



SUMMER

Welcome to the summer edition of the GRASSROOTS newsletter!

As the summer approaches, we feel the heat of the EU Referendum debates. Sadly, truth-telling has been twisted into fear-mongering and scapegoating. The issues of immigration, security and money have been used as means to blame 'others' for all our problems. We may have hoped our politicians would campaign using positive messages and by seeking to address genuine concerns in helpful ways, but the grim reality is that fear sells. The popularity of US based politician Donald Trump is a clear example of the power of fear.

In light of all this, we encourage people to replace 'fear' with 'dare' - dare to have courage; dare to hope. We must be courageous in the face of extreme views. We must stay confident in our ability to 'live well together' and 'live well with difference'. When discussions seek to defend the rights of an individual or group, we must be bold in encouraging consideration of those rights in the context of responsibilities towards the wider society. The Summer 2016 Edition of Justice and Peace Newsletter of the Catholic Church says this: "We need to build a Europe which revolves not around the economy but around the sacredness of the human person" and asks "How, in the light of the Gospel, can my vote best serve the common good?" We pray that this question will inform all our decisions on 23rd June.

Visit to Lambeth Palace

Celebrating the growing movement and success of the Near Neighbours Programme, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, hosted a garden reception at Lambeth Palace on 19th May 2016 for 'grassroots' people from different faith communities from across the country.

The invitation was well-deserved recognition of the work of our local unsung heroes - Ann Hyde (Catholic), Nila Soni (Hindu), Pari Rashid (Muslim) and Marie Burns (Catholic) who have been working tirelessly over the last 10 years as the Ghar se Ghar women's co-operative. To find out more about our work with women of all faiths and cultures, please visit us online at <http://www.grassrootsluton.org.uk>

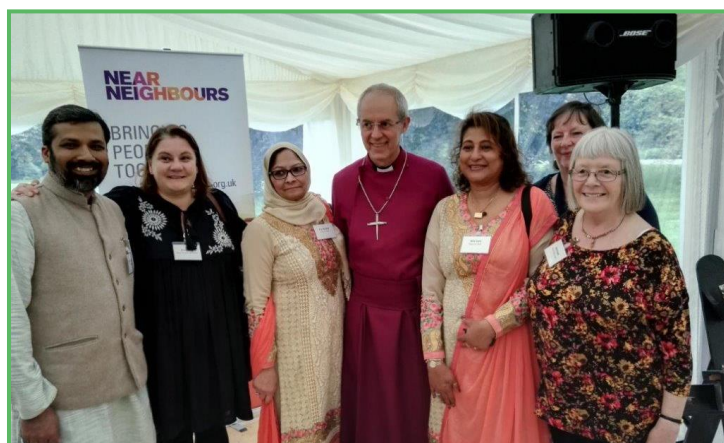
Muslims greet Christians during Good Friday Walk of Witness

In January 2016, Far-Right group Britain First carried a big cross during their unannounced 'Christian patrol' in Luton's predominantly Muslim Bury Park. They provoked local Muslims and claimed Christians are not welcome in the area.



Muslims greeting Christians and giving out Peace Candles during the Good Friday Walk of Witness

Led by the Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches, the annual Good Friday Walk of Witness gave rise to scenes far different to the claims of Britain First. The 25th March 2016, saw business owners and shoppers alike greeting the Christian procession as they made their way through Bury Park, carrying the cross between their respective churches. At Luton Central Mosque, a sizeable group of Muslims - including the Senior Imam - gathered outside to greet their Christian neighbours, presenting them with Peace Candles as a gesture of welcome, hospitality and solidarity.



Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby with Ghar se Ghar and GRASSROOTS team members

Other GRASSROOTS News

Women's World Day of Prayer

Contributions from the GRASSROOTS team were integral to the commemoration of the Women's World Day of Prayer on 4th March 2016. The deeply meaningful service was prepared by the women of Cuba, recalling their country's history and exploitation by the world's powers. One prayer felt particularly significant - "Lord we thank you for the people who work hard for the social, economic, and cultural development of our country. We pray that you will transform the walls erected by the economic blockade into wide open doors ready to receive." Recent visits to the island by Pope Francis and President Barack Obama, and the openness of Cuban President Raul Castro in receiving them, may be seen as steps on the journey towards peace and prosperity in Cuba.

Roma Easter Party

A Roma Easter party took place on 28th March 2016 in Bury Park United Reformed Church. Co-ordinated by a GRASSROOTS team member, 16 children enjoyed crafts, games and archery before being treated to a pizza lunch and Easter eggs. Roma parents shared games and conversations together and with members of the volunteer team. With 3 non-Roma participants, it was good to see the youngsters simply being 'children together', rather than 'separate' or 'different'. The party was greatly enjoyed by all.

Near Neighbours Programme Continues until March 2017

In the middle of March 2016 we were thrilled to hear the great news that Near Neighbours has been extended for another year. This means that the Luton Hub based in GRASSROOTS continues, and the Small Grants Programme re-opened in May 2016. The Near Neighbours grant process will be almost exactly the same as before, but there will be a tighter monitoring and evaluation process. Grants are now open until the end of November 2016. Information can be found at <http://www.grassrootsluton.org.uk>

'A Touching Place' - Creative Writing Sessions

It was a Christian and Muslim team effort between Karen Campbell (Church Related Community Worker) and Imrana Mahmood (local Muslim volunteer) to plan and co-lead three creative writing sessions in May 2016, focused on the themes of Identity, Peace and Turmoil and Luton Psalms. Of the 14 participants, several had no writing experience or lacked confidence, yet the depth of reflections written about themselves, their lives, the world and the refugee crisis, at times reduced each other to tears.

MWM (Methodists for World Mission) Annual Conference

For a number of years GRASSROOTS has been one of the ecumenical partners of Methodists for World Mission (MWM). The MWM conference, from 3rd to 5th June 2016, focused on Latin America, with the theme 'Spirit of Liberation'. Keynote speaker Pastor Luciano Pereira, General Secretary of the Council of Latin American and Caribbean Evangelical Methodist Churches (CIEMAL) spoke passionately on 'Church Growth in Latin America', while Rosangela Oliveira, Executive Director of Women's World Day of Prayer, spoke about women in leadership in Latin America. Workshop topics focused on ecology and sustainability, church unity and immigration.

Dates for your Diary

High Town Festival from 2nd to 3rd July 2016 (As part of the festival Churches in High Town Worship together on Sunday 3rd July at 10:30am at HOPE Church)

CATALYST - FREE Youth Leadership Training will run across July 12th, 13th, 14th, 19th and 20th 2016. Please email near.neighbours_luton@btconnect.com for details

Luton's Annual Peace Walk - 24th September 2016. Full details coming soon

Contact Us Online



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This year's Women's World Day of Prayer was prepared by the women of Cuba



A Roma Easter party took place with fun, food and games for 16 children



GRANTS NOW OPEN!

The Near Neighbours Programme will now continue until March 2017



'A Touching Place' creative writing sessions drew deep reflections from 14 participants



MWM Conference 2016 - Latin American Speakers' Panel in the Final Plenary Session