

A photograph showing a group of people sitting around a wooden table. In the foreground, two light-colored ceramic mugs are on the table, one held by a person on the left and another by a person on the right. A dark-colored teapot is also on the table between the mugs. The background is slightly blurred, showing more people and a patterned blanket.

# Life Together

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**Livability**

**A reflective training course  
equipping you to connect  
with your community.**

# Welcome

## 'Fix it' or 'Together and with'?

Want to connect with your community? Are you part of a church congregation that's passionate about working together with local people, needs and opportunities?

Churches play a vital role in the life of their community. Providing soup kitchens, food banks or debt clinics contributes to social change and meeting needs. But how effective are they at creating real connections?

With things changing so rapidly in our communities, it's not surprising when some churches fall into a 'fix it' mentality. Yet a service delivery approach risks keeping the community at a distance - more as 'recipients', rather than co-partners and participants in community change.

Life Together is a course that enables churches to go about community work differently. It helps churches respond to local needs and opportunities 'together and with' the local neighbourhood to achieve true participation.

Livability's strengths based approach uses creative tools grounded in tried-and-tested ideas and relevant theology. It helps Christian groups engage effectively with their communities, discovering new possibilities together.

Life Together is for any group who are looking to renew their approach to community activity. Congregations may already be active in their communities or may just be considering getting involved for the first time. The course can be tailored to address the specific needs of each group.

As the disability charity that connects people with their community, Livability has been helping churches develop strong foundations for long-term community work for many years.

We invite you to journey with us.



## Experience



## Exploration



## Reflection



## Response

# About the course

**Life Together is a five-session course, delivered over ten weeks by an experienced facilitator. Groups are encouraged to put learning into practice and try out 'experiments' in their communities in between sessions.**

Designed to be accessible and engaging, each 2 hour session takes a practical theological approach, structuring the sessions in four stages: *Experience, Exploration, Reflection* and *Response*, drawn from Laurie Green's 'doing theology' cycle, (Let's Do Theology, 2009).

Each session involves prayer, discussion, presentation, group exercises, creative activities and multi-media elements to help engage the experiences of those in the group with community development practice and theological reflection. A workbook with space for journaling accompanies the course.

# Life Together

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“Life Together has played a vital part in shaping the way our church engages with the community. It is accessible, interesting, interactive and enjoyable. I warmly recommend it.”

Rev Simon Robinson,  
Lead Minister,  
Watnall Road Baptist Church



## Session 1

### Getting our bearings

Groups explore the concept of 'community'. Participants will reflect on their history and experience of community engagement, their current relation to their community and their motivations for getting involved.

**“The course content makes you think about others, but also yourself and the part we play in developing a unified community.”**

Participant

## Session 2

### Following God into our community, Part 1

Groups focus on different approaches to practical action in community engagement. It will highlight the difference between focusing primarily on the need in the community and choosing to focus first on *strengths and gifts*. Group members will discuss their experiences of these approaches in practice and consider the different roles we might play in our communities

**“I was very influenced by this idea that we are part of the community - with a Kingdom distinctive - rather than service providers.”**

Participant

## Session 3

### Following God into our community, Part 2

Groups consider the ways in which our Christian beliefs shape our approach to community engagement. Groups will discuss Christian understandings of poverty and reflect on the need for a profound shift, from 'working for' our communities to 'being with' them (Wells, 2015). A theology of Christian community development is explored.

## Session 4

### Taking in the scenery

Groups develop skills for understanding their community and explore specific ways to listen to different perspectives; including local individuals, groups, agencies and organisations, and research and statistics. Groups gain a working knowledge of Conversation Café as a specific listening tool.

**“By setting personal tasks for myself based on each session, I felt driven to communicate with different people in our community. This has changed the way that I think about things.”**

Participant

## Session 5

### Building Kingdom communities

Groups focus on taking action, the challenges of beginning to engage, and the need for ongoing theological reflection and evaluation. Groups are introduced to Appreciative Inquiry as a strengths-based approach to planning and will decide together the next steps in their community engagement.

**“Excellent, well-structured course. Very nicely paced and excellently facilitated - enough time for reflection and discussion but not too much to allow drift.”**

Participant

# Passion + God's call + 97 cups of tea Community



## How to start Life Together for your church

Livability is working to make Life Together financially accessible for all churches.

- We ask for a recommended and minimum donation of £150 per session (£750 for the whole course).
- We invite churches or groups with more resilient incomes (or who are able to access external funding for staff and volunteer training), to offer more than our minimum donation, as they are able.
- For churches or groups with restricted income and no access to external funding please do not hesitate to get in touch.

**“Life Together was an excellent way of helping people to think outside the box. It is relevant, practical and theologically well-grounded. I would commend it to any church wanting to think about connecting with the community.”**

**There was a wide range of people on the course from those with a new faith to those who had been in the Church for many years and all found it really helpful.”**

**Rev Jane Gaffney,  
Rugby Methodist Church Centre**

## Supporting your journey

Christian community development can be challenging, requiring us to go through our own process of formation alongside those in our communities.

Livability offers churches and Christian groups accompaniment through culture change, providing support as you take steps to deepen their engagement with God and with your communities. This could include:

- Coaching for a staff member or key volunteer.
- Strategic away days for leaders or the whole team/congregation.
- Formal evaluation of an activity including a written report.

## Get in touch

Contact Livability at:  
[lifetogether@livability.org.uk](mailto:lifetogether@livability.org.uk)

# About Livability

The Life Together course is an initiative from Livability.

Livability is the disability charity that connects people with their communities.

We tackle social isolation and the barriers that can cause this in the lives of disabled and vulnerable people.

Through a wide range of disability, education, training, church and community services, we promote inclusion and wellbeing for all. Together, we work to see people take part, contribute and be valued.

We are inspired by a broad and inclusive Christian ethos, working with people of all faiths and none.

We put the elements in place that all add up to connected lives and communities.

[www.livability.org.uk](http://www.livability.org.uk)

It all adds up to

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# Livability

Email: [lifetogether@livability.org.uk](mailto:lifetogether@livability.org.uk)

[www.livability.org.uk](http://www.livability.org.uk)   LivabilityUK

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