

Grassroots

... a different point of view

Newsletter Edition 1 - Spring 2014

Working to build community amongst
Luton's diverse people

Partner of Luton Council of Faiths, Ghar se Ghar and New Creations

Welcome to this first edition of the new GRASSROOTS newsletter!

Produced quarterly, we aim to stay in contact with friends far and near, give regular updates of what GRASSROOTS is doing and let you know about forthcoming events. We hope you enjoy the newsletters. Please let us know what you think!

What is GRASSROOTS?

GRASSROOTS is a small Christian community organisation. Set up in 1991, we work with Churches and people of all faiths and cultures to build a strong community in the town of Luton and beyond. GRASSROOTS spearheads a variety of initiatives aimed at bringing diverse people together; the team can also be found behind the scenes of numerous events, supporting the work of our partners. For more information about our history and work to date, please see our website at www.grassrootsluton.org.uk

Can we Help?

The GRASSROOTS team welcome invitations to lead worship, give talks, deliver diversity training and support other groups. Please get in touch for more information.

Getting Involved

If you would like to support our work, why not join the brand new 'Friends of GRASSROOTS'? Donations of time, talent or finances are always much appreciated. Visit our website to find out more:

[www.grassrootsluton.org.uk/
get-involved](http://www.grassrootsluton.org.uk/get-involved)

We look forward to hearing from you!

GRASSROOTS News

Luton Archery Project

Led by Luton Council of Faiths in partnership with GRASSROOTS, the archery project was officially launched on 15th January 2014. Enabled by Big Lottery funding, project aims include improving the physical health of disadvantaged minority ethnic people, enabling these groups to be less isolated and better engaged, and strengthening community cohesion, to foster a stronger and safer community. Look out for community archery sessions coming to local places of worship soon.

Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

On Saturday 25th January Christians from across Luton gathered at Holy Ghost Catholic Church to explore gospel challenges in the areas of Education, Social Outreach, Justice, Health and Public Life. This event is organised by Area Deans and Churches Together Luton.



Luton Archery Project

Stall In The Mall

Holocaust Memorial Day

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'Journeys' was the theme for Luton's Holocaust Memorial Day event on Sunday 26th January. Held in the specially prepared Council Chambers, visitors were first given a ticket to board the train, then led to the station, in a powerful reminder of how journeys featured in the persecution and terror suffered by many people during the Holocaust, and in subsequent genocides.

First Fairtrade School in Luton!

Congratulations to St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Junior School who have worked hard to achieve their Fairtrade status. Well done! We hope many more schools will follow!

Fairtrade Fortnight

Fairtrade Fortnight took place between 24th February – 9th March 2014, themed *Stick With Foncho* to fight against unfair banana prices.

Luton's 'Stall in the Mall'

With Fairtrade products on display and tasty samples to try, the stall raised public awareness of Fairtrade. Representatives from Luton Polish School, Lush, Cafe Culture, Discover Islam, Luton Council of Faiths and ASDA joined in the event. Over 200 petitions regarding unfair bananas were signed. The event was supported by The Co-Operative, a long term partner of the campaign.

Dates for your Diary

Luton Peace Walk is to take place on Saturday 20th September 2014. More details to follow soon!

Meet the Team

The GRASSROOTS team come from a variety of Christian backgrounds. Our work is divided into four inter-linked projects, with a different team member leading on each.



David Jonathan (Johny) is GRASSROOTS' Co-ordinator, and leads on **Community Cohesion & Interfaith Work** work. "GRASSROOTS creates spaces where people of all backgrounds can encounter each other and have their voices heard. By getting to know each other, when potential flashpoints arise we are able to respond as one community, united for peace." Johny works closely with a partner organisation, Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF). This partnership is vital in allowing us to work proactively with other people of faith and in responding quickly and effectively to cohesion issues in Luton. Look out for GRASSROOTS' events and celebrations, and organised visits to different places of worship, such as the annual Peace Walk (in partnership with LCoF).

The **Spirituality of Justice** project is led by Sr. Maire Hayes. "As it sounds, my work links spirituality and faith with issues of justice. Instead of talking about faith, we gather people across faiths to work together on practical issues." The highly successful 'Making Luton a Fairtrade Town' campaign was born out of this project, so too peace-building initiatives under the heading 'Meeting God in friend and stranger'. Sr. Maire has various responsibilities within the national and regional Roman Catholic Church, as the Inter Faith Co-ordinator for the Diocese of Northampton and as a member of the Executive of the National Justice and Peace Network. "I pay special attention to women especially the most vulnerable – 'for the face of poverty is feminine'."



Working with Women of Different Faiths and Cultures is headed by Ann Hyde. Through our partner organisation, Ghar se Ghar, this project runs various exercise groups around the town and signposts vulnerable women to relevant services and agencies. The annual 'Precious Pearls' event, gathering women of diverse backgrounds to celebrate International Women's Day, is another of the initiatives organised by the GRASSROOTS/Ghar se Ghar partnership. Ann is also an accomplished circle dancing instructor, and can often be found leading dances in a variety of faith and community settings. "If you want to do some circle dancing, I'm your gal!" Women and men are invited to join any of Ann's regular dance groups.

Karen Campbell is our **Church Related Community Worker**. While specifically linked to the Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches, Karen engages with people of all faiths and none. "My ministry involves breaking down barriers between church and community, building links which enable Christians to live the Gospel and put their faith into action." Since the start of this project in January 2010, the Council of Churches has hosted a number of events to build friendship with their multi-faith neighbours, and welcomed opportunities to be a united Christian presence in various community initiatives. The CRCW Project is deeply involved in supporting Luton's growing Roma community, who number amongst the most disadvantaged groups in our town.



Completing the team is Sarah Alexander - our **administrative support** for all the projects. If you call the GRASSROOTS Office, Sarah is the friendly voice you are most likely to hear. Sarah's contributions to GRASSROOTS have been significant, particularly in coordinating the work on our website, newsletter, annual reports, theological reflection, strategic review and Friends of GRASSROOTS. She has played an extremely inspiring role in our 'Making Luton a Fairtrade Town' campaign by coordinating events and activities throughout the year and compiling our application to make Luton a Fairtrade Town. She also volunteers to assist with Roma Church and teaching English to Roma families. She is modest and quiet but an inspirational asset for GRASSROOTS.