3	1	2
Once	3	0	3
Never	13	18	2

Number of Groups



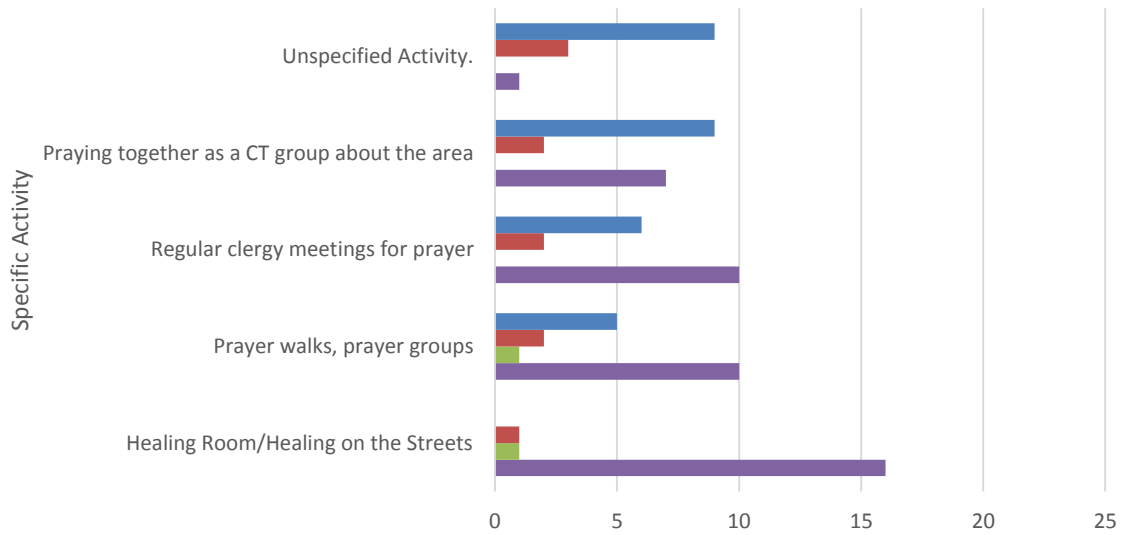
### Weekly/Monthly social clubs/activities



	Youth activities, After-School Club	Pensioners' and/or disabled people's activities	Unspecified Activity
Regularly	2	2	2
Sometimes	0	0	1
Once	0	0	1
Never	23	22	2

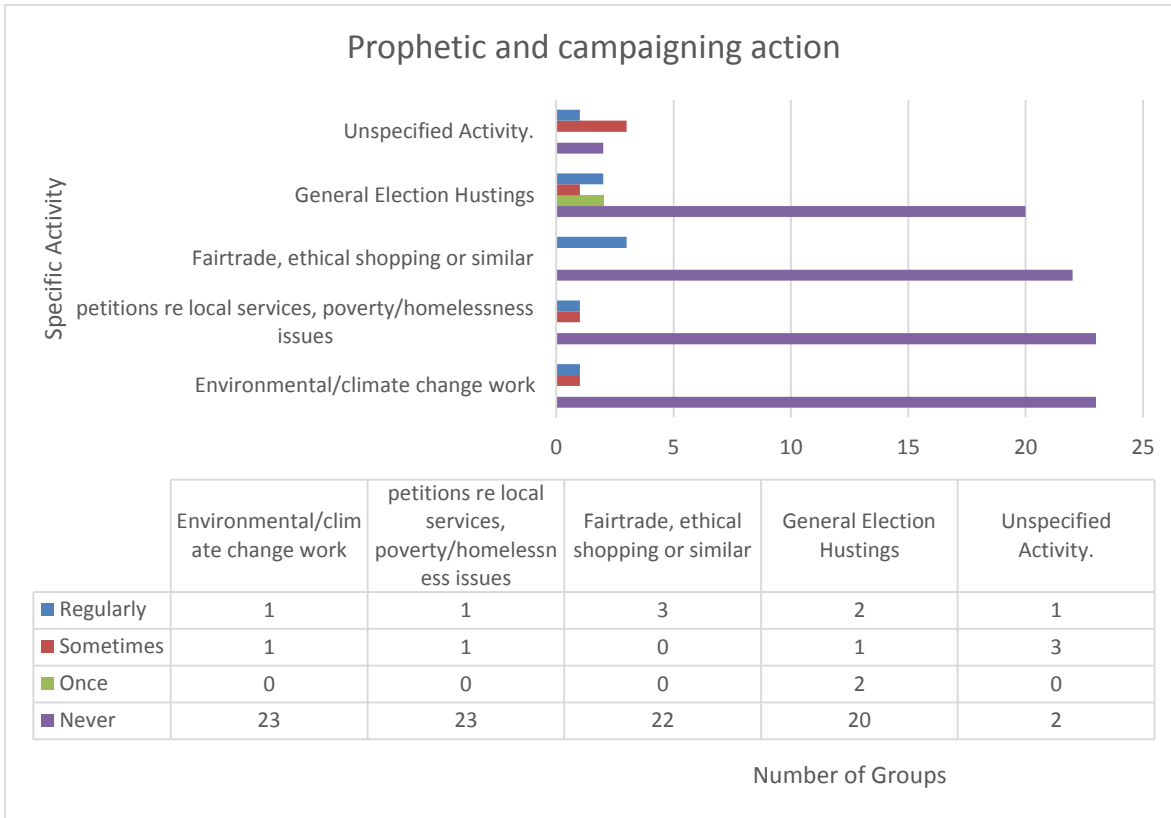
Number of Groups

### Prayer-related activities



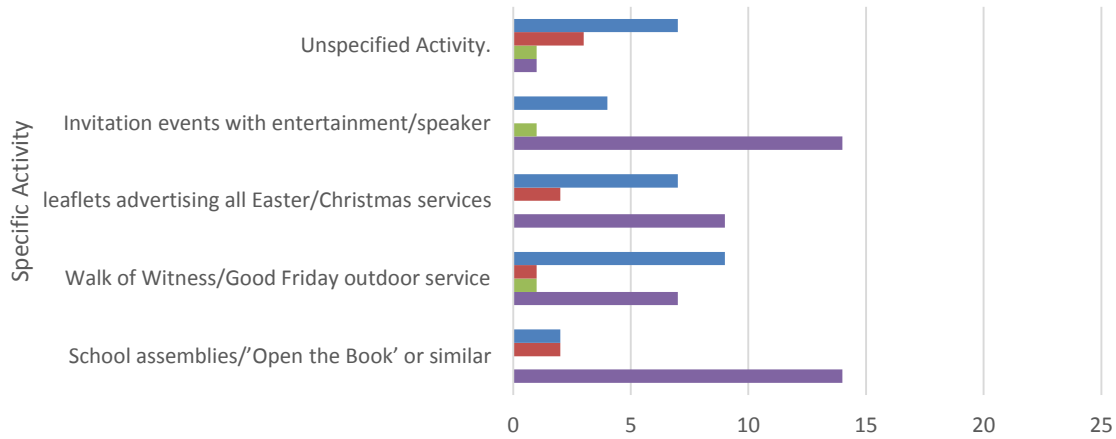
	Healing Room/Healing on the Streets	Prayer walks, prayer groups	Regular clergy meetings for prayer	Praying together as a CT group about the area	Unspecified Activity.
Regularly	0	5	6	9	9
Sometimes	1	2	2	2	3
Once	1	1	0	0	0
Never	16	10	10	7	1

Number of Groups





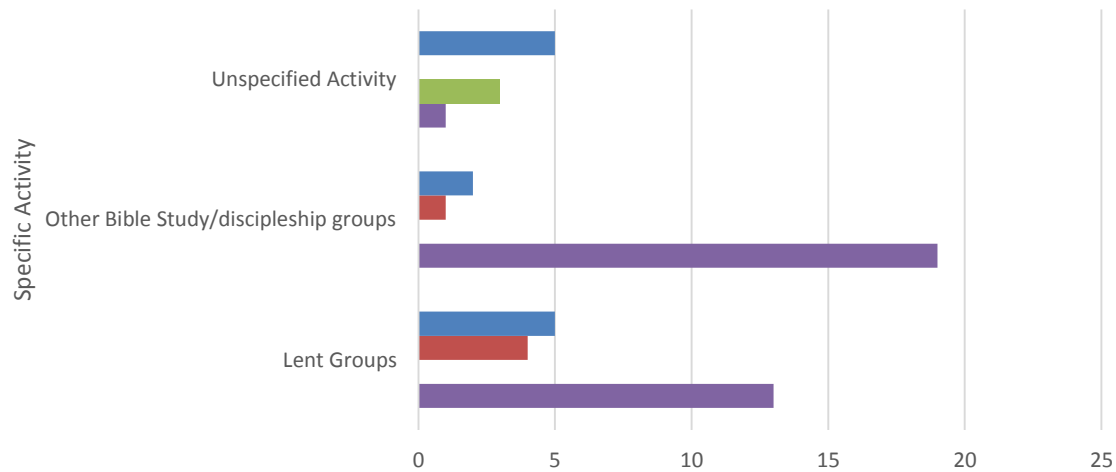
### Joint worship or witness (External)



	School assemblies/'Open the Book' or similar	Walk of Witness/Good Friday outdoor service	leaflets advertising all Easter/Christmas services	Invitation events with entertainment/speaker	Unspecified Activity.
Regularly	2	9	7	4	7
Sometimes	2	1	2	0	3
Once	0	1	0	1	1
Never	14	7	9	14	1

Number of Groups

### Joint Discipleship



	Lent Groups	Other Bible Study/discipleship groups	Unspecified Activity
Regularly	5	2	5
Sometimes	4	1	0
Once	0	0	3
Never	13	19	1

Number of Groups

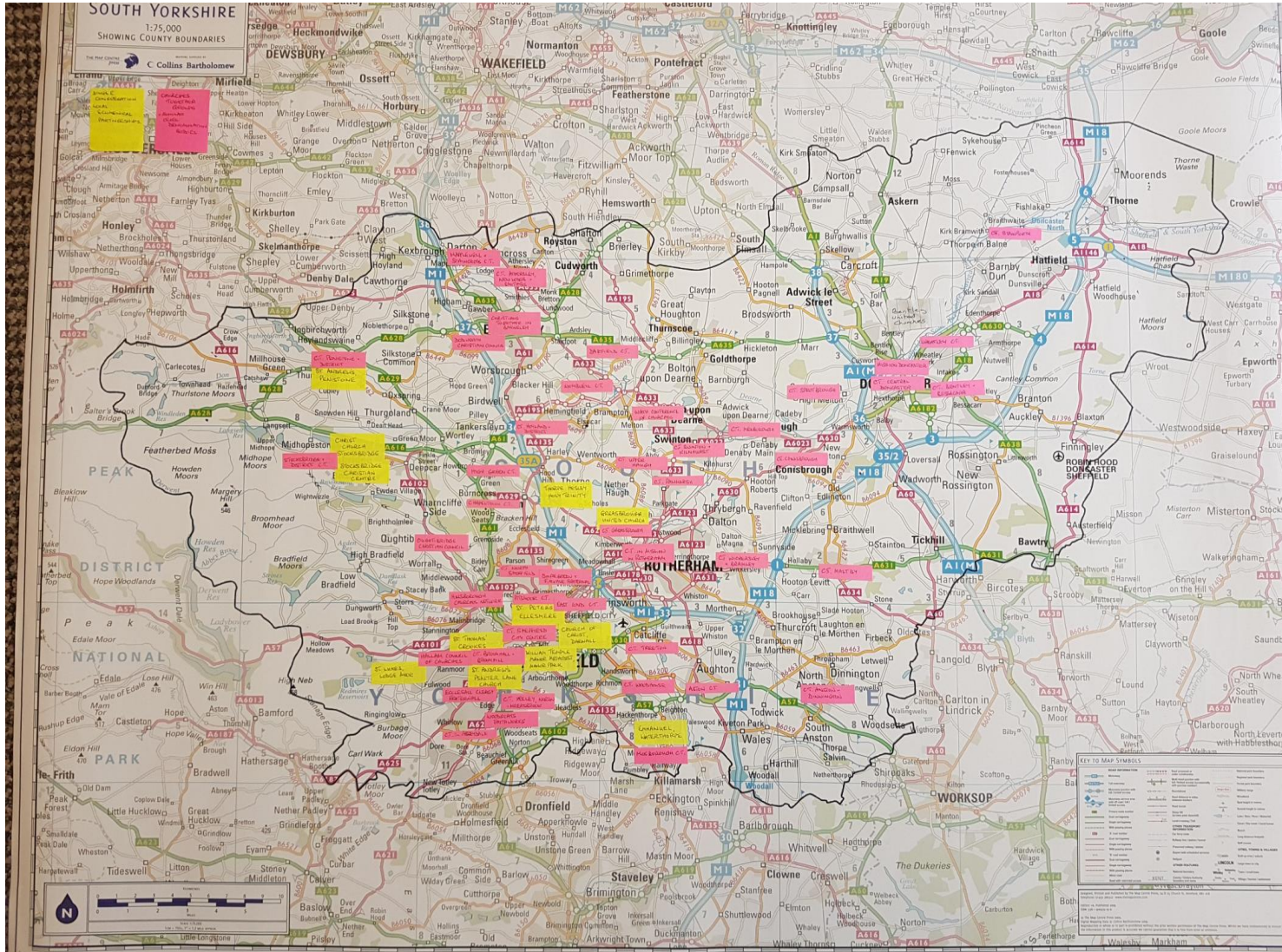








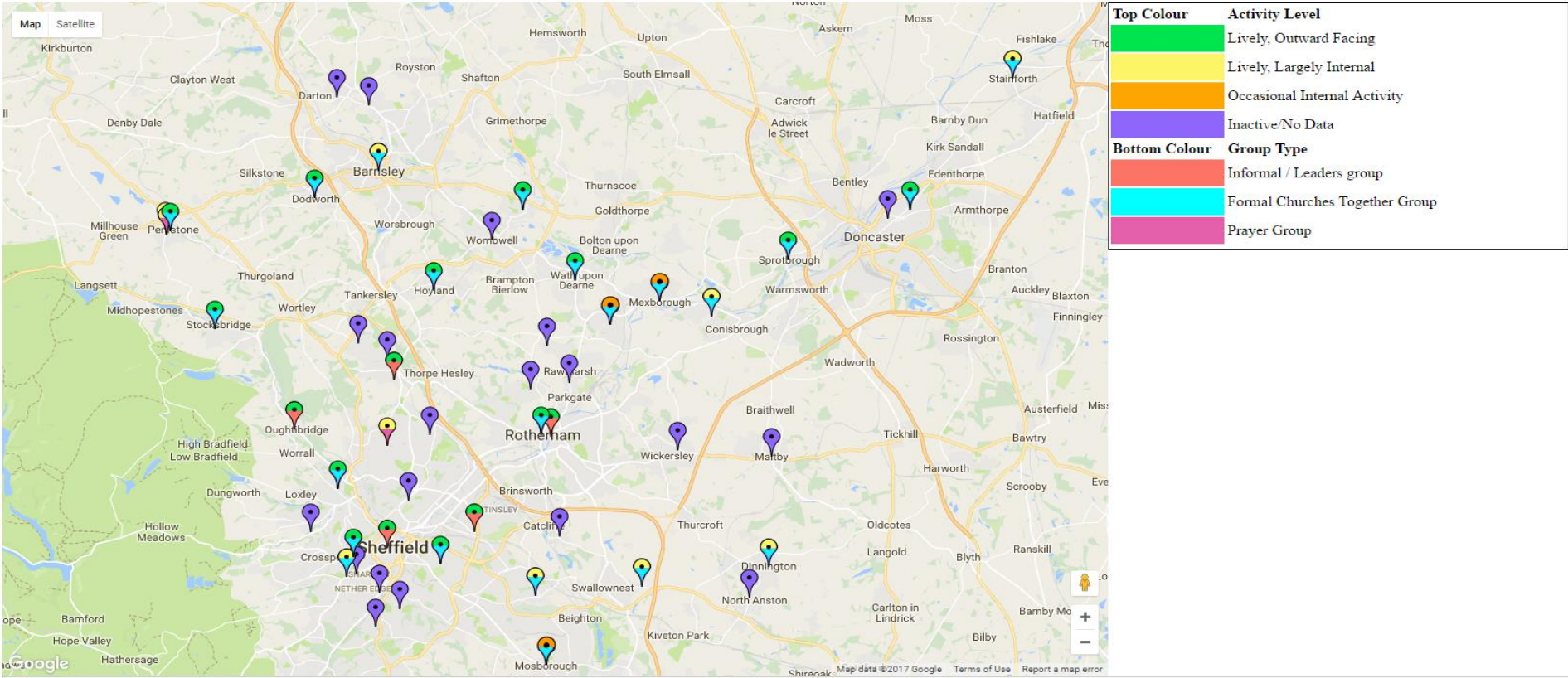
# Map of Together Groups from 2011





# Map of Together Groups from 2017

## Together Groups in South Yorkshire



Created by Tom Balfour @ FaithstarLLP



## Local Ecumenical Activity Report - Methodology

### Methodology

The research method employed was to attempt a full sample of responses from the groups where we had recorded contacts, in order to ensure that as complete a picture of ecumenical activity across S Yorkshire could be assessed as possible. Secondary objectives were to uncover additional groups not already identified, or renew contact.

In 2016 a mailing was sent by email or post, to all the contacts that CTSY had on file for local or borough-wide ecumenical groups to check if they were still operating and asking how often they met, what churches were involved and their next meeting date.

Where there was no answer, chasing calls and research via local clergy in that area was undertaken, as often the contact was a lay person who might be on holiday, or no longer well enough to be involved.

This was followed up by a further form in early 2017, again with chasing phone calls, which surveyed the work being undertaken in more detail. Both the type of group and frequency of activity was asked about, and these were then categorised as below. The word internal indicates that the events held are only for existing church-goers; outward-facing that there is an expectation that non-church goers will attend or witness the event, and that they are missional.

The groups were categorised as follows:

#### a. Type of group

informal – e.g gatherings of local church leaders (ie pastor, minister, vicar, priest), or groups where the people can be self-appointed rather than elected to represent their church. Some of these groups have identified as part of the Gather network, and some may have some sort of constitution.

formal – having a system whereby each member church/congregation/parish nominates at least one recognised representative

prayer – in some areas there are specific groups set up simply to pray for the area, or which may have been a formal CT group which is still meeting but only to pray together  
These are the categories plotted on the map as the bottom colour of the pins.

#### b. Type and level of activity

1. inactive or closed – we know they have definitely ceased to meet, or have not been able to make contact or found no evidence of meetings (Please prove us wrong !)
  2. occasional activity internal – they meet and do the bare minimum of activity – a Good Friday Walk and something for the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity
  3. lively, largely internal – they meet regularly (at least quarterly), with good participation in Lent Groups etc, but nothing except the Good Friday Walk engages in any way with those not already worshipping
  4. lively outward-facing - they meet regularly (at least quarterly), with some internal events and a positive commitment to mission with external events held regularly
- These are the categories plotted on the map as the top colour on the pins.