

# Grassroots

... a different point of view



Newsletter Edition 6 – Summer 2015

Working to build community amongst  
Luton's diverse people

In Partnership with Luton Council of Faiths & Ghar se Ghar  
(Home to Home)

# Summer

Welcome to the summer edition of the  
**GRASSROOTS** newsletter!

As we enter the beautiful summer season we are reminded that the God of Grace is the God of Nature too. "It was you who set all the boundaries of the earth; you made both summer and winter." Psalm 74:17 (NIV). We remain blessed in our work and invite you to see some of what has kept us busy in the past three months. We also wish you a wonderful summer in the months that follow!

## Exciting Volunteering Opportunity FAIRTRADE CAMPAIGN COORDINATOR

Are you passionate about volunteering for community led initiatives?

Would you like to support Luton's diverse communities in buying more ethically?

Do you have enthusiasm for leading a group of people committed to promoting Fairtrade?



We are looking for a volunteer Fairtrade Campaign Coordinator to help us continue our Fairtrade work within Luton and its diverse communities.

Luton became a Fairtrade Town in November 2011 but there is still much pioneering and everyday activity to be done in raising awareness and supporting partners and the community at large to work for trade justice by coming together to *think globally but act locally*.

For more information, please visit us online at [www.grassrootsluton.org.uk](http://www.grassrootsluton.org.uk), contact Johny on 01582 416946 or email us at [admingrassroots@btconnect.com](mailto:admingrassroots@btconnect.com)



Yasmin Alibhai-Brown with members of different faith communities and organisations from Luton and beyond

## Freedom of Speech Discussion

On 19<sup>th</sup> May 2015, more than 80 people attended a public discussion on Freedom of Speech, featuring Yasmin Alibhai-Brown (Ugandan-born British journalist and author) as our keynote speaker. Participants heard how this topic raises complex issues, given that we all have different boundaries. We should be mindful to use our freedom responsibly. This does not mean we cannot express a view which may be disliked, but we should not deliberately seek to insult and ridicule others. Freedom of expression, for some, has become a duty to attack and insult. This is not 'free speech'. It is just bad behaviour.



Sr Maire Hayes with Kiran Kaler, a speaker on the Sikh Faith, at St Joseph's Catholic Church on 16<sup>th</sup> April 2015

## Faith Talk Series A Great Success

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 each has a place of worship of the different faiths in its 'neighbourhood'. All three talks were very well attended and much appreciated, and saw the speakers fully engaging with their audiences. This has been a ground breaking initiative and it is hoped that similar encounters will be developed in the future.

## Other GRASSROOTS News



### Youth Leaders Complete Catalyst Programme

The first delivery of the Catalyst Youth Leadership training for 16-25 year olds (part of the Near Neighbours Programme) has taken place. Local youngsters gathered from 30th March-1st April 2015 for the Bronze Award, 9th May for Silver and 16th May for Gold. In partnership with the St Philips Centre in Leicester, training included themes such as leadership, networking, interfaith, team work and communication, and was delivered by Luton professionals including the local Councillor, Police and Faith communities, Luton Council of Faiths (LCOF) and the Luton Near Neighbours Hub.

### Berakah Concert

The Berakah Project unites musicians from Jewish, Christian and Muslim faiths. On 7th June 2015 the band returned to Luton as part of their 10th year anniversary tour. Playing a host of their earlier music together with some new material, Berakah's songs include a message of hope, peace and reconciliation. Highlights of the evening included a Fairtrade prize draw, and a rousing 'Happy Birthday' to the project founder, Mohammed Nazam. Band members were also presented with Luton boater hats!

### Community Meeting with MPs in Response to Britain First

On Friday 12th June GRASSROOTS hosted a meeting with Luton's re-elected MPs Kelvin Hopkins and Gavin Shuker, plus members of Luton's different faith communities. Conversations included the proposed march by Britain First, scheduled to take place in Luton on 27th June. Concerns were raised about the negative impact that such marches have on young people in particular, and the pressure placed on local resources. Following a Q&A session with the MPs, all present reaffirmed their love of Luton and proclaimed their commitment to work together for peace and unity in the town.

### Visit of Shaykh Habib Ali al-Jifri

On 10<sup>th</sup> April 2015 Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills, Inter Faith Advisor for the St Albans Diocese of the Church of England and GRASSROOTS team member, hosted Shaykh Habib Ali Al-Jifri for afternoon tea in Kimpton Village Church Hall. In 2009, Al-Jifri was listed 34th in the world's 500 most influential Muslims. He addresses key issues involving Muslims today, including interfaith dialogue, modernity and religion, preventing extremism of all types, promoting ethics and morality. During the afternoon Zafar Khan, Chair of Luton Council of Faiths (LCOF) presented the Shaykh with a Fairtrade Gift Hamper, contents including local Bedfordshire honey.

### Same Difference Project Launched

On the 10<sup>th</sup> June 2015 Beech Hill Methodist Church hosted the launch of Same Difference, a new project inviting participants to meet with other people of various backgrounds, to explore how we experience and celebrate key life milestones. Future topics will include Birth, Childhood, Courtship, Marriage, Developing Faith and more.

## Dates for your Diary

**CATALYST - Youth Leadership Training (part of Near Neighbours Programme)** at High Town Methodist Church on 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> August 2015 (Bronze), 12<sup>th</sup> August 2015 (Silver) and 13<sup>th</sup> August 2015 (Gold). Contact [near.neighbours\\_luton@btconnect.com](mailto:near.neighbours_luton@btconnect.com)

**Peace Walk** at various places of worship in Lewsey (Luton) on Saturday 26<sup>th</sup> September from 2:30pm onwards. Assemble at Lewsey Community Centre, Landrace Rd., LU4 0SW

**Same Difference** at Beech Hill Methodist Church on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday of each month from 12:30-2.30pm including a shared meal. Contact [crcwsmiles@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:crcwsmiles@hotmail.co.uk)

## Contact Us Online



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*A Catalyst participant collecting his Gold Certificate and Medal at a Luton Council of Faiths meeting*



*Berakah band members wearing Luton boater hats given by members of faith communities*



*Community members and MPs declare that a proposed Britain First march has no place in Luton*



*Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills and Zafar Khan exchange gifts with Shaykh Habib Ali al-Jifri*



*Inviting participants from diverse backgrounds to explore our similarities & differences*