

GRASSROOTS Annual Report 2014-2015



It isn't enough to talk about peace. One must believe in it. And it isn't enough to believe in it. One must work at it.

- Eleanor Roosevelt -

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One Hello, No Goodbyes!

In 2014 Ciaran O'Brien, who has been a volunteer with GRASSROOTS for a number of years, began offering more voluntary administrative services. Due to ever increasing demands on the limited and already over-stretched capacity of the GRASSROOTS team, Ciaran was soon appointed as the new part-time Admin Support Worker. He continues to volunteer in a number of areas. We greatly appreciate Ciaran's support.

Poem: Who is your neighbour?

Tell me, who is your neighbour?
Do you ask their name;
do you smile hello;
do you catch their eye
and let them know
'Wherever you're from,
whatever you do,
in this place
there's place for you'?

Tell me, who is your neighbour?
Do you take the time
to try to hear
the things they say
and hold so dear?
Do you notice when
they laugh or cry,
and share their lives
as time goes by?

Let us stop, take a look at our neighbours:
They're from every corner
of every land,
awaiting your smile,
your nod, your hand -
a little sign
to somehow send
the message 'You're home,
I welcome you, friend.'

Tell me, who is your neighbour?
Have they been here long
or are they new;
every creed and colour
or just like you?
Are they up or down?
are they rich or poor?
What have you done to declare
'Let's be strangers no more'?

Tell me, who is your neighbour?
Does your life path twist
and rise and turn
to meet with them
and from them learn
about all things -
both old and new -
till you become
more fully you?

By Karen Campbell (2015)

Adapted from 'Woman, who is your neighbour?' written for Precious Pearls 2015

Acknowledgement of Thanks

GRASSROOTS is blessed to have the support of many funders, partners and volunteers, and we wish to say thank you for enabling our work to continue and grow:

Funders:

Allder Trust
Awards for All
CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development)
Church of England Diocese of St. Albans
Luton Council of Faiths
Methodist District of Beds, Essex and Herts
Near Neighbours Fund
Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton
United Reformed Church Thames North Synod

Partners:

Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches
Churches and Other Faith Communities in Luton
Creative Muslim Network
Daughters of the Holy Ghost
Ghar se Ghar
Luton Council of Faiths
New Creations
Reconciliation Walk Community
University of Bedfordshire Treehouse Chaplaincy
University of Bedfordshire Students' Union (Beds SU) and Volunteer Services

Volunteers:

From Churches, Other Faith Communities and of no particular faith affiliation:

Anwer Usmani
Bozena Briggs
Carol Bond
Catherine Aganoglu
Ciaran O'Brien
Fahad Matin
Marie Burns
Nila Soni
Pari Rashid
Rasitha Madusanka
Saida El Moujahid
Bilal Hussain
Sue Bentley
Tanya Ducker
Thakor Morarji



Message from Co-Chair, David Lawson



"It's very easy for people to talk about cohesion in abstract terms, but the thing about this community is you are doing it in a concrete way. It is not abstract – it's day-to-day reality."

These were words spoken by Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury, during his visit to Luton in June 2015, and they splendidly mirror GRASSROOTS' very significant contribution to the day-to-day reality of cohesion in Luton. This Annual Report (2014-2015) reflects once again the dedication and commitment of the GRASSROOTS team and is an inspiration to all of us seeking to build communities of peace and reconciliation.

The pages of the report tell the story of the incredible range of work undertaken by the team over the past year. There is engagement with women of different faiths and cultures, wide-ranging activities addressing the spirituality of justice, pioneering initiatives in Church related community work, the Near Neighbours programme seeking to improve the lives of diverse local communities, not to mention Johnny's highly respected work giving him so many entrées into the many different faith communities in Luton. It is the impressive hands-on work of the team that results in the impact and difference it makes to the life of a very challenging context such as Luton.

Inevitably a programme such as GRASSROOTS has to be resourced not just with the team doing the day to day work, but also with our funding partners to whom we are enormously grateful for their generous financial support. Their financial commitment is crucial to all that GRASSROOTS seeks to do. Gratitude also needs to be expressed to my fellow trustees for once again giving their time, experience and collective wisdom. Very sadly we are losing two of our trustees - Gordon Slater, our Treasurer, and Michael Jagessar, my Co Chair. Gordon has not only been an extremely efficient treasurer managing our accounts, but he has also made some very significant contributions to the many discussions at our meetings. Michael has also been a major contributor to GRASSROOTS in the midst of a very busy and demanding role he fulfils in the United Reformed Church (URC). We are particularly grateful to him for a review of the work of GRASSROOTS he undertook with a team from the URC a few years ago.

A major piece of work undertaken in this past year was to revise our constitution to keep abreast of the many changes in charity law. The highest standards of governance are now expected of charities and trusts, and rightly so. To this end GRASSROOTS has now become a Charitable Incorporated Organisation and we are very grateful to Martin Shaw, a fundraising and management consultant and Ciaran O'Brien, our volunteer admin support, who guided us through the constitutional options for a charity such as GRASSROOTS.

So, I present to you our Annual Report, reflecting on a year which has been full of challenges and opportunities. As you read this Annual Report you will see GRASSROOTS' contribution to making cohesion in Luton a reality, and we hope an inspiration and encouragement to all who share this common vision.

*The Revd Canon David Lawson
Co-Chair, GRASSROOTS*

Ecumenical Relations

Rightly or wrongly, it is often said that Inter Faith is the new Ecumenism. While in some quarters interest in dialogue across different Christian denominations may seem to be declining, a new ecumenical dimension unfolded at the start of the GRASSROOTS financial year:

Poorvo Inter Faith Engagement Course:

From 21st to 25th September 2014, GRASSROOTS was invited to participate in an Inter Faith Engagement Course hosted in Norrköping (Sweden), on the theme 'Learning from each other – Inter-faith dialogue in practice'. The course included 50 participants from across the Dioceses of Linköping and Strängås (Church of Sweden) and their link Dioceses of St Albans and Truro in Cornwall (Church of England). The participating churches are part of the Poorvo Communion¹, a network of Anglican and Lutheran Churches in Great Britain and Ireland, the Nordic region, Iberia and the Baltic countries, who have signed an agreement to "share a common life in mission and service". Following ground-breaking dialogue in September 1996, representatives of the participating churches celebrated the Eucharist together, giving rise to the name 'Porvoo Communion'. Whilst proclaiming the oneness and visible unity of the Church, Porvoo is not a new confession. Each member church maintains its respective identity.

The inter faith engagement course was led by Rev. Canon Dr Andrew Wingate, former director of the St Philip's Centre, and Rev. Pernilla Myrelid, Minister in Linköping, with programme topics including:

- Swedish and English contexts, Government and Religious Identity
- Gender Roles, Relationships and Theological Foundations
- Issues for Muslims in Europe in relation to national-international issues concerning religion
- Changes in living conditions and lifestyles in relation to religion and culture

URC Windermere Centre – When Church & Kingdom Collide Consultation:

GRASSROOTS attended a consultation from the 29th September to 2nd October 2014 which sought to contribute to the on-going exploration of the future of the United Reformed Church. Recognising that the Church is not the Kingdom, but lives within the tension of being either a sign and foretaste of the Kingdom, or a part of that from which the world needs saving, the consultation gathered a wide cross-section of people to explore key questions, including:

- How does the Church avoid the ever-present temptation to focus its energies on becoming a successful institution in an unchartered and hostile context rather than on being more faithfully the Church?
- How do we do this when we find ourselves in what appears to be terminal decline, with our future possibilities dictated by a shrinking budget?

The agenda of the consultation focused on three main areas - (1) Jesus, the Kingdom and the Church, (2) When the world needs saving from the Church, and (3) 'Render unto Caesar' – the spirituality of money. A series of 15-minute 'provocation papers' on any aspect of the Church's life and/or theology connected with these three areas were presented by the consultation participants. The result was a very rich, varied and hugely challenging experience as participants focused on our faith, the Church, our theology and doctrines, and our relevance, significance and impact in the 21st century.

¹ Porvoo is the name of a Cathedral city on the southern coast of Finland, approximately 30 miles east of Helsinki.

Which are the Porvoo Churches? The Churches of England and Ireland, the Church in Wales and the Scottish Episcopal Church, together with the Churches of Norway, Denmark and Sweden, and the Evangelical Lutheran Churches of Estonia, Finland, Iceland and Lithuania. Latvian Evangelical Lutheran Church Abroad and the Lutheran Church in Great Britain signed the Porvoo Declaration in 2014. The Lusitanian Church and the Reformed Episcopal Church of Spain, are as extra-provincial diocese under the metro-political authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury, also members of Porvoo.



Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills enjoyed a moment of respite whilst at the Poorvo Inter Faith Engagement Course alongside GRASSROOTS team members and other colleagues



David Jonathan (Johnny) from GRASSROOTS and a colleague in one of the sessions on the Poorvo Inter Faith Engagement Course



Sheikh Al-Jifri received a gift from Zafar Khan, Chair of LCOF and Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills, GRASSROOTS team member

Peace Light Service at All Saints Church:

Nearly 150 people from different faith backgrounds joined together in supporting Luton's Annual Peace Light Service on 15th December 2014 at All Saints Church. The Peace Light flame is brought from Bethlehem every year. The tradition began as part of a large charitable relief project to help children in need in Austria and abroad. Since 1990, with the help of the Scouts and Guides, the light has been distributed across Europe at Christmas time, spreading the message of peace in all countries. The flame encourages all to work for peace with people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. Many members from the Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches joined in singing special peace songs.

Sheikh Al-Jifri visits Kimpton:

Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills, St Albans Diocesan Inter Faith Advisor, and her parish congregants in Kimpton hosted Sheikh Habib Ali al-Jifri in the village Church Hall on 10th April 2015. A typical English afternoon tea with homemade cakes demonstrated hospitality and friendship to the Sheikh and other guests. Sheikh Al-Jifri, a Sufi Islamic scholar and spiritual educator, spoke addressing the key issues concerning Muslims today, focusing particularly on spiritual development, interfaith and cross-cultural dialogue, modernity and religion, preventing extremism of all types and promoting ethics and morality. The event ended with the exchanging of gifts, warm smiles and greetings.

Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP):

Once again, Circle Dancing played an important role in the proceedings on the 6th March 2015 when music from the Bahamas was played for processional and recessional lines of dance and a choreographed dance was performed to the Caribbean Halleluiah. The dances were led by GRASSROOTS' Ann Hyde and performed in services at Wigmore Methodist/URC Church in the afternoon and St Augustine's Anglican Church in the evening.

GRASSROOTS Theological Reflection:

Revd Dr John Campbell, Minister of High Cross United Reformed Church, Tottenham, and 2 of his colleagues led the GRASSROOTS staff and trustees in an exercise titled 'Messy Theology', reflecting on the theological rationale for our community involvement using three key questions:

- What are the theological underpinnings, justifications or implications of GRASSROOTS working within the Christian ecumenical and multi-faith (plural) context of Luton/UK?
- How and why GRASSROOTS, being a Christian programme, should or could be inclusive of people of other faiths or those of no faith affiliation?
- What makes GRASSROOTS 'Christian', and at times 'Christian on the margins', and why?

As the diversity and richness of opinions unfolded, it was agreed that we write 10 theological principles, in order to do justice to the numerous threads which contribute to the ever-evolving tapestry of GRASSROOTS work. These are available on request from the GRASSROOTS office.

Other activities supported or attended by GRASSROOTS in 2014-2015:

13th Nov	NEHEMIAH Meeting with Luton's Host Organisations
19th Nov	Bishop Richard Atkinson visits Luton's Mosques ahead of EDL March planned on 22 nd Nov
19th Nov	Beyond Difference – a talk led by Sr Maire & Johnny in Amersham
3rd Dec	University of Bedfordshire Annual Carol Service at St Mary's Church
6th Dec	Luton Christmas Light Switch On in the Town Centre

GRASSROOTS also supports the work of Luton Town Centre Chaplaincy and the work of Reconciliation Walk Community based in the Church of England parish in Farley, Luton.



Bishop Richard Atkinson visiting Luton's Mosques ahead of an English Defence League (EDL) march planned for the 22nd November 2014



Attendees sung hymns and held candles during the Peace Light service at All Saints Church



Participants at the Women's World Day of Prayer Service at St Augustine's Anglican Church

Church Related Community Work (CRCW) Project

In reviewing the journey of the Church Related Community Work (CRCW) Project in 2014-2015, we find ourselves reflecting on the Parable of the Sower (Matthew 13). In many respects, the work of the Project is to scatter seeds. Nobody is certain where the seeds will fall, how fertile the ground on which they land will be, which of the seeds will take root, how hardy the plants which grow will be or how much fruit the seeds might yield. Most of this is in God's hands. We simply prepare the ground and scatter the seeds, then wait to see what might emerge.

Bury Park Beech Hill (BPBH) Churches:

Work with the BPBH churches continues to grow. Karen Campbell, the project worker, has continued to lead worship on a regular basis in 3 churches - Bury Park United Reformed Church, Oakdale Methodist Church and Beech Hill Methodist Church – in addition to preaching on a number of occasions in All Saints & St Peters churches. These have been valuable opportunities for grounding the practical work of the CRCW Project in Christian teaching and Gospel stories. A monthly newsletter article titled 'Thoughts from Your CRCW' continues to be published in the respective newsletters of Bury Park, Oakdale and Beech Hill churches, reflecting on recent activities, keeping the churches updated of forthcoming events and inviting us all to keep making links between faith and the living of our everyday lives. One highlight of the year was the BPBH Christmas Dinner and Dance which took place on 5th December 2014 in the Holy Ghost Parish Centre, gathering over 100 people from different churches and the local community for an evening of laughter, entertainment and dancing. Entertainment was provided by the Diamond Divas, a dance group with links to All Saints Church, and Beech Hill's Monday Morning Singing Group.

CRCW Project 5 Year Celebration:

On 21st February 2015 a special event was held to celebrate the first phase of the CRCW Project and look ahead to the second term, gathering over 100 guests including members from the respective Bury Park Beech Hill churches and the local community. The afternoon traced the journey of the project over the last 5 years, exploring how we have journeyed out, invited people in, got involved in community initiatives and devised new initiatives to bring people together. Photographs were displayed and reflections shared from those who have been involved in different aspects of the work. In a grand finale, everyone was invited to enjoy a slice of the CRCW birthday cake, symbolising that the Project and the celebration belongs to all.

Bury Park Beech Hill Big Bus Ride:

Two coaches and a minibus made the journey from Luton to Clacton for the Bury Park Beech Hill Big Bus Ride on 22nd August 2015. This is an event with several aims. On the surface, it is an opportunity for a family day out by the sea. Equally important, however, is the aim of building fellowship between the BPBH churches and latterly, to deepen relationships with Christ Church URC in Clacton. The trip proved to be incredibly popular with well over 100 people taking part, consisting of church members, their families and friends from a wide range of cultural backgrounds and ages. We were delighted to include members of the local Roma community for the first time, plus a family from a Black Pentecostal church which worships in the All Saints Church building.

Shooting Stars Archery:

The Shooting Stars archery group has continued throughout the 2014-15 year, meeting in All Saints Church Hall. On 2nd November 2014 Shooting Stars took part in the Luton Community Archery Games, a very successful event organised by Luton Council of Faiths and held at Luton Sixth Form College. A number of our archers were delighted to be awarded medals for their performances in the Games. In 2015 the majority of the Shooting Stars instructors undertook further training to become Level 1 Archery Coaches. The highlight of the group remains the huge diversity of people it has drawn, including both women and men, young and old, Christians, Muslims and people of no particular faith background.



Beech Hill's 'Monday Morning Singing Group' entertained guests at the BPBH Christmas Dinner and Dance at the Holy Ghost Parish Centre



Over 100 people went on the Bury Park Beech Hill Big Bus Ride from Luton to Clacton for a fun day out



Christ Church URC in Clacton welcomed visitors from the Bury Park Beech Hill Big Bus Ride and laid on a wonderful afternoon tea

Same Difference Project:

Following the successful 'Cooking and Befriending' and 'Food Between Friends' projects in recent years, May 2015 saw the launch of 'Same Difference', a new project aimed at fostering relationships between people of diverse backgrounds, enabled by funding from the Near Neighbours initiative. This new project seeks to explore how people of different faiths and cultures mark common themes in our lives such as birth, childhood, marriage and death, discovering what makes us both 'the same' and yet 'different'. Conversations have been aided by the sharing of personal photographs and mementos, illustrating that 'this is how we do it!' The opportunity to share home-made cultural foods has also proved very popular. To date, around 30 participants have attended the sessions, held twice each month in the early afternoon. The majority have been Christians of various cultural backgrounds including British, Caribbean, African and Roma; others have included individuals from the Muslim, Hindu and Baha'i faith groups, and those of no particular faith affiliation.

Cohen's Yard Community Inclusion Project:

The Cohen's Yard Community Inclusion Project was a new initiative for 2014-2015, working in partnership with Muslim colleagues and friends from the local community. The seeds of the project were sown on encountering Cohen's Yard, a small and unsightly park with broken equipment, largely used for antisocial activities, yet supposedly serving a densely populated area. So it was that the project was created, with the aim of engaging local people in reclaiming the park as a community resource. The project has blossomed, enlisting several partners including GRASSROOTS, Luton Council of Faiths, Luton Borough Council and Building Blocks Children's Centre. Supported by the Near Neighbours funding stream and volunteers from local businesses and schools, activities have included a door to door survey to find out what residents want, a Green Clean Day (cleaning equipment, litter picking and planting seeds), an Action Day (repainting the equipment, litter picking and creating a planting area) and a Family Fun Day, drawing well over 300 participants for a day of family-focused activities. In response to the project, Luton Borough Council has installed new fitness equipment, gates and fencing. The Building Blocks Children's Centre has since run their own fun day, supported by some of the project partners.

Luton and Beyond:

During the past year Karen has led worship for a number of churches outside the BPBH area, including Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church (Luton), Trinity URC (St Albans) and Harpenden URC (Harpenden). The wider GRASSROOTS team has also led worship for Wigmore URC/Methodist Church (Luton). Both within and outside of Luton, people seem deeply interested in the work GRASSWORKS is doing and are often inspired by stories of the CRCW Project. Other activities beyond Luton's borders include the 'Black & Pentecostal Approaches to Interfaith' conference on 11th October 2014, organised by Churches Together in England, where Karen contributed reflections on the approaches employed by the GRASSROOTS team; a one day consultation on the theme of Discipleship on 27th April 2015 where Karen helped formulate practical ideas for growing discipleship in the United Reformed Church; and a further session on Church Community Engagement on 15th to 16th June 2015 for the United Reformed Church's 'Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic Ministers Gathering', drawing on the experience of the Luton context.

URC 'Reform' Magazine and the URC Prayer Handbook 2016:

In August 2015 Karen was invited to write a reflection for Reform, the United Reformed Church's monthly magazine, on the theme 'Is my Identity God-given?', contemplating whether identity regarding race and gender is profound and inescapable, or something imposed which we can challenge and change. Karen has also written a number of prayers for the URC Prayer Handbook 2016, each linked to set biblical texts, enabling her to sit still, reflect and consider how age-old scriptures still speak into the world today.



More than 300 participants attended a Cohen's Yard Family Fun Day with activities including a bouncy castle, bucking bronco, face painters, children's archery, music and free food



Same Difference, a new project, enabled people of different faiths and cultures to share how they mark common themes in life



Over 100 attendees came to the CRCW Project 5 Year Celebration event which also looked forward to its exciting future

Spirituality of Justice

In Laudato Si, Pope Francis' encyclical which urges us to take care of our 'common home' - the earth - the pope quotes Patriarch Bartholomew saying "as Christians we are asked to accept the whole world as a sacrament of communion, as a way of sharing with God and our neighbour on a global scale. It is our humble conviction that the Divine and the human meet in the slightest detail in the seamless garment of God's Creation, in the least speck of dust on our planet". Communion and the desire for communion has been the underlying thrust of the Spirituality of Justice programme in 2014-2015, enabling us to look at the past with gratitude, to live the present with passion and to embrace the future with hope.

Fostering Inter Faith Dialogue:

The political threat from UKIP as we neared the General Elections did not go unfelt in Luton. The anti-immigrant line taken by the main political parties to counter UKIP, and the actions of the EDL and Britain First, all added to the build-up of tension in the town. The suffering and horror caused by ISIS's intolerant and violent ideology fuelled a rise in Islamophobia that made the Muslim communities claim victimisation and become even more self-defensive, especially after an invasion of a mosque in Bury Park by the Far Right. These issues, along with the ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict and the Charlie Hebdo tragedy in Paris, had a strong ripple effect, necessitating a meeting of all the Faith communities to discuss their understanding of Freedom of Speech. This prompted GRASSROOTS and Luton Council of Faiths to facilitate a public discussion on 19th May 2015 with the journalist Yasmin-Alibhai Brown on the subject of free speech. Whilst the conversations became heated at times, the overall consensus was for mutual respect and responsibility towards one another. This highlights that the work to foster inter faith dialogue is even more imperative. Hans Kung's declaration that there will be no peace among the nations without peace among the religions; and no peace among the religions without dialogue between the religions, seems so true. GRASSROOTS emphasises the need to dialogue through action, in order to improve the quality of life both locally and globally.

Fairtrade Activities:

Saturday 18th October 2014 saw an inspiring get-together of nearly 150 Fairtrade champions from the East of England region. Luton Fairtrade Steering Group, with the support of GRASSROOTS, Luton Council of Faiths and the University of Bedfordshire, hosted this Fairtrade Supporters' Triennial Conference at the University's Luton Campus. "[The] Luton conference has so much personality, humanity, character and style of its own kind," commented one Fairtrade Foundation staff member. The day was packed with exciting and inspirational talks, craft activities, 'fair and funky' cook-in corner, art with Fairtrade date seeds and a buzzing market-place displaying a range of Fairtrade products. Both children and adults enjoyed cycling to make their favourite drinks on the Green Hub Pod's Smoothie Bike. Children from St Joseph's Catholic Junior School (1st Fairtrade School in Luton) stole the show with their role play promoting the significance and relevance of Fairtrade. The key message of the conference was summed up by Mike Gidney, CEO of the Fairtrade Foundation: "*Fairtrade can turn the rules of international trade upside down in favour of the world's poorest. We need to keep at it.*"

The 9th International Fairtrade Towns Conference, held in Bristol on 4th to 5th July 2015, was both an inspiration and a challenge. 240 delegates from 20 countries across the world gathered to explore the theme 'Fair Trade for Sustainability'. Fatima Ismael, from Fairtrade Co-operative Soppexcca in Nicaragua, shared how climate change is reducing coffee yields and threatening the livelihoods of millions of farmers in developing countries. Harriet Lamb, CEO of Fairtrade International, explained how Fairtrade is working to mitigate the effects of climate change, as well as employing sustainable farming methods, to ensure resilience and sustainability. The conference concluded with the signing of The Bristol Resolution, committing to take one step for Fairtrade that will contribute to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals and focus on both people and planet, just as Fairtrade does.



Nearly 150 Fairtrade champions from the East of England region attended a Fairtrade Supporters Conference jointly hosted by GRASSROOTS at the University of Bedfordshire



Children from St Joseph's Catholic Junior School stole the show at the Fairtrade Supporters Conference with their performance



Journalist Yasmin-Alibhai Brown visited Luton to speak at a public discussion on Freedom of Speech

Faith Talks:

'Celebrating Difference, Staying Faithful' was the theme of a programme of three Faith Talks given during the year, looking at the question of how we can step outside our own traditions and open our hearts and minds to others. With so much turmoil in the world blamed on religion, now is surely the time to make an effort to learn about other faiths. Therefore, with the support of Near Neighbours funding, a trio of talks on Hindu, Sikh and Muslim beliefs and practices were presented in three different Roman Catholic parishes in Luton. The parishes were chosen because a place of worship of each of the different faiths was in their neighbourhood. The talks were attended by about 70 people each and well appreciated.

National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) Conference:

Sr Maire Hayes is part of the executive of the NJPN, and was invited to deliver two talks at the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) conference on 17th to 19th July 2015 in Swanwick - 'Interfaith Dialogue' and 'Things that make for peace in Luton', highlighting the work of GRASSROOTS and Luton Council of Faiths. It was affirming to share our work and to receive appreciation for the ways in which we strive to build community cohesion, working to empower Luton's faith and cultural communities.

Berakah Concert:

On 7th June 2015, GRASSROOTS and Luton Council of Faiths, in partnership with Luton Culture, invited the London-based band Berakah (www.theberakahproject.org), to perform in Luton Library Theatre. The performance saw a mixture of World Music, Jazz, Blues and traditional elements drawn from Europe and the Middle East. Mohammed Nazam, Founder of The Berakah Project, said: "Whenever we perform I see the power of our music melting the differences between people and bringing us together in a spirit of unity and celebration." Thanks to funding support from Awards for All, the concert was offered without charge and attended by nearly 250 people. In his opening speech Luton Mayor, Cllr Dave Taylor said, "Violence and growing conflicts worldwide are affecting all people, whether of faith or none, but tonight is about affirming that we all can, despite our religious, cultural or ethnic differences, not just live together, but even sing together in harmony."

Memorial Events:

The Holocaust Memorial Service held on 25th January 2015 was well attended by various faith communities. The theme 'Keep the Memory Alive' also incorporated the commemoration of the 20th Anniversary of the massacre of thousands of Muslim boys and men in Srebrenica during the Bosnian War. GRASSROOTS also supported a minute's silence on the 3rd July 2015 for the victims killed in the Tunisia attack, and then on 7th July 2015 we joined with over 200 members of the Luton community to walk in solidarity at the 10th year commemoration of the 7/7 bombings. The number and diversity of people attending these memorial events affords a visible sign of multi-faith and multi-cultural communities standing together and having the freedom to express their sentiments.

Climate Change:

The CAFOD appeal for Family Fast Day on 3rd October 2014 outlined the realities of climate change and its effect on the most vulnerable in the Developing World. Climate change is contributing to poverty and its consequences, such as the surge of migrants from African countries. It is imperative to support the campaign to transition from polluting fossil fuels to sustainable energy, and in a Lobbying of Parliament, Luton's MPs were asked to lend their support in preparation for the UN Climate Change summit in Paris in December 2015. All this has been accomplished in line with LAUDATO SI, which propagates the Theology of Stewardship, advocating care of our 'common home' rather than 'domination'. This was also emphasised in a Northampton Catholic Diocesan Study Day.



A discussion about the Sikh Faith was one of three highly successful Faith Talks held in three of Luton's Roman Catholic Parishes under the theme 'Celebrating Difference, Staying Faithful'



The Berakah players were given gifts and a vote of thanks at the end of a wonderful concert held at Luton Library Theatre



Different faith communities attended the annual Holocaust Memorial Service held at Luton Town Hall

Working with Women Across Faiths and Cultures

Most of the work of this project is delivered through GRASSROOTS' partner organisation, Ghar se Ghar (Hindi/Urdu words meaning Home to Home). In 2014-2015 this work was made possible thanks to the support of a number of sources including the Primary Care Commissioners, Near Neighbours, Luton Borough Council, Dar Aminah plus contributions from project participants. Whilst not funding the work directly, the Alder Trust has continued to contribute towards the funding of one of Ghar se Ghar's worker/directors via GRASSROOTS. This continues to be an invaluable support to the organisation.

Activity Groups 2014-2015:

Bury Park -

Monday and Thursday morning exercise groups continued to run in the Community Centre until the end of the December term, when the Thursday session ended.



Ashcroft -

This exercise group continued to run in the Sacred Heart R.C. Church Hall on Tuesday mornings. Attendance increased greatly in the autumn term.



Beech Hill -

The Friday morning group in the Beech Hill Methodist Church, Dunstable Road, has continued and has been open to including some men.



Dar Aminah -

The Dar Aminah women's group at the Jamia Islamia Ghouseia Trust Mosque were provided with a course of sessions, paid for from their own funds.



Alzheimer's Carers Group -

Exercise sessions were provided for this group in High Town Methodist Church Hall on a voluntary basis.

Support and signposting/referral to other support services was given continuously throughout the year.

Ghar se Ghar:

Ghar se Ghar has continued to work with a diverse group of women, and in some groups also a few men, to promote a healthy lifestyle by providing exercise, relaxation and discussions on health topics. The sessions have had a range of 'add-ons' in terms of health related discussions and provision of information. Visiting teachers have provided different activities such as Pilates and Circle Dancing and mental health researchers have visited one of the groups. Speakers have been in attendance, including representatives from the Alzheimer's Society and Diabetes Association. Individual support has continued for a wide range of problems including the support of a mother whose child had been taken into care. New connections have also been made such as the provision of a course of exercise for the Dar Aminah women's group at the Jamia Islamia Ghouseia Trust Mosque, and existing connections have been maintained including voluntary sessions delivered to support the Alzheimer's Carers Group.

The big events are very important to bring the Ghar se Ghar 'family' together. The regular groups each have a distinct identity of their own so it is important for members to experience the wider diversity across the organisation as a whole. Social barriers are broken through by involving diverse groups in having positive experiences together. The small group identity is of course also important and members continue to have a strong bond with each other.



Hockwell Ring Community Centre was once again host to a 'Festive Afternoon' of Circle Dancing with a number of men and women from different backgrounds and mixed abilities taking part



Circle Dancing took place at the Women's World Day of Prayer Service at Wigmore URC/Methodist Church



Regular dance sessions have continued across Luton at a number of venues including Blenheim Baptist Church Hall

Circle Dancing:

Small group dynamics spread over into the world of Circle Dancing too. The individual groups function from their different venues with a strong identity, but only a few dancers from each will venture out to a bigger event which is out of their venue and time frame. They all might like to be the hosts, but to be a receiver of another's hospitality is more of a challenge. Hockwell Ring's small group of regulars do well in both respects. Despite having no funding available, the Hockwell Ring group organised a Christmas event, charging an entrance fee (as opposed to it usually being free) and 30 people attended, which enabled all costs to be covered. People enjoyed hosting and participating in this very successful event.

Circle Dancing sessions take place at Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church Hall, St Anne's Church Hall, Hockwell Ring Community Centre and High Town Methodist Church on a weekly or monthly basis. The High Town Group is a prayerful/meditative style of dancing, while the others are mostly a mixture of traditional folk/contemporary choreographies. A number of special events took place throughout the year including a Festive Afternoon at Hockwell Ring on 6th December 2014 and three sessions of dancing emphasising different aspect of exercise with the Ghar se Ghar group across January and February 2015. The two weekends of Circle Dancing in Cirencester on 'Women of the Old Testament' and 'Women of the New Testament' were inspirational. The dances learnt were, for once, not complicated, allowing for easy access to a wider participant group, and were encompassed in some lovely rituals which had been very creatively put together.

International Women's Day 'Precious Pearls' Event:

Precious Pearls is one of the big Ghar se Ghar events. Held on 5th March 2015 with the theme 'Woman, Who is your Neighbour?', around 90 women from across faiths including Christians, Hindus and Muslims assembled together to listen to different presentations and be entertained by each other at Bury Park Community Centre. The event was supported by Near Neighbours funding and included a number of talks and discussions including neighbourliness, current community projects which encourage neighbours to share and get to know each other, interviews with women who reflected on their own stories of how neighbourliness had enriched their lives and also advice from Neighbourhood Watch on how to stay safe. This was accompanied by a wealth of entertainment including dancing from the 'Diamond Divas' and the Beech Hill Ghar se Ghar group, singing from the Satya Sai Trust and Dar Aminah, along with other music, poetry and a gossipy neighbours sketch from GRASSROOTS team members which had opened the event! It is always good to see such a diverse group of women collectively appreciating presentations from other cultures/religions as well as their own.

It is interesting how the small/wider group situations can be used as reminders that we all constantly need to venture forth to gain a wider vision of who we are and what we are doing, and be able to return to our small situations refreshed and with a new image of the way things are and the way they could be. Most Christian denominations and churches feel content to remain in our own little comfortable space. Every now and then, we might need a reason and a little push to get involved with the wider Christian community. If wider engagement is difficult among Christians, it reminds us just how much more difficult the interfaith task is! Still, there is so much that people could learn from one another. On 'venturing forth' to attend one of the faith talks on the theme of Islam, a Christian Ghar se Ghar participant told how she was so impressed with the woman speaker and her praying 5 times a day, she also felt inspired to pray for peace 5 times a day. This illustrates how religions can complement each other, not just inspiring us to pray more, but also to act for the justice, peace and integrity of all those with whom we come into contact in our day to day lives.



Members of the Satya Sai Trust and Dar Aminah entertained the audience by singing a number of songs at the International Women's Day 'Precious Pearls' event



Ann Hyde from GRASSROOTS interviewed a group of neighbours from Luton to talk about neighbourliness at the Precious Pearls event



Attendees at the Precious Pearls event were also entertained by the 'Diamond Divas', a female dance group with links to All Saints Church

Inter Faith Relations

During 2014-2015 the heat of the General Elections was felt right across the UK. Following the Scottish Referendum, and UKIP continually confounding electoral expectations, it was said to have been one of the most difficult elections to forecast in decades. Since the elections the following challenges have emerged demanding our attention and response:

- Anti-immigrant rhetoric affecting our response to the current Syrian Refugee Crisis
- Budget cuts meaning there are less resources and more pressure on existing service provision, fuelling immigrants being used as scapegoats and the poor being made poorer
- Extremism – both religious & political (Islamist & British/European Far Right)
- Suffering caused by ISIS' intolerant and violent ideology
- Rise in Islamophobia, Muslim hatred and anti-Semitism

Following the brutal killings in Peshawar (December 2014), Paris (January 2015) and Tunisia (July 2015), the disappearance of an extended Luton family of 12 in Turkey in July 2015, with the possibility they may have joined ISIS in Syria, stunned both the town and nation. Another issue catching the nation's attention were the cases of sexual exploitation during 2008-2010 in Rochdale. In March 2015, Police admittance of failure to investigate these cases sparked a debate as to whether the crimes were racially motivated or conversely, whether the failure to investigate was linked to the authorities' fear of being accused of racism. Ofsted Inspections of Muslim faith schools in the wake of the Trojan Horse concerns raised questions about the role, significance and relevance of faith schools, but also spot-lighted the Government's mandate for all schools in the UK to promote "British values" of tolerance and fairness. The new Counter-Terrorism and Security Bill has also caused anxieties. British Prime Minister, David Cameron, has announced plans to tackle Islamist extremism, saying that the Government will confront 'groups and organisations that may not advocate violence, but which do promote other parts of the extremist narrative'. Many feel that this casts the net of extremism so wide it undermines some very basic civil liberties. GRASSROOTS responded in the following ways to meet some of these challenges:

Candle Light Prayer Vigil for Peshawar Killing of Innocent Children:

Through Luton Council of Faiths, people from diverse religious and no particular faith backgrounds expressed their deep abhorrence of such acts of mindless violence. While extremist minorities continue to stir up hatred, division and violence, the vast majority of peace loving people were called upon to reflect and act together on our mutual obligations for peaceful co-existence, demonstrated by the offering of prayers from different faith traditions outside Luton Town Hall on 20th December 2014.

Tunisia Attack - National Minute's Silence for UK Victims:

At 12pm on the 3rd of July 2015, GRASSROOTS led a gathering outside the Town Hall of more than 150 people from Luton's diverse communities to observe the national minute's silence for UK victims killed in the Tunisia attack. Zafar Khan, Chair of Luton Council of Faiths, concluded the gathering by saying, "Our coming together, this afternoon, is one small but significant sign of hope; hope that lies in our shared humanity."

Luton Peace Walk – International Day of Peace:

The International Day of Peace was observed all over the world on 21st September 2014. GRASSROOTS and Luton Council of Faiths, with support from the University of Bedfordshire, held a Peace Walk in the Farley Hill area of Luton. Nearly 200 people of all ages, faiths and cultures walked together, visiting different places of worship in the area, and the unveiling of a mural of children's artwork on the theme of peace. Fruit bushes were planted in a vicarage garden by representatives of different faiths and local schools before all participants enjoyed an English Afternoon Tea. In a world divided and hurt by the circumstances of excessive violence and endlessly growing conflicts, the Luton Peace Walk is a model demonstrating the possibilities for initiating peaceful co-existence.



Children at Farley Hill Community Centre took part in the annual Peace Walk by creating and unveiling artwork inspired by the theme of peace



A candle light prayer vigil for the innocent victims of the Peshawar Killing took place outside Luton Town Hall



More than 150 people from Luton's diverse communities observed a minute of silence for the victims of the Tunisia Attacks

Eco-Iftar:

As Ramadan came to an end for our Muslim neighbours this year, GRASSROOTS and Luton Council of Faiths collaborated with the Luton Branch of Islamic Relief to deliver an Eco-Iftar, an exciting event which was the first of its kind! Local organisations Khayaal Theatre Company and Fairtrade Luton were instrumental in shaping the event, held on Sunday 12th July 2015, which included stalls showcasing Fairtrade, Eco-Farming (Willowbrook Farm) and Bee Mercy, and even a smoothie bike promoting ethical living. The inter-generational and inter-faith audience responded joyfully to a story-telling session before concluding the night with the break of fast, enjoying delicious food and organic cake for desert.

English Defence League (EDL) and Britain First Protest Marches:

Right wing parties again caused significant challenges in Luton in the past year. The EDL held protest demonstrations on 22nd November and 31st December 2014; a further protest by Britain First took place on 27th June 2015. Thankfully, these demonstrations went by peacefully. That said, we would wish to acknowledge the strong and well-proven working relationship between Bedfordshire Police, Luton Borough Council Officers, the Muslim community, Christian leaders, Chaplains, Mediators and also members from other faith communities, within which GRASSROOTS continues to play a key role.

United Nations (UN) Day:

United Nations Day marks the anniversary of the 1945 UN Charter which officially brought the United Nations into being. In Luton, faith leaders and officers from Luton Council of Faiths joined with the UN Associations (UNA) Luton & Harpenden Chairpersons and the Luton Mayor to hoist the UN Flag. In view of scepticism regarding the effectiveness of the United Nations, UNA Luton Chair, Dr Nazia Khanum, invited Sir Jeremy Greenstock, former UK Ambassador to the UN and current President of UNA-UK, to address the theme 'Is the UN working?' The event was hosted by the University of Bedfordshire on 31st October 2014, with GRASSROOTS conducting the evening's proceedings.

Community Archery Games:

On 2nd November 2014 at Luton Sixth Form College, the Community Archery Games gathered over 100 people from Luton's diverse communities for a friendly competition organised by Luton Council of Faiths with support from GRASSROOTS. The Games were preceded by a special training workshop for local archery instructors led by Danielle Brown, MBE - double Paralympics Gold Medallist, Commonwealth Games Gold Medallist and three times World Champion in Archery. Danielle's presence was inspiring and affirming for those already participating in Luton's archery project, and also attracted some who may not otherwise have engaged in inter-faith and cross-cultural work.

Robin Hood Feast:

A special event was held on 12th November 2014 celebrating a successful year of the community archery project "On Target with Faith Communities for a Healthy Luton", enabled by Big Lottery funding. The event was run by GRASSROOTS and Luton Council of Faiths, and supported by the Near Neighbours Programme. The Feast gathered archers and their families from across the breadth of the project for a social evening with a medieval theme. Around 60 people attended, including different faiths, cultures and ages. All enjoyed the great spread, old games and archery, followed by an educational quiz about how the sport of archery relates to different faith traditions.

Luton Communities 'Thank You' Event:

GRASSROOTS joined key members of Luton's diverse communities at Hotel Chiltern on 17th December 2014 for an event organised by Bedfordshire Police to thank Luton Communities for their support. David Jonathan (Johny) of GRASSROOTS was amongst those awarded a 'Thank You' certificate.



David Jonathan (Johnny) accepting a certificate of thanks from Bedfordshire Police for GRASSROOTS support and work within the Luton Community



Around 60 people attended a Robin Hood inspired feast with games, archery and an educational quiz



The UN Flag was raised in a special ceremony involving community partners at the University of Bedfordshire (Luton Campus)

Near Neighbours

The Near Neighbours (NN) Luton Hub has continued to promote and advertise opportunities and support the non-stop trickle of grant applications.

A main focus has been the continued and growing development of partnerships, both locally and with NN national partners, enabling the delivery of innovative youth leadership programmes, the support of community worker development initiatives, and generally assisting in the delivery of local community events and activities.

It has been a very busy year for Near Neighbours Luton, including the following key events:

Presentations:

NN Luton has made a number of presentations in the past year including an update to the Church Urban Fund (CUF) board on the progress of NN and the work of GRASSROOTS in Luton (September 2014); a presentation at the Luton Chapter meeting at St Augustine's Church, updating the local team of vicars about the NN Luton Hub (September 2014); and an update on the progress of the NN Luton Hub to the national Near Neighbours Interfaith Advisory panel at Lambeth Palace, London (November 2014).

Near Neighbours National Partners Meeting:

On 15th January 2015 GRASSROOTS hosted the NN National partners meeting. Over 20 partners from across the country gathered with a key focus on the evaluation of the national Near Neighbours programme. Coventry University have embarked on an on-going process to develop a Community Tool for Coordinators and co-workers to evaluate local Near Neighbours projects.

National Evaluation Workshops:

The NN Luton hub hosted a series of evaluation workshops on 26th February 2015. The Woolf Institute has been commissioned by Near Neighbours to undertake evaluations in Luton as part of the NN local initiatives. The team from Woolf Institute conducted interviews and ran 2 workshops, forming the basis for an evaluation report for the national Near Neighbours programme. A second set of evaluation workshops will take place in February 2016 to conclude their research.

NN Community Tool App Pilot:

Luton was chosen to deliver a workshop to introduce an evaluation Tool App for IT (phone, tablet and laptop) on 27th May 2015. The aim of the workshop was to describe the download and technical use of the App, and explain how it could be used to evaluate NN projects. 14 local community members having experience of Near Neighbours projects participated in the workshop. The App is now live.

Faith Based Fundraising Workshops:

On 15th June 2015 John McCallum, NN coordinator in Leicester, delivered a Faithful Fundraising workshop in Luton with the purpose of 'Developing Confidence and Skills in Fundraising for Faith Based Social & Community Action'. A second workshop will take place in October 2015.

Visit by the Most Revd and Rt Hon Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury:

The GRASSROOTS team were privileged to be part of a visit to Luton by the Archbishop of Canterbury on 18th June 2015. Together with Revd David Kesterton, All Saints & St Peters Churches, the team presented photos of NN projects and examples of Luton Council of Faiths and GRASSROOTS' work.



Ryad Khodabocus from LCOF and Sr Maire Hayes from GRASSROOTS were among colleagues who discussed the work and challenges in Luton with the Archbishop of Canterbury



A Jewish member of Luton Council of Faiths presenting a certificate to a young Muslim participant of the Catalyst programme



A Cohen's Yard Action Day saw business volunteers and local school children litter pick and create a planting area

Projects:

As of August 2015, 41 applications have been successful with a total spend of £161,596.31; a further 4 projects are in the application process and 12 have been unsuccessful. Among the many exciting and successful NN projects which have been awarded funding, some of those that GRASSROOTS and NN have supported in their delivery, and are mentioned elsewhere in this annual report, have included:

- International Women's Day 'Precious Pearls' Event
- Cohen's Yard Community Inclusion Project
- Public Discussion on the Freedom of Speech with Yasmin Alibhai-Brown
- Faith Talks
- Berakah Concert

Nehemiah Community Workers:

Thanks to the support of GRASSROOTS and the local NN Coordinator, Kim Greig, 4 Nehemiah Community Workers are now in place and working with locally based host organisations at Hope Church in High Town (Luke Middleton), Dallow Community Trust in Dallow (Husna Rasul) and with the Biscot Faith Partnership (Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church and St Margaret's Methodist Church) in the Biscot and Saints wards (Mary Huffman and Melissa Llewellyn). The Nehemiah workers meet regularly with the Near Neighbours Coordinator and are having on-going training for developing community profiles, interviewing and collecting data relating to community organisations. They are all actively involved with existing NN projects and three workers have already applied for Near Neighbours grants for their host organisations.

Catalyst Programme:

The Catalyst vision is to contribute to the formation of a future leadership that prioritises civic engagement and builds association between different faiths and communities. The first Luton-based Catalyst programme took place over 3 days, from 30th March to 1st April 2015, accessed by a locally recruited group of young people. Delivered in partnership with the St Philips Centre, Leicester, programme sessions were led by local Luton professionals from the Council, Police, Faith communities, Luton Council of Faiths, and the Luton Near Neighbours Hub. The Silver and Gold levels of this accredited programme were delivered on May 9th and 16th 2015 and introduced an appropriately timed political session, with further sessions focused on health and well-being, money factors, and Inspirational People, with guest speaker Cllr Tafeen Sharif. The second Catalyst programme was delivered in August 2015 at the start of the summer holidays, accessed by 14 young people of varying ages and from diverse faiths and backgrounds. Some of these participants were recruited through existing NN projects, or were linked through the work of Luton Council of Faiths and GRASSROOTS.

Near Neighbours Coordinators:

The quarterly Near Neighbours coordinators meetings continue to focus on updates, changes, developments and programme progress. They are also a good opportunity to share best practice, and learn from each other.

The Feast:

The Feast are building the capacity of young people aged 11-18 to live well with others who are of a different faith and culture to their own. Peter Adams, from Churches Together in Luton, is working with the Feast in linking with groups of young people. This is an exciting and growing initiative which has recently recruited a local coordinator to build capacity and gained additional funding to deliver more programmes in Luton.



Young people from the second delivery of the Catalyst Programme were awarded their Bronze, Silver and Gold levels of award at GRASSROOTS where the project was delivered



Near Neighbours has played a key role in the Cohen's Yard Community Inclusion Project including the family fun day



The Faith Talk Series was supported by Near Neighbours including the talk on Islam facilitated by GRASSROOTS team members

St Albans Diocese Inter Faith Advisor, Bonnie Evans-Hills



GRASSROOTS has been blessed to have been able to work closely alongside Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills, an Inter Faith Advisor to the Diocese of St Albans, who has been partly based at GRASSROOTS in 2014-2015. She reports:

This first year in Luton has certainly been eventful, with last minute calls between Christmas and New Year for yet another possible EDL march. It seems as if far right groups set the public agenda, and cost the taxpayers of the town a considerable sum in policing costs.

This is really rather sad as there are so many wonderful, 'GRASSROOTS' initiatives taking place on the ground – the greater majority of which are coming straight out of GRASSROOTS projects and backing, some through the partnership with Luton Council of Faiths and Near Neighbours programme.

As a diocesan adviser my concern is resourcing and encouraging local parishes in reaching out to and supporting the wider community. Rather unfortunately, attention given to the far right agenda has been a barrier to wider engagement. This agenda is the predominating view from both parishes and faith communities with regard to Anglican engagement and it will take some effort to transform that perception. It is difficult for most parishes to consider joining in with this kind of agenda, and they are in need of something more attune to parish ministry. St John, Farley Hill, has gone some way toward providing an example of the Church of England parish at its best – discerning the needs of the local community and providing for them.

Conversations have been taking place with the area dean, with interest from the local ecumenical officer, about how best to encourage parishes in the direction of better understanding and engagement with faith communities in their vicinity.

This past year has been invaluable in observing the various communities around Luton, and I look forward to encouraging local churches in greater engagement with the community. GRASSROOTS sets a high standard in quiet, patient and inspiring ministry – with a view to the long term. While GRASSROOTS has been courageous in its stance before the far right, it has not allowed that agenda to take precedence.

There are a number of positive initiatives coming out of national organisations that could be useful at the local level in Luton, aimed at helping to build local relationships. It is hoped we can encourage parishes to take advantage of these resources, or to develop their own! Whatever this coming year brings, I am confident GRASSROOTS will be an invaluable support and encouragement for Church of England parish churches and their ecumenical partners.

*The Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills
St Albans Diocese Inter Faith Advisor*

Conclusion

The front page of the National Justice & Peace Network newsletter (Spring 2015 Edition), features an article titled 'How Do We Re-engage Politically?' by John Battle, former MP for Leeds West. Battle reflects how in the era of 24/7 news and Twitter Feed, the issue, for politicians and political parties, and which greatly influences public service provision "is not only 'surviving' with reputation intact from one news bulletin to the next but crucially sustaining an image of 'competence' rather than the 'reality'. What is sacrificed is not only longer term thinking and vision, but the political search for truth about reality. Politics reduced to a process of survival cannot develop hope. It therefore feeds off fostering fear, in which the space for rational debate, argument and discussion of alternative principles and policies is occluded."

In the Luton context, GRASSROOTS seeks to be and to act differently, to inhabit a space between reality and possibility, encouraging our neighbours of all faiths and cultures to debate, argue and journey together, to develop friendships and become the agents of hope. This is not always an easy or thankful task. Inevitably, there are many challenges and frustrations, but it is the work to which the GRASSROOTS team is committed.

John Battle concludes his article with these beautiful words:

"There are alternative narratives; and in our (Christian) tradition, it runs from the Crib to the Cross but ends in Resurrection. There are no short cuts but a need for outspoken action".

It is to this reality that GRASSROOTS feels called.



2014-2015 Financial Summary

Income	£
Grants received	149,769
Donations	1,826
Interest	73
	151,668
Expenditure – Charitable activities	
Mission Education and Advancement	29,607
Spirituality of Justice	22,608
Work with Women across Faiths and Cultures	8,895
Near Neighbours	50,103
Bury Park Beech Hill Church Related Community Work	2,834
Awards for All	7,536
Other Events	10,410
	131,993
Governance costs	
Total	7,146
	139,139
Net Incoming Resources for the year	
Total	12,529
Reserves at 31 August 2015	
Unrestricted	16,542
Restricted	13,547

Meet the GRASSROOTS Team



David Jonathan

Co-ordinator and Community Cohesion and Interfaith Relations



Sr Maire Hayes

Spirituality of Justice and Interfaith Coordinator for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton



Ann Hyde

Working with Women of Different Faiths and Cultures



Karen Campbell

Church Related Community Worker



Kim Greig

Near Neighbours Coordinator



Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills

St Albans Diocese Inter Faith Advisor



Ryad Khodabocus

Community Relations Development Officer, employed by Luton Council of Faiths, working closely with GRASSROOTS



Ciaran O'Brien

Volunteer and Admin Support Worker

Contact Details

GRASSROOTS welcomes co-workers, guests and visitors from Churches, other faith communities, and those of no particular faith affiliation for events, visits to places of worship in Luton, and conversations over a cup of tea or a meal.

To be kept up to date with GRASSROOTS news, upcoming events and more about the work we do, there are many ways you can stay in touch. We also have a quarterly newsletter which we would love to send to you, so please let us know if you would like to receive it.

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