

Grassroots

...a different point of view

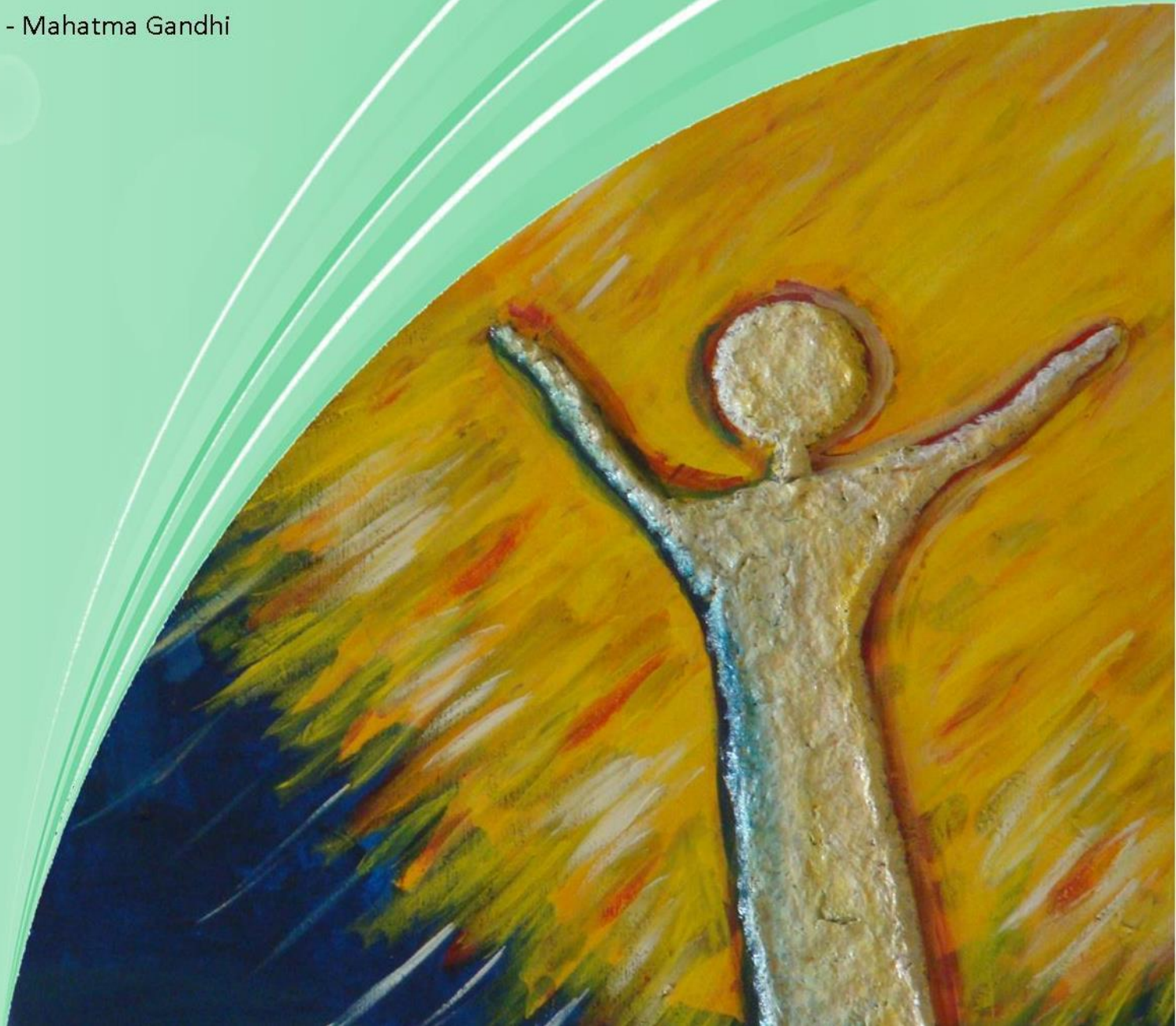
GRASSROOTS Annual Report

2013-2014

You must be the change you wish

to see in the world

- Mahatma Gandhi



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Hellos and Goodbyes!

In June and September 2014 we welcomed the newly appointed Near Neighbours Development Coordinator Kim Greig and CofE Diocesan Inter Faith Advisor Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills.

Sadly, at our office, we also recently said goodbye to Sarah Alexander who had been working with GRASSROOTS as Admin Support for the last 3 years. Her support and contributions to the life of GRASSROOTS have been significant. We thank her and wish her all the best for her future endeavours. Please hold Sarah, Kim and Bonnie in your thoughts and prayers.

BY KAREN CAMPBELL (2009)

A Table For All



Come as you are, because you are welcome.
Come take your place, and hear now the call,
The table is spread, and the music is playing -
Come take your place at the Table for All.

Don't ponder now who you think is worthy,
When, where or how RSVP they sent;
Instead come with gladness, and joy overflowing,
For each person present was God's first intent.

No special place for royal or mighty,
Earthly wealth and position a thing of the past
At the Table prepared with upside-down values,
Where the last shall be first, and the first shall be last.

No longer division 'tween haves and the have nots;
Here no oppressed, neither those who oppress.
Where the world has said 'no' to dignity of justice,
Our God, at His Table, says 'yes'.

Don't be fooled into thinking God does not see colour;
His Table for All is no sea of grey -
He creates and admires, and declares 'It is good',
No matter what racist or bigot may say.

He calls to His people from every direction,
From the east to the west, the north and the south;
There's drink for the thirsty of every nation,
A banquet abundant for every mouth.

A rainbow of women and men at His Table;
Different languages, customs, and faiths from all lands,
Invited to sit, talk and learn all together,
More human made by the joining of hearts and of hands.

So come sit with prince, and come sit with pauper,
With old and with young freely come take your rest;
Whatever the label, the burden you carry,
Lay it down, for now you are most honoured guest.

And let us not wait to dine at that Table,
Though it's not yet, the Table is now-
Where valleys are filled, and mountains are levelled
And a sharing of fate emerges somehow.

Oh the Table is spread, and the music is playing,
Let's listen and hear and respond to God's call,
And live into being the Kingdom we cry for
The Table with room for All.



2013-2014

Acknowledgement of Thanks



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 Spirit
Ghar se Ghar
Luton Borough Council
Luton Council of Faiths
New Creations
Reconciliation Walk Community
The Co-operative
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
Catherine Aganoglu
Ciaran O'Brien
Fahad Matin
Kim Greig
Marie Burns
Nila Soni
Pari Rashid
Rasitha Madusanka
Saida El Moujahid
Shafina Ahmed
Sue Bentley
Tanya Ducker
Thakor Morarji

*Thank
you*

Message from Co-Chair

David Lawson



You have in your hands the Annual Report (2013-2014) from GRASSROOTS and you will see, as you read through it, just what an extraordinary range and variety of work has been done over the last year by the team based in High Town, Luton.

We owe an enormous debt of gratitude to the GRASSROOTS team for all they have done through their work to promote GRASSROOTS' vision of the churches engaging with other faith communities, and thus promoting community cohesion and reconciliation in Luton. We are also hugely grateful to our funders, partners and volunteers, whose generosity and commitment to GRASSROOTS makes possible so much of the work done by the team.

This year has seen some interesting developments – the very recent appointment of an Inter Faith Adviser for the Anglican Diocese of St Albans and based in the GRASSROOTS office at High Town, the appointment of a Development Officer for the Near Neighbours Programme, and the imaginative and creative theological reflection by staff members and Trustees entitled 'Messy Theology'. These initiatives only go to illustrate the energy, vision and life in GRASSROOTS that continues to build on solid foundations of community work developed over many years.

Gratitude is also due to my fellow Trustees, who give of their time, expertise and commitment to supporting all that GRASSROOTS seeks to do. I consider it a privilege to work with such a group of people, from different Christian traditions and yet sharing the vision of a society transformed by God's love.

At the time of writing these few lines there is much to depress us in terms of what is happening in Iraq, Syria and other parts of the Middle East and indeed elsewhere in the world. However, these events remind us of the challenge that the world faces today.

The need for understanding and co-operation among peoples of different faiths and cultures is more urgent than ever. Hans Kung, the Roman Catholic theologian has reminded us:

'No peace among the nations without peace among the religions. No peace among the religions without dialogue among the religions. No dialogue among the religions without investigation of the foundations of the religions.'

GRASSROOTS, in its day to day work in Luton, is meeting that challenge of building a community of peace, understanding and reconciliation, and this Annual Report is a testimony to what is possible.

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

Enriching Ecumenical Relations



No other words could be as fitting as those of Revd Peter Colwell, Deputy General Secretary of the Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), when he says that the Ecumenical Movement “Oikumene” refers both to the unity of all Christians and also to the reconciliation of the whole created order. Christians are called to pray for unity, and to work so that the prayer of Jesus might be fulfilled “that they may be one”.

With some of the enthusiasm for Christian unity dimmed, however, and with some theologians speaking of “an ecumenical winter”, there has been some suggestion that the ecumenical endeavour has moved on and inter religious dialogue has become the fresh urgency. This thinking may be misplaced. Inter religious dialogue, far from replacing ecumenism, is in fact a dynamic expression of the ecumenical movement that seeks not only the unity of all Christians, but the reconciliation of all creation to God.

In our time – Ecumenism and Inter Faith Dialogue:

On 12th September 2013, at the start of the new GRASSROOTS financial year, it was a privilege for GRASSROOTS to participate in an event organised by Churches Together in Britain and Ireland (CTBI), exploring the dynamic relationship between Christian Ecumenism and Inter Religious Dialogue, its opportunities and challenges in the 21st Century. In this one day conference, the following questions were explored:

- What is distinctive about Christian ecumenism and why does it matter?
- What does inter religious dialogue tell us about Christian (ecumenical) self-identity?
- How does current Christian thinking develop and resource itself in a context that is both religiously plural and ecumenical?
- How do ecumenical approaches relate to bi-lateral dialogues between denominations and faiths?

This day set the scene for GRASSROOTS to begin a new year full of action - both proactive and reactive, some of which is mentioned below.

Asian Christian Fellowship Prayer Meeting re Peshawar Killings:

On 27th September 2013, the Luton Asian Christian Fellowship held a solemn prayer meeting following the worst-ever attack on beleaguered Christians in Pakistan, in the historic All Saints Church, Peshawar, by extremists acting in the name of Islam. Christians are a tiny and politically weak minority in Muslim-majority Pakistan who suffer from prejudice and sporadic bouts of mob violence, but this was the first time that bombs had been used to deadly effect against worshippers. GRASSROOTS stood in solidarity with the Asian Christian Fellowship, while Bishop Richard Atkinson (Anglican Bishop of Bedford) shared the helplessness of Christian minorities in countries like Pakistan, offering prayers for peace and for the families who have been bereaved.

Papal Nuncio Visit:

On 29th October 2013, Luton was privileged to receive a visit from Catholic Archbishop Antonio Mennini, Papal Nuncio (the Pope's Ambassador to Great Britain), to Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Bury Park. GRASSROOTS coordinated part of the day's schedule, including a visit to the neighbouring Jamia Islamia Ghousia Mosque, where the Archbishop was presented with a gift from our Muslim friends, followed by a meeting with a representative group from Luton Council of Faiths. We were later informed that Archbishop Antonio and Bishop Peter Doyle (Catholic Diocese of Northampton) were both impressed with the whole event and felt that it was a very useful and positive experience!



Peace Light Service at All Saints:

On 16th December 2013 Luton received the Peace Light flame from Bethlehem, marked by a special service at All Saints Church in Bury Park. Initially part of a large charitable relief project to help children in need in Austria and abroad, since 1990 the Scouts and Guides have helped distribute the light all across Europe at Christmas time, spreading the message of peace. The Peace Light encourages all to work for peace in partnership with people of different ethnic and religious backgrounds. David Jonathan, GRASSROOTS Coordinator, was invited to pass the light on to others during the service.



Christian Presence and Engagement in Luton:

On 25th January 2014, during the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity, Churches Together in Luton invited ministers and lay people from all the churches in Luton to spend a morning of reflection on the theme of Christian Presence and Engagement in Luton.

Bishop Peter Doyle of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton and Rev Geoff Colmer, Regional Minister and Team Leader of Central Baptist Association, were the two keynote speakers, leading the gathering to grapple with two main questions: "What is the Gospel challenge in our areas?" and "What is one practical outcome we must aim to achieve?"

Methodists for World Mission (MWM) Conference:

The theme of this year's conference, held from 30th May to 1st June 2014, was 'Injustice in South Asia – How Religions and Arts Respond'. Particular issues addressed included the Church of Bangladesh's efforts to help families suffering from terrible working conditions; the call to prayer and action to end the injustice of caste discrimination; exploring the extent of reconciliation in Sri Lanka; and how to learn from the conflicts in South Asia such as ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka, religious struggles in India and identity struggles in Bhutan and Nepal. The MWM Conference includes past and present mission partners and their families, and is open to anyone who supports MWM's aims to be more involved with the world church.



Vatican II Lecture and Dinner with Archbishop Kevin McDonald:

The Archbishop Emeritus of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Southwark was the keynote speaker at the Vatican II Lecture hosted by the Holy Ghost Catholic Parish Church on the 28th February 2014. GRASSROOTS was invited to join in the Dinner with the Archbishop following the evening's lecture, which was well attended by over 40 people from different Catholic Churches in Luton.

Othona Community:

Othona is an open and inclusive community, rooted in the Christian tradition and drawing on a wealth of other inspirations. Founded in 1946 by Canon Norman Motley, the Othona community seeks to foster peace and reconciliation between peoples of different nations, beliefs and outlooks. The community welcomes people of all backgrounds at its two centres on the quiet coasts of Essex and Dorset. Through sharing in a daily rhythm of work, learning, worship and play, it seeks personal renewal and glimpses of the sacred.



GRASSROOTS led a week at Othona in Bradwell on Sea, Essex, from 28th July to 1st August 2014, exploring the theme 'Embracing Diversity & Harmony in Creation' based on our work across different faiths and cultures in Luton. Further details about the week can be found on page 24.

Women's World Day of Prayer (WWDP):

Each year women from a different country are asked to select Bible passages and themes for reflection, and to write a worship service to be used for the Women's World Day of Prayer. This is an invaluable opportunity for women to prepare and take a leading role in the worship service, particularly for those who belong to denominations where women are not on an equal footing with men. In Luton, members of the GRASSROOTS team and Trustees make a significant contribution to WWDP every year. The theme for 2014, 'Streams in the Desert', was prepared by the women of Egypt. Karen Campbell led the Bible Study for the WWDP Preparation Day on 27th January, while Sr Maire Hayes prepared services to celebrate Women's World Day of Prayer, 7th March, with asylum seekers in Yarleswood Detention Centre, noting that "these women too are living '*a desert experience and live in hope of streams of living water*'." Ann Hyde, responding to a reflection by an Egyptian Coptic Christian speaking about the horrors facing Christians in his country, said "I identified with his sense of darkness and light in relation to our situation in Luton. This led to me sharing a presentation at the Othona Community titled '*Darkness and Light - The Highs and Lows of Living in Luton*', which attempted to give a balanced picture of the positives and negatives which are the reality of living in my hometown of Luton today."

Christian Ecumenical Initiatives in Luton:

GRASSROOTS has also continued supporting various organisations as listed below:

Near Neighbours (NN) Programme, plus work with NN partner agencies, such as exploring prospects of deploying community workers through the Nehemiah Foundation, bringing Christian and Muslim youths together through the FEAST organisation, and a youth leadership programme through the CATALYST programme.

Church Related Community Work (CRCW) Project, which engages with the various member churches of the Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches (BPBHCC), and has recently been approved for a second term of 5 years following a successful review.

Chaplaincies in Luton (Luton Town Centre Chaplaincy, The Tree House - University of Bedfordshire Chaplaincy and the Luton & Dunstable Hospital Chaplaincy)

Churches Together in Luton and Transforming Luton

High Town Churches Together

CAFOD (Catholic Agency for Overseas Development) Regional and Diocesan Office

CEDO (County Ecumenical Development Officer) for Bedfordshire

Church Denominations - mainly Roman Catholic Church, Church of England, United Reformed Church and The Methodist Church

Individual conversations, meetings and talks held with clergy and lay people across different Christian backgrounds

Worship Services, theme-based workshops and talks led by the GRASSROOTS team at different churches and also at different Churches Together groups and denominational meetings



Performance by pupils from the Polish Community School marking the 60th Anniversary of the Polish Catholic Parish in Luton and Dunstable on 13th Oct 2013



Ann Hyde leads a Circle Dance as a physical expression of prayer during the Women's World Day of Prayer liturgy on 7th March 2014



GRASSROOTS' Trustees & staff gather for ecumenical theological reflection sessions titled 'Messy Theology' on 25th November 2013 and 30th June 2014



As part of the Messy Theology sessions, the GRASSROOTS Trustees and Team reflected biblically on stories shared from their practical experiences



Members of the GRASSROOTS team visited St Claire's Convent and its beautiful surroundings - truly one of Luton's hidden gems, on 25th June 2014



Reconciliation Walk Community Coordinators at St John the Baptist Anglican Church with Vicar Rev Rob O'Neil – welcomed and supported during 2013-2014



Archbishop Antonio Mennini enjoys refreshments and conversation with Maureen Borbone, GRASSROOTS Trustee, during a visit to Luton on 29th October 2013



A Scout collects the Peace Light from GRASSROOTS coordinator David Jonathan during the Peace Light Service at All Saints Church on 16th December 2013



Peter Adams, working as part of the St Mary's Church Team on Inter Faith issues, being installed as a Lay Canon of St Albans Cathedral on 3rd May 2014



Sr. Maire Hayes deep in conversation about the theme 'Harmony in Creation' during the Othona residential led by GRASSROOTS 28th July - 1st August 2014



Ann Hyde lights a candle for her session titled 'Light and Darkness', sharing positive and negative experiences of life in Luton at the Othona residential



A number of decorative artefacts helped inspire and facilitate discussion and activity during the Othona week, including this one arranged by Ann Hyde

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 2013-2014 the various areas of work were funded by a number of sources, including the Primary Care Commissioners - supporting health initiatives, Love Luton – funded International Women's Day, the Sangham group based at Marsh Farm, plus contributions from project participants. Whilst not funding the work directly, the Allder Trust has continued to contribute towards the funding for one of Ghar se Ghar's worker/directors via GRASSROOTS. This is invaluable support.

Activity Groups 2013-2014:

Bury Park –

Monday and Thursday morning exercise groups continued to run in the Community Centre for 1½ hours.

Ashcroft –

This exercise group continued to run in the Sacred Heart R.C. Church Hall on Tuesday mornings. The group has been mostly self-supporting, having had an increase in new members.

Beech Hill –

The Friday morning group in the Beech Hill Methodist Church, Dunstable Road has continued to be open and to include the husbands who see the value of regular exercise.

Marsh Farm –

The Sangham Ladies Group were provided with 12 sessions which were paid for out of their own funding.

Alzheimer's Carers Group –

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

One to one support and signposting/referral to other support services was given continually throughout the year.



Events / Activities:

The Ghar se Ghar groups like to celebrate, and Ashcroft included a 90th birthday celebration at the Fish and Chip restaurant in Wigmore. Christmas involved several meals out with women from all faiths taking part in the celebrations.

Ghar se Ghar was pleased to host a Student Social Worker in their group sessions. The student, from the University of Bedfordshire, was on an observation placement with GRASSROOTS.

The Ghar se Ghar Directors gave an amusing presentation sketch in a bid for Luton Borough Council's Your Say Your Way Participatory Budget funding for Biscot Ward:

Ann: Doctor, what can help control my diabetes as well as diet and medication?

Doctor Pari: Exercise is a good thing to try.

Marie: Doctor, my head and neck really hurt.

Doctor Pari: Have you tried Pilates?

Ann: Doctor, I'm feeling really stressed.

Doctor Pari: Have you tried Head Massage or Reiki?

Marie: Doctor, I have continual backache.

Doctor Pari: You could try going to a Chiropractor or learning the Alexander Technique.

Ann: Doctor, my digestion is poor and my circulation is not good.

Doctor Pari: Have you tried Reflexology?

Marie: Doctor, I feel very tense and my muscles ache.

Doctor Pari: Autogenic Training is a very good relaxation technique. Go and learn it.

Ann: Doctor, I am feeling depressed and isolated.

Doctor Pari: Why don't you join a regular Circle Dancing Group?

Marie: Doctor, I feel tired and sluggish and need something to get me moving.

Doctor Pari: It sounds like you need a Zumba dance class.

Ann: Doctor, what can I use instead of conventional medicines?

Doctor Pari: You could try Homeopathy or Herbalism.

Marie: Doctor, what can I do to improve my general state of health and wellbeing?

Doctor Pari: There are many different things, Yoga, Tai Chi or Meditation, to name a few.

Ann: Doctor, it takes me 2 weeks to get an appointment with you and every time I come, all you do is tell me to go off somewhere and try something.

Doctor Pari: Yes my dear, it is the new system... L.A.Y. Look after yourself. Off you go now-and don't slip over in the ice.....you'll wait at least 4 hours at AandE!

Ann: Hopefully none of us will slip over on the ice as we would no doubt have a long wait at AandE.

Looking after ourselves is very good advice. Ghar se Ghar is a workers co-operative partnership which has existed for many years in Luton, running exercise sessions in Bury Park, Beech Hill and Ashcroft areas at the moment. These sessions include exercise and discussion about ways of maintaining a healthy lifestyle.

We would like to organise a "Health and Wellbeing Day" to give women the opportunity to try out different sorts of exercise and some Complimentary Therapies. They can then make better informed choices about the kind of 'looking after themselves' that suits them best. Please vote for us. It could save the NHS a lot of money!

Marie: Doctor, I am a bit fragile and need some gentle exercise, relaxation, someone to talk to and a bit of understanding. I don't suppose you can help me?

Doctor Pari: Of course not. Go to Ghar se Ghar!

The funding bid was successful and the Health and Wellbeing Day took place on 10th June 2014!

Circle Dancing:

Circle Dancing sessions take place at Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church, St Anne's Church, 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 two dance sessions provided for Luton Catholic Day at Cardinal Newman R.C. Secondary School in September 2013, a dance workshop for the Othona Community in October 2013, Hockwell Ring Dance Group's "Festive Afternoon" in December 2013, and the Women's World Day of Prayer Preparation Day and services in January and March 2014. Ann Hyde also helps to facilitate a twice-yearly residential dancing event in Youlgreave Village Hall in the Peak National Park.

Health and Wellbeing Day at Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church Hall:

The Health and Wellbeing Day took place on 10th June 2014 in Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church Hall. The 75 participants, mainly women, comprised a mix of English, British, Irish, Pakistani, Indian, African, Caribbean and European ethnicities, and enjoyed activities such as Tai Chi, Yoga, Pilates, Meditation, Alexander Technique, Hand Therapy, Reflexology, Head and Hand Massage and Circle Dancing. Individual health checks relating to weight, body fat, body water and BMI (Body Mass Index) were also available. While regular Ghar se Ghar groups focus on promoting healthy lifestyles, they are also a place where women can get out from their homes and feel part of a community, thus combating social isolation. Events such as this take things a step further, by including people from very culturally diverse backgrounds to join in activities together.



International Women's Day 'Precious Pearls' Event:

Ghar se Ghar hosted an event in Bury Park Community Centre on the evening of 6th March 2014 with the theme "Women Loving Luton." The event was supported by Love Luton funding and GRASSROOTS. Over 110 women of all ages and from diverse faith and cultural backgrounds gathered for an evening of mutual sharing, including information about groups and services available in the town. Between presentations of personal stories from a selection of the women in attendance, participants were treated to an explanation of the cultural boxes on display, plus entertainment including poetry from Karen Campbell, and songs from the Sai Singers and the Zimbabwe Ladies Fellowship, who have existed in Luton since 2011. A grand finale cultural fashion parade was followed by socialising around a delicious buffet. The closing address by Cllr. Tafheen Sharif, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner, was a reminder of the importance of women in society, women inspiring change and the recent introduction of Clare's Law. Cllr. Sharif spoke of being born in Luton, loving Luton and encouraging everyone to come together to make things happen - a fitting end to an evening full of interest and laughter, when we had done just that!



Ann Hyde leads a Circle Dance as part of the Circle Dance Christmas Special which took place at Hockwell Ring Community Centre on 14th December 2013



A beautiful decorative centrepiece with a distinctive Christmas theme was used to enhance the dancing at the Circle Dance Christmas Special



There was an array of cultural and religious artefacts on display at the Precious Pearls event on 6th March 2014, including this stall representing Pakistan



Over 110 women attended the Precious Pearls event featuring song, poetry, speeches, cultural displays and even a fashion show!



The Sai Singers performing a beautiful selection of songs at the Precious Pearls event, contributing to a truly multicultural range of activities



The Precious Pearls event was treated to some wonderful singing from the Zimbabwe Ladies Fellowship which has been in Luton since 2011

Bringing People Together Near Neighbours



The aim of the Near Neighbours (NN) programme is to bring people and neighbours together in communities that are diverse, so they can get to know each other better, build relationships of trust, and collaborate together on initiatives that improve the local community they live in. In summary, it is about enabling people from diverse backgrounds to come together for *interaction & social action*.

Following an initial round of funding targeting specific areas of the country, the NN programme was extended for a second round from 2014-16 by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG). The programme is administered by the Church Urban Fund (CUF), through the structures of the Church of England and with the support, resources and reach of the Dioceses and local parishes. Having been only partially included in the first round, from 2013-14, Luton has been fully included in the latest round of the programme. GRASSROOTS was invited to host the NN programme for this second period, and funds were made available to employ a NN Coordinator to be based at GRASSROOTS and to develop the work in Luton. Kim Greig was appointed in June 2014.



Events and activities funded by the NN programme and run by local community groups during the first phase of the project, September 2013 to March 2014, included a Fairtrade Afternoon Tea, Cookery Classes, Meditation, Breath Work and Simple Yoga Classes, English Language and Speaking-Listening Skills Classes, 3 Moroccan Cookery and Lunch Sessions, Faith Schools Friendship Project, a CommuniTea and a FestiDinner. Up to £144,000 is available to fund small grant projects in Luton in the NN second round. As the host organisation, however, GRASSROOTS is unable to apply for any of this funding.

Near Neighbours Briefings:

In May 2014 there were 2 very successful Near Neighbours briefing events, one with other Faiths at the Holy Ghost Catholic Church in Bury Park with over 20 attendees, and the Churches briefing at St Hughes Church in Lewsey Farm had over 15 attendees.



This was a good promotional and engaging start to Near Neighbours Luton with the continual support and participation of Bishop Richard Atkinson who sits on the national Near Neighbours Board.

Near Neighbours Launch Event:

The 6th July 2014 saw the Community Launch of NN in Luton, attended by more than 40 people, with special guests including Stephen Williams MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government), Liz Carnelly (Programme Director for Near Neighbours) and Luton Mayor Cllr Farooq. Projects funded in the first round shared their experiences, including Catherine Aganoglu reflecting on an Afternoon Tea event and Cllr Tafheen Sharif sharing thoughts on an Interfaith Picnic in Dallow Park.



Successful Projects and Applications:

The current round of the programme has seen 7 successful applications to date, 15 ideas are yet to be discussed, 11 activities are at the application stage and 2 have been rejected. The successful applications include a 2-Day Neighbours Together Festival, Cultural Sharing Evenings, Community Gardening, Summer Play Activities, an Interfaith Lunch Club and a Photography Workshop.

Faith, Photo, Luton, Action!

The Hindu-Christian Forum were partners in delivering a photographic workshop on 27th August 2014. The workshop was facilitated by the 2013 national winner of the *Faith through a Lens* photo competition, John Sykes. Twenty people from Hindu, Muslim, Christian and no-faith backgrounds joined the workshop in which participants had opportunity to visit Luton Central Mosque and All Saints Church, both located in Bury Park, to take their own photographs.



NN Local Support Network:

The NN programme in Luton is blessed to have daily support and guidance from David Jonathan, GRASSROOTS coordinator, and Ryad Khodabocus from Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF). A NN Local Support Network has also been created, consisting of Peter Adams from Churches Together in Luton and Janet McKenzie, Area Dean for Luton, who plays an important role in supporting Near Neighbours applications in the referral process.

Near Neighbours Partners:

The Near Neighbours programme is delivered via 3 strands:

Strand 1	Coordinators in Local Hubs
Strand 2	National Partners including Nehemiah, FEAST, Christian Muslim Forum, Inter Faith Matters, Three Faiths Forum and the Hindu-Christian Forum
Strand 3	Small Grants Fund

Commissioned nationally by the Church Urban Fund, the NN national partners were enlisted to deliver and support certain initiatives to increase the capacity and reach of the Near Neighbours programme. Some of these partners, as listed below, have adapted their objectives to partner GRASSROOTS in the Luton context. Positive work is developing at a good pace.

Nehemiah –

In collaboration with GRASSROOTS, Nehemiah is able to offer support to 3 organisations in Luton by (a) helping find the resources for each to employ a local community worker; (b) providing a development framework to achieve Near Neighbours objectives; and (c) involving the 3 organisations in a network of pioneering community partnerships.

Catalyst –

Catalyst seeks to contribute to the formation of a future leadership that prioritises civic engagement and builds association between different faiths and communities. Catalyst will bring together a group of young leaders from different faiths and communities for shared learning and team building. They will be supported and trained to lead more effectively and to work across faith boundaries.

The Feast –

The Feast are building the capacity of young people aged 11-18 years to live well with others who are of a different faith and culture to their own. Each year Feast works directly with over 200 young people through multiple encounter activities. Their work builds friendships between highly diverse young people, breaking down relational barriers at this key stage of their lives.

Hindu-Christian Forum –

The Hindu Christian Forum is an association working together at national and local levels to strengthen relationships of trust, mutual respect and understanding between Hindu and Christian believers. They also develop shared activities to speak out on matters of common concern and to strengthen a shared contribution to the public square.

Christian-Muslim Forum –

The Christian Muslim Forum is made up of Muslims and Christians who believe that the time is right for Christians and Muslims to develop strong and committed relationships, and that the two can work together for the benefit of both faith communities and wider society, using their faith as a resource for peace, conflict resolution, understanding and the valuing of all human beings.





Participants from different faith and cultural backgrounds join together for communal singing at the FestiDinner on 15th December 2013



The 5th Stopsley Girl Guides presented cultural aspects of Christmas (e.g. Christingle) to guests of different faiths and backgrounds at the FestiDinner



Muslim women volunteers led a special drumming workshop for children as their parents enjoyed Fairtrade Afternoon Tea on 15th February 2014



Workshops and discussions led by Muslim women volunteers during the Afternoon Tea event highlighted the significance of neighbours living together peacefully



A Fairtrade workshop delivered with the help of GRASSROOTS at St Margaret's Methodist Church during an Afternoon Tea event on 15th February 2014



Storytelling from Islamic cultural traditions took place as part of the Near Neighbours Afternoon Tea event at St Margaret's Methodist Church

Enriching Relations Through Church Related Community Work



This was an important year for the Church Related Community Work (CRCW) project. In early 2014 the project underwent an external review in which we were called upon to give a coherent and joined-up account of the project to date, articulate our vision for the future, place our work and progress under the spotlight, and where decisions would be made as to whether the project should continue beyond its initial 5-year term. The review prompted the CRCW Management Group to sharpen their thinking and become more intentionally reflective about the journey we are on. It also gave an opportunity for many people, across a spectrum of faith and cultural backgrounds, to share their reflections on how the project has impacted them or their settings, and to voice their hopes for the future. In May 2014 we received formal confirmation that the CRCW project has been accredited for a second term from February 2015 to January 2020.



Local CRCW Project Activities

Engagement with the Council of Churches –

Karen Campbell, the project worker, has strong relationships with Bury Park United Reformed Church (URC) and with Oakdale and Beech Hill Methodist Churches. The arrival of a new minister at All Saints and St Peters (CofE) in 2013 marked the beginning of more intentional engagement with these churches too. Revd David Kesterton represents his churches on the CRCW Management Group, and the past year has seen Karen participate in Revd Kesterton's induction service, present an overview of the CRCW project at a meeting of the joint All Saints and St Peters Church Council, and lead reflections for a joint Bible Study group. A monthly article titled 'Thoughts from Your CRCW' is published in the respective newsletters of Bury Park, Oakdale and Beech Hill churches, and is also distributed at All Saints and St Peters.

Church and Community Engagement –

As in previous years, there have been a number of activities aimed at building and deepening relationships between the churches and their multicultural and multi-faith neighbours. 'Food between Friends' was a 7-week project gathering people across diverse faiths and cultures to cook, eat, talk and learn. As participants shared something of their heritage through traditional foods and reflections, friendships were built and relationships strengthened. Enabled by funding from the Near Neighbours funding stream, the project drew over 50 participants, including Christians, Hindus, Muslims, members of the Baha'i faith, and people of no faith affiliation, represented by people of British, Caribbean, African, Asian and Roma backgrounds.

Local CRCW Project Activities continued...

'Centre of Attraction', a home-grown, multicultural fashion show, was the fundraising finale of the Food between Friends project. The event saw well over 100 guests gather for a night of fashion, food and music, with catering and models sourced mainly from the Food between Friends participants. While the catwalk featured a variety of outfits, the highlight was a finale of fashion from around the world, including India, Ghana, Romania, Zimbabwe, Morocco, Sierra Leone and the Gambia – all cultures standing together, different and free to be themselves, yet all belonging and united.

The Shooting Stars Archery Group opened its doors in June 2014. Based in the All Saints Church Hall, this project has been resourced by Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF), a GRASSROOTS partner organisation. The diverse team of qualified instructors includes members from the Council of Churches working in partnership with local Muslims and other individuals to deliver archery sessions for an equally diverse range of participants. To date, the group has successfully delivered a number of free taster sessions, and 2 six-week archery beginners' courses.

Precious Pearls, a celebration of International Women's Day, saw a wonderfully diverse gathering of women under the theme '*Women Loving Luton*'. We were delighted to welcome participants from the Shona Community, a Zimbabwean fellowship based at Oakdale, who wowed the audience with a song. Women from Beech Hill joined with friends from the local Hindu, Muslim and Roma communities, to lead the gathering in a mini multicultural fashion show. As personal testimonies were shared, a sense of real solidarity could be felt in the hall. Barriers are coming down; steps are being ventured; friendships are being built.

Luton Roma Church (LRC) –

The past year has been very busy supporting Luton Roma Church in various aspects of work. This has included negotiating a move into the premises of Bury Park URC, which unfortunately proved to be short-lived, taking part in discussions about the potential move to independent charity status, coordinating the LRC children's programme and volunteers, and planning and delivering activity groups for children aged 5-13 years. Karen is involved in the planning and delivery of the Devon Adventure Week, a youth residential taking young people from deprived urban areas to the North Devon countryside for a week of physical and spiritual adventure. In May 2014, for the first time, three young people from Luton Roma Church were able to participate.

Participating in Events of the Wider United Reformed Church (URC):

URC Multicultural Celebration –

In September 2013 a group of 18 people travelled from Luton to Birmingham for this celebration of the culturally and spiritually diverse Church. The day, with Karen Campbell acting as host, included folk and gospel singing, line dancing, story-telling, poetry, drama, art, comedy, shared food and shared worship – different faces of the one Church, celebrating their diversity and their unity.

Cause for Celebration –

Cause for Celebration is an event organised by the Urban URC Network, inviting congregations in Thames North and Southern synods to gather for a day of worship, workshops, conversation and celebration. Twelve members from the Bury Park Beech Hill churches joined Karen Campbell for the journey to Tooting on 14th July 2014. Karen delivered 2 workshops reflecting on running church community projects, and a third encouraging participants to pen their own 'Urban Psalms'. During the closing worship, the Luton participants stood with members of various URCs, sharing the contributions they had prepared together in dance, drama and singing workshops.

General Engagement and Opportunities:

As part of Karen's role, she is frequently invited to accept a variety of engagements beyond the immediate remit or location of the Council of Churches. During the past year, these have included leading the Bible study for the Women's World Day of Prayer preparation day, preaching engagements at United Reformed Churches in Harpenden, St Albans and Kilburn, delivering a presentation for the Stopsley Baptist Church Tuesday Fellowship reflecting on her ministry in Luton, leading worship at a number of Methodist churches in and around Luton, and also participating in a number of Fairtrade presentations for schools and community groups.

Contributing to the Life of the Wider United Reformed Church:

Together Ethnic and Minority URC (formerly EMLOMA) –

Formerly known as EMLOMA (Ethnic Minority Lay and Ordained Ministers Association), Karen Campbell is part of the planning group for this forum which organises twice-yearly gatherings for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic members of the URC. On 19th October 2013, GRASSROOTS and the CRCW project hosted the EMLOMA gathering, sharing reflections on the Luton context, and taking our visitors for a meal in Bury Park.

BAME (Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic) Ministers' Gathering –

As one of only two Black women ministers in the whole United Reformed Church, it was significant for Karen both to attend this residential from 16th–17th June 2014 and to be asked to lead morning worship for the gathering. The residential was an opportunity for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic colleagues to think together about the opportunities and challenges of their ministries, to share encouragement and support, and to consider their roles and responsibilities in the life of the Church.

Cascades of Grace: Voices of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Women in the URC –

Karen continues to convene this group whose first open event, *Chrysalis: Transforming the Table*, was held on 21st June 2014. The event aimed to gather BAME women for worship, reflections and conversations about their journeys in the URC, and to raise awareness of the work in which Cascades is engaged. Around 25 women participated in what was felt to be a positive and useful event.

The URC Human Sexuality Task Group –

In 2013-14 Karen continued to work as part of this group, tasked with producing materials to enable the URC to make a response to the matter of same-sex marriage. The group produced a booklet – One plus One, encouraging discussions around the theme of marriage, and featured in a related short film. These resources were made available to the meeting of General Assembly, the URC's decision making body, which met in July 2014. As no agreement was reached, a range of resources, including One plus One, have been made available to synods and local churches to enable deeper conversations.

URC General Assembly (3rd to 6th July 2014, Cardiff) –

Karen attended the General Assembly with 2 remits. Firstly, as part of the Human Sexuality Task Group, Karen helped present the group's work to the Assembly (details above). Secondly, members of Cascades of Grace prepared a promotional stall to raise the profile of their work. The Racial Justice and Intercultural Ministry Office (RJIIM), under whose remit the group works, honoured Cascades with a gift to encourage them in their ministry.

URC Prayer Handbook 2015 –

Karen was both humbled and honoured to be asked to prepare prayers for this forthcoming publication. Her prayers will feature in the month of August 2015.



12 members from the Bury Park Beech Hill Churches participated in Cause for Celebration, organised by the Urban URC Network in Tooting on 14th July 2014



Young boys from the Roma community participated in a wide range of activities as part of the Devon Adventure Week from 24th - 30th May 2014



The Food between Friends project drew over 50 participants and saw people from different cultures and faiths share, learn and build friendships together



Worship, reflection and conversations took place as part of the Cascades of Grace event 'Chrysalis: Transforming the Table' on 21st June 2014



The Shooting Stars Archery Group providing archery taster sessions and six week beginners' courses for participants of different faiths and cultures since June 2014



Children from the ROMA community with YWAM volunteers displaying their work as part of CRCW led activities for weekly Luton Roma Church services

Our Living Spirituality of Justice



The Spirituality of Justice programme addresses inter-faith dialogue on many levels, the development of new ecumenical partnerships, and denominational pastoral and faith concerns (particularly Catholic). The words of Pope Francis express it thus *“There has been a growing awareness of the identity and mission of the laity in the Church... At the same time a clear awareness of this responsibility of the laity grounded in their Baptism and Confirmation does not appear in the same way in all places... Even if many are now involved in lay ministries, this involvement is not reflected in a greater penetration of Christian values in the social, political and economic sectors. It often remains tied to the tasks within the Church, without real commitment to applying the Gospel to the transformation of society”* (Evangeliu Gaudium - paragraph 102). In 2013-14, the Spirituality of Justice project has worked to help Christians live the responsibilities of their baptism while being faithful to issues of Justice, Peace and Integrity of Creation. Through the year’s activities, therefore, Spirituality of Justice has been translated into *a Spirituality that does Justice*.

Holocaust Memorial Service:

Held on 27th January 2014, the service had the theme ‘Journeys’ and sought to recreate the atmosphere of the Kinder Train which brought thousands of Jewish children into the UK. Unsuspecting attendees were issued with tickets and ushered into the makeshift station, where a letter from the Chief Rabbi, dated 1939, was read out instructing the children on how to behave on arrival in England. The points of advice included being considerate by behaving quietly and politely, observing the English customs of waiting for your turn and young people offering their seats to the elderly, and remembering to show gratitude. All of these things would contribute to living harmoniously in the UK. The message of the letter seems no less significant today.



The Holocaust Memorial Service was attended by a gentleman who made the journey on the real Kinder Train more than 60 years ago. Sr Maire Hayes was part of the planning group for the service.

Srebrenica Memorial Event:

On 6th July 2014 a ‘Remembering Srebrenica’ memorial event and service was held by Luton Borough Council in partnership with the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) at Chaul End Community Centre. In an extremely moving service, Bosnian women and mothers shared their personal stories and reflections on the Balkan Conflict.

National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN) Conference:

Sr Maire Hayes is part of the executive of the National Justice and Peace Network, and served on the planning group for this conference titled 'Called to Life in all its Fullness'. Planned as a celebration of life and a renewal of vision, the conference took place in Swanwick in July 2014, and sought to empower lay people to accept the responsibility of their Baptism, to bring lived experiences and relate them to their Baptismal call. The conference featured a number of speakers and workshops addressing wide-ranging topics including the relationship between religion and the natural world, the highs and lows of being both a Christian and an MP, the issue of 'food sovereignty' and the trafficking of peoples. With many hours of work invested in planning the conference, it was heart-warming for the planning group to receive extremely positive feedback from participants.

Othona Community:

From 28th July - 1st August 2014, GRASSROOTS led a week of workshops and reflections for the Othona community in Bradwell on Sea around the theme 'Embracing Diversity & Harmony in Creation', drawing on our work promoting harmony in diversity in Luton. Ann Hyde led Circle Dance sessions on the theme of Creation and gave a presentation titled 'Darkness and Light' (see page 8). Sr Maire Hayes delivered two workshops giving suggestions of how groups can be enabled to embrace diversity and deepen their spirituality. 'Praying with Colours' is used as a medium to share our commonalities and so grow in respect, while 'Harmony in Creation' highlighted that all Faiths have a reverence for Creation and can work together for its protection. In what was a demanding week, the presence of German participants and also work volunteers from Korea, Italy, Spain, France, the Czech Republic, Denmark and Finland brought an international-multicultural flavour to our communal living... truly harmony in diversity!

Fairtrade Activities: Fairtrade Annual Supporters' Conference 2013

More than 300 Fairtrade campaigners met at Kensington Town Hall in London for the Annual Fairtrade Supporters' Conference on 5th October 2013. The theme of the conference was 'Unlocking the Power of Many'. Speakers from Fairtrade Africa and the Windward Islands inspired and challenged the audience as they spoke about the benefits of Fairtrade to their communities as well as the many obstacles to securing their livelihoods.



Workshops featured debates around the latest issues and developments in Fairtrade, such as how Fairtrade delivers benefits to workers on tea plantations. Following Luton's Fairtrade successes and Outstanding Achievement Award last year, the Fairtrade Luton group were privileged to be invited to run a workshop at this year's conference. The theme was 'Taking Fairtrade to New Audiences: Interfaith Outreach in Luton'. Luton's Fairtrade story provoked keen interest at the conference.

Fairtrade Activities: Fairtrade Fortnight 2014

Several activities took place during Fairtrade Fortnight, 24th February to March 9th 2014, with the involvement and support of the Luton multi faith Fairtrade Steering Group and the University of Bedfordshire Fairtrade Steering Group. These included:

- **Muslim Holiday Camp –**
Islamic Home Tuition, a local voluntary youth organisation, ran a children's camp during the February half term holiday. With more than 100 children taking part, the camp focused on learning about healthy eating and ethical foods, as well as teaching the children more about their religion and moral living. Members of Fairtrade Luton performed an interactive roleplay about a banana producer in Ghana and the difference Fairtrade could make to her life and community. Later, a parent pasted a comment on Facebook saying their child had spotted the Fairtrade logo during a shopping trip and insisted on buying that product!
- **Luton's 1st Fairtrade School –**
On 28th February 2014 St Joseph's Roman Catholic Junior School celebrated becoming Luton's first Fairtrade School. Pupils from Year 6 led the occasion with a brilliant presentation demonstrating how, in the words of Martin Luther King Jr. "Before you finished your breakfast this morning, you'll have relied on half the world." The children reminded everyone how supporting Fairtrade is a good way to love our neighbour - the most important commandment in Christian teaching and in other faiths too.
- **University of Bedfordshire –**
Fairtrade activities galore took place at the University of Bedfordshire with a Master Chef cooking session, Fairtrade fashion show, Go Bananas Day, Find Foncho activities, Fairtrade Hunger Lunch and Fairtrade movie night. Fairtrade Wine Tasting events organised by the Co-Operative took place at the University and at the Hat Factory, and featured a wine producer.
- **Fairtrade Promotional Stall in The Mall –**
Fairtrade goodies were available to sample in Luton Mall as local volunteers, organisations and businesses joined together to promote Fairtrade. Over 200 signatures were added to a petition against unfair bananas by school children and members of the public. In terms of quality of public engagement, Fairtrade Fortnight 2014 was considered the best so far.
- **Commonwealth Day –**
Commonwealth Day flag raising celebrations on 10th March 2014 at Luton Town Hall were supported by Fairtrade Luton and featured Fairtrade stickers, flags and refreshments.

Fairtrade Activities: Mayor's Charity Hat Show

Luton's Fairtrade Steering Group served an array of Fairtrade refreshments and snacks at the Mayor's Charity Hat Show on 14th March 2014. The show commemorated Luton's famous hat-making industry of bygone years and highlighted the new lease of life now being experienced.

Fairtrade Activities: Afternoon Tea

Participants took part in discussions about Fairtrade and enjoyed Fairtrade refreshments at the second of two 'Afternoon Tea' events on 15th February 2014. Enabled by funding from Near Neighbours, the event was organised by a group of Muslim women and supported by GRASSROOTS.



Here one of many beautiful displays is used at the OTHONA residential led by GRASSROOTS from 28th July to 1st August 2014



Ryad Khodabocus from LCOF speaking to attendees of the Fairtrade Annual Supporters' Conference in London on 5th October 2013



On 28th February 2014 St Joseph's Roman Catholic Junior School celebrated becoming Luton's first Fairtrade school as part of the Fairtrade Fortnight festivities



Sarah Alexander, Ryad Khodabocus and Kim Greig don their Fairtrade aprons at the University of Bedfordshire 'Master Chef' event for Fairtrade Fortnight



The Fairtrade 'Stall in the Mall' was the most successful to date as local volunteers, organisations and businesses joined together to promote Fairtrade Fortnight



Ryad Khodabocus and Karen Campbell perform a fun and engaging Fairtrade role play at Islamic Home Tuition's half term camp in February 2014

Building

Inter Faith Relations



In 2014, the Israel-Palestine conflict yet again challenged world politics and generated unease and unrest worldwide. Luton saw two big events. First, the Luton Council of Mosques (LCoM) organised a Public Meeting on 16th July 2014, attended by nearly 500 people. Second, on 18th July 2014, the Sunni Council of Mosques (SCoM) organised a protest / peace Demo outside the Town Hall. While attendance at both events was mostly Muslim, there were many others too, including a large group of Jewish supporters standing up for Justice and Fairness in Gaza. Speakers at both events included local MPs, Leader of the Council, Churches Together, local Imams, Councillors and guest speakers from outside Luton. The speakers all gave a very balanced view, respecting Israel's right to exist and defend itself but, but stating this should not be at the cost of Palestinians.



Given the serious global circumstances of excessive violence and growing conflicts, particularly in Israel-Palestine, Syria and Iraq, GRASSROOTS, in partnership with Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF), organised a special meeting on 27th August 2014 for people across faiths and cultures to:

- mutually share with one another and support each other as these global incidents are affecting us all
- offer readings and prayers from our respective faith traditions for peace in our world and in our town
- share reflections as to what we as individuals from different faith communities can do to promote justice and peace in our world and strengthen community cohesion and development in Luton

At GRASSROOTS, we found a creative way of engaging people locally while supporting those further away. With the help of staff and volunteers, Fairtrade Eid Hampers were prepared for local Mosques and other key Muslim organisations and individuals celebrating the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr in July 2014. Whilst promoting good relations in Luton, through the hampers we sought to ethically tackle poverty and empower people on the ground in places like Palestine. Priced £15 - £35, the hampers were bought by many people. GRASSROOTS also raised money to plant olive trees in Palestine; people can still donate £20 to pay for 5 trees.

While globally we are experiencing a turbulent time, the year 2013-14 has seen Luton enjoy a period of relative peace and quiet. This means GRASSROOTS has been able to focus more on the pro-active, creative and imaginative side of our work. In general, life at GRASSROOTS has been dominated by the Archery Project, Fairtrade Campaign and Near Neighbours Programme, but there have been various other events and numerous meetings to develop our work.

Archery Project:

The new GRASSROOTS year began with an exciting first-of-its-kind event when the Community Archery Games were held at Luton Sixth Form College on 28th September 2013. The Games proved to be a successful combination of culture and sport, following the Olympics legacy. Around 150 people from across the diverse community of Luton attended the event, with 6 mixed teams of archers taking part in the competition. Winners were awarded with medals, while all participants received Fairtrade chocolates. Friends and family members who had come in support of players were also treated to a free “Have a Go” archery taster session.



The Community Archery Games were a big success. One of the most notable aspects of the event was the catering, with food being brought and shared by a number of community groups. Further highlights included performances of Sikh Martial Arts (Ghatka) by Guru Nanak Gurudwara, Nasheed (Arabic) singing and playing of the Daff (Middle Eastern and Eastern percussion) by Jamia Islamia Ghausia Mosque, Bollywood Dance performance from Luton’s Hindu community and Polish singing by the Luton and Dunstable Polish Language School, all of which were too good to be missed.



Led by Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) in partnership with GRASSROOTS, Luton’s Archery Project aims to inspire Lutonians of all backgrounds to get involved in this historic, fun and inclusive sport. The project seeks to develop a more active Luton while improving cohesion and getting people out of isolation. Community leaders and volunteers of different ages and backgrounds are being trained as Archery Instructors to help bring archery to all communities in the town. The volunteers are also trained as First Aiders, with some becoming Health Champions re Mental Health Issues, courtesy of additional training from Public Health, Luton Borough Council.

Inter Faith Network for the UK – Local Area Link Meeting:

As a local inter faith organisation, Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) is affiliated to the Inter Faith Network for the UK. On 20th Aug 2014, GRASSROOTS hosted a meeting of the Network which was taking place in Luton for the very first time. It was good for LCoF and GRASSROOTS to be part of a gathering in which 10-12 local inter faith organisations from various locations around the UK took the opportunity to share their work, challenges and good practice.

Annual Peace Walk:

On a rather wet day, 21st September 2013, nearly 150 people from diverse faiths, cultures, ethnicities and nationalities walked together showing public solidarity and friendship as they visited different places of worship. The visits included the Guru Nanak Gurudwara on Dallow Road, the Holy Ghost Catholic Parish Church and Jamia Islamia Ghousia Mosque, both on Westbourne Road.



During the visit to Holy Ghost Church, children from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School gave a presentation about their journey towards becoming Luton's 1st Fairtrade school, whilst at the Mosque, the audience was charmed by pupils from the Mehria Primary School as they played Nasheeds and Daff. Various communities brought bread from different cultures to share with other participants. Supporting Luton Food Bank, car loads of food items were collected during the walk, generously donated by various community groups including Foxdell Primary School, St Joseph's Catholic Primary School, OM Group, the Luton Central Mosque and the three host places of worship.

Faith Leaders' Gathering:

Continuing in his efforts to establish positive relationships with Luton's diverse faith communities, faith leaders and different places of worship, Bishop Richard Atkinson (Anglican Bishop of Bedford), with the help of GRASSROOTS, hosted nearly 30 people for an informal buffet supper on 3rd October 2013 at Bishop's Lodge, Cardington. While affirming the need for us all to 'be nice' to each other, and to seek to understand each other, Bishop Richard also challenged the gathering with the question "What more can we do together?" to build a stronger community.



During the gathering, the newly-appointed Chief Constable of Bedfordshire Police, Colette Paul, introduced herself to all, declaring how excited she was to come to this "vibrant and exciting town". Several other guests mentioned how wonderful it felt to receive the invitation. "Never would I have expected to eat with a Bishop in his own home!" was the comment from one awestruck Muslim friend, while another guest reflected that "With everyone speaking to everyone else throughout the evening, I have great hopes for us."

Dallow Downs Picnic:

On 22nd June 2014, a day marked by lots of sunshine, nearly 350 people from different backgrounds took part in a variety of fun activities in the Dallow Downs Runley Park. Participants, including many children, enjoyed a guided walk, sack race, spoon race, mini golf, and story-telling, finished off with a picnic of samosas and cakes. Organised by the partnership of GRASSROOTS and Luton Council of Faiths, and supported by Community Needs, Cllr Tafheen Sharif, and schools from Dallow and Farley, the afternoon was a celebration of how local people have reclaimed Runley Park which had been taken over by drug dealing and anti-social behaviour.



While it has been a long journey, many positive outcomes have been achieved through community efforts, with support from Luton Borough Council's Park Services and grant money from 'Awards for All'. The nature trail has been recreated in Dallow Downs, and is being used extensively by schools and residents in the area. Children from local schools created some beautiful artwork, which is displayed outside the park. Dallow Downs is now regarded as 'Luton's Little Gem' - a relaxing and peaceful place, countering negative stereotypes about the area. It is an inspirational sight to see women in veils walking the paths alongside many others from Eastern European, African-Caribbean and other Asian backgrounds. The success of this project has inspired the GRASSROOTS-LCOF team to explore similar community development initiatives in other areas of the town, with a view to improving their open and green spaces and strengthening the feeling of being part of a neighbourhood.

Bishop's Cup Inter Faith Cricket Tournament:

The Bishop's Cup Tournament was held in Watford on 3rd August 2014. A day of friendly cricket, family fun and fellowship with people from different faiths and cultures, the event drew participants from different towns, including Bedford, Luton, St Albans and Watford, with each town contributing a multi faith team.



Players and spectators included clergy and lay people, men and women. Watford won the tournament, with Luton claiming the runner-up position. Revd John Kiddle presented the Cup on behalf of the Church of England's St Albans Diocese.



Revd Andrew Goodman from the Treehouse Chaplaincy at the University of Bedfordshire talks to volunteers at the Gaza Protest on 18th July 2014



Fairtrade Eid Hampers prepared by GRASSROOTS staff and volunteers for the festival of Eid-ul-Fitr in July 2014



Participants engaging in fun and interactive archery training at Luton Sixth Form College as part of the Archery Project on 28th September 2013



Archery instructors being trained as Health Champions (Mental Health Issues and First Aid) courtesy of the Public Health department of Luton Borough Council



Colleagues sharing food and enlightening conversation at the Inter Faith Network for the UK – Local Area Link Meeting on 20th August 2014



GRASSROOTS hosted the Inter Faith Network for the UK – Local Area Link Meeting for the first time ever with more than 10 other interfaith organisations attending



Kelvin Hopkins gives a welcome speech to Annual Peace Walk attendees outside Luton Town Hall alongside Mayor Sheila Rodden on 21st September 2013



The Peace Walk procession comprised of many people from different faiths and cultures heading through Luton Town, led here by LCOF Chair, Zafar Khan



Annual Peace Walk attendees are treated to a presentation by children from St Joseph's Catholic Primary School about becoming Luton's first Fairtrade School



Placards carrying messages of hope and peace are carried by many of those on the Annual Peace Walk heading through the Dallow and Bury Park areas of Luton



Children enjoyed a wide range of activities including a guided walk, sack race, spoon race, mini golf and storytelling at the Dallow Downs Picnic on 22nd June 2014



GRASSROOTS is always deeply appreciative of all our volunteers - including these three taking a well-deserved break at the Dallow Downs Picnic. Thank you so much!

The Past Year In Conclusion



In the ever-increasing secular, multi faith and multicultural contexts of Luton, Christianity – a faith once held by the majority of the indigenous population, is now as much a minority as the other so-called minority faith and community groups present in the town. ‘Minority’ and ‘majority’ have become complex concepts. There are issues not only of minorities amongst majorities, but in certain local contexts, there are issues of:

- minorities within minorities (e.g. South Asian Christians amongst Asian Muslims)
- minorities as majorities (e.g. South Asian Muslim minority as a majority in Luton) and
- majorities (English indigenous people) as minorities amongst the so-called minorities

As a result of this complex picture, the importance, relevance and significance of different communities walking, working and living together are now greater than ever before. As well as being together, it is equally important that we are *seen* to be together.

Anxieties caused by global situations (e.g. conflicts in Palestine, Syria, Iraq and Egypt) and circumstances here in Britain (such as the Trojan Horse scandal and Rotherham sexual offence cases) should not be dismissed, but accepted as natural human reactions. What is not acceptable, however, is for whole ethnic groups and faith communities to be criminalised as a response.

Feelings of victimisation - rightly or wrongly, real or perceived, past or present, are alive on all sides. Extremes of Political Correctness (as opposed to ‘Political Fairness’) serve to further divide communities. It is time, therefore, that we learn not to acknowledge minorities at the cost of majorities. The need to be acknowledged, valued, affirmed and loved is common to all human beings, which must include the white indigenous population too.

In working with Luton’s hugely diverse population, GRASSROOTS and our partner organisations have sought to ‘start where people are’, respecting cultural preferences and norms. The appearance of some men in groups previously considered to be predominantly for women has led us to question whether the days of gender-specific events are largely over, and whether there are other areas where we may need to reconsider the ways in which we work. This may not be a bad thing. The emerging mixed groups reflect that the culture of this country is for men and women to mix; perhaps there are other areas too where immigrant cultures can be encouraged to make some adaptation to embrace aspects of the host community. The barriers to integration in a town such as Luton need to be sensitively dismantled, otherwise it will become increasingly difficult for our diverse population to function in shared spaces.

Here at GRASSROOTS, we are engaged in some very valuable work, to which this Annual Report gives testimony. That said, life in Luton is still not as easy as we may like it to be, and we could be forgiven for sometimes feeling that the cup is half empty. Thankfully, though, we usually proceed in the confidence that the GRASSROOTS cup is half full!

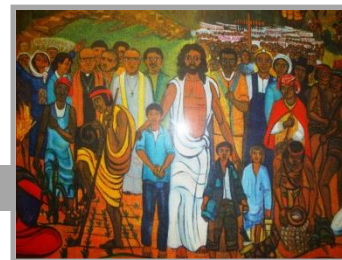
2013-2014

Financial Summary



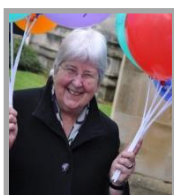
Income	£
Grants received	102,123
Donations	1,073
Interest	75
	103,271
Expenditure – Charitable activities	
Mission Education and Advancement	58,026
Spirituality of Justice	16,605
Work with Women across faiths and Cultures	8,580
Church Urban Fund	7,492
Near Neighbours	14,015
Bury Park Beech Hill Church Related Community Work	2,559
Awards for All	6,200
Other	275
	113,752
Governance costs	
Total	6,411
	120,163
Net Resources Expended for the year	
Total	£(16,892)
Reserves at 31 August 2014	
Unrestricted	4,986
Restricted	12,574

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



Sarah Alexander

Administration and Project Work Assistance



Ryad Khodabocus

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

Grassroots

...a different point of view

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.

Please do get in contact with us:

GRASSROOTS Programme, 47 High Town Road, Luton, Beds, LU2 0BW
01582 416946
jgrassroots@btconnect.com

Charity Registration Number: 1057468