



Summer

Welcome to the summer edition of the GRASSROOTS newsletter!

After the three recent terror attacks in the UK, many people feel confused and powerless. The forces of terrorism, militarism, extremism, nationalism, racism, consumerism, individualism, seem overwhelmingly powerful and fully in control. The world seems vast and so complex, and we are so small.

What can we do?

"Vote..." someone said.

Another replied "but can we trust our democratically elected leaders?". Millions protested, exercising their right democratically, to persuade Bush-Blair not to go for war on Iraq. Did they listen? Isn't therefore democracy a failure? So why vote? And who suffers in the end? Innocent people in the streets... in London, Iraq, Syria or Afghanistan!

What can we do?

Well, if you cannot do something on your own, you are welcome to join us in our endeavours of bringing people together, as highlighted in this newsletter. Meeting together is not an option (Hebrews 10:25). It is our collective responsibility. This can yield amazing results in establishing a better world that we all want to see.

Peace Vigils Say 'No!' to Hate

The country has been deeply shocked and grieved by the violent, depraved and cowardly terror attacks in London and Manchester. On 24th March 2017, over 200 people from diverse faiths and cultures gathered outside Luton Town Hall in remembrance of the victims of the Westminster attack. Further vigils were held on 23rd May and 6th June following the attacks in Manchester and London Bridge. The message on each occasion was loud and clear: Hate-mongers, extremists and terrorists have no place in our civil and democratic society. Community leaders strongly condemned these evil acts and vowed that we will not be driven apart. They reminded us all to be vigilant against such evil and keep supporting one another.

Enjoying Conversations on the Abrahamic Faiths

Judaism, Christianity and Islam are commonly known as the Abrahamic faiths, and are very closely related in their origins, stories and holy scriptures. They have similar beliefs regarding morals and ethics, but differ in their expressions, culture, doctrine, theology and aspects of belief.



Representatives of the Abrahamic Faiths discussed their commonalities and differences

On 30th March 2017 Sister Maire Hayes from GRASSROOTS led an evening of dialogue at the Holy Ghost Roman Catholic Church, exploring these similarities and differences. The panel of guest speakers included Rehana Faisal from Luton An-Nisa Trust (LANtern) and Suffa-tul-Islam Mosque, Brian Green from Luton Hebrews and Orthodox Synagogue, and Monsignor Kevin McGinnell from Holy Ghost Catholic Church. Discussions also addressed contemporary 21st century issues, and a food donation was made to the Luton Foodbank by the organisers on the night.



The Luton community came together in solidarity to state that we will not be divided by those sowing hate and fear

Other GRASSROOTS News

Sister Maire Hayes celebrates 50 Years of Religious Service

This spring saw the 50th Anniversary of Religious Service of GRASSROOTS team member Sr Maire Hayes, a much-loved figure across Luton's different faith communities. Sr Maire belongs to the Catholic Congregation of the Daughters of the Holy Spirit and has worked with GRASSROOTS for over 14 years, leading the 'Spirituality of Justice' Project. During her 50 years of being a nun, Sr Maire has impacted many lives both in Luton and across the world, particularly in Santiago, Chile, where she lived and worked for 22 years. She is the Inter-faith Coordinator for the Catholic Diocese of Northampton and a member of the Executive of the Catholic National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN).



Sr Maire Hayes enjoys a well-earned cake celebrating 50 years of Religious Service

Reflection Day with the URC Heartland Group

Focusing on the theme 'People of the Way', the GRASSROOTS team led a reflection day for the URC Heartland group on 11th March 2017, including Bible Study, worship and interactive workshops. Celebrating and highlighting GRASSROOTS' core themes of work, activities and discussion groups included Creative Writing, Circle Dancing, Interfaith and Fairtrade, Intercultural Insights, the Diversity Game and 'Mission is...'. A thoroughly rewarding day for all involved was rounded off with lively worship, reflections and sharing from workshop participants, singing and an all-inclusive circle dance.



Activities at the URC Heartland Training Day included the Diversity Game

UBUNTU Workshops help to Sow Seeds of Solidarity

Three workshops under the theme UBUNTU, an African Nguni/Bantu term meaning 'I am because we are', took place in April and May 2017, inviting Luton participants to discuss and share their own cultural origins, beliefs and behaviours to help develop a better understanding of each other. GRASSROOTS facilitated discussions focused on how we can successfully engage in dialogue, avoid conflict and collaborate with others to address the challenges of division, isolation and intolerance.



UBUNTU workshops took place at three different places of worship across Luton

Good Friday Walk of Witness

GRASSROOTS colleagues joined the Good Friday Walk of Witness led by the Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches on 14th April 2017. Walking together, hearing deep reflections connecting the Easter account with our world today, stood as a reminder of the power of forgiveness, the challenge of living and dying for others, and that evil does not have the final say. At a time when, for many, the world seems like a dark and trouble-filled place, the Good Friday account inspires us all not to give up hope.



The Good Friday Walk of Witness gathered many people in Bury Park Beech Hill

Near Neighbours Grants are now OPEN!

GRASSROOTS is delighted to be hosting Near Neighbours for another year. The Near Neighbours programme offers small grants between £250 and £5,000, enabling local groups and organisations to bring neighbours together, and develop relationships across diverse faiths and ethnicities in order to improve their communities. Applications for Luton groups are now open until 17th November 2017. For more information, please contact Kim Greig on 07930 601640 or email near.neighbours-luton@btconnect.com.

Dates for your Diary

High Town Festival on 1st July 2017 on High Town Road, featuring many events and activities, including a Fairtrade stall from GRASSROOTS! See www.hightownfestival.org

Luton's Annual Peace Walk on 23rd September 2017 in the High Town area. Full details coming soon! For any enquiries please email info@lutonfaiths.org

Circle Dancing sessions continue to take place on a weekly basis across Luton. Beginners welcome! For dates and venues, email admingrassroots@btconnect.com

Contact Us Online



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Kim Greig is the Near Neighbours Coordinator for the Luton Hub based at GRASSROOTS