

12<sup>th</sup> April 2017

For Immediate Release

## Working Together for Peace and Unity

We, the Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF), a voluntary body of Luton's different faiths and cultures, are deeply shocked by the Palm Sunday church bombings that killed 45 people in two cities in Egypt. We strongly condemn such act of barbarism, disrespect to the sanctity of a place of worship and attack on religious freedom.

In our world, increasingly being driven by hate and fear, on one hand it is distressing to see the intent of extremists to wage a sectarian war in Egypt by killing Christians but on the other hand it is heartening to note the heroic acts of Police Officers Ms Abdel-Aleem and Imad al-Rekaibi who died in the line of duty while preventing suicide bomber from entering the church in Alexandria. It is heartening to note the Muslim-Christian family solidarity and to see Muslims raising funding for victims and donating blood.

It is only such acts of kindness and mutual support that helps us stay firm and resolute in stopping the forces of division. We need to nurture values and good character in our communities to combat extremism while staying vigilant.

Here in Luton, we saw hope when last month, following another cowardly terror attack on PC Keith Palmer and other innocent people in London Westminster, people from different cultural and faith backgrounds, had stood together in the Town Centre for a simple, hopeful and unmistakable message saying we stand together in solidarity to strengthen our collective hope that lies in our shared humanity.

As Luton Council of Faiths, we therefore reaffirm our hope, pledge and strong resolve, to continue playing an active role in creating an environment of understanding and respect amongst the many religious and culturally diverse communities, locally and where possibly influencing globally too.

We offer our heartfelt condolences to the families of those killed and injured in Egypt.

We call upon our Christian and Muslim brothers and sisters in Egypt to stand firm by the shared values and speak out against any violence by working together on the basis of our common values for increased understanding, cooperation and harmonious coexistence.