



Welcome to the autumn edition of the GRASSROOTS newsletter!

As we write, we are rocked by the devastation caused by Hurricane Irma in the Caribbean and US region. The strongest earthquake in a century has hit Mexico. A quarter of a million Rohingya Muslims have fled Myanmar (Burma) since the end of August, and Desmond Tutu has become the second Nobel Peace Prize winner to criticise fellow laureate Aung San Suu Kyi for her silence on this issue. In addition, the world seems to be becoming increasingly polarised, with the extreme views of certain minority groups becoming more mainstream. Faced with such stark realities, can we resist the tendency to give in to doubt, suspicion, fear and anxiety? Can we, as Christians, find our faith strengthened, even through the challenging questions raised by these times: Why do I believe what I believe? In a world of injustice, what issues do my faith prompt me to stand for? Am I really listening for God's voice, and how am I responding? We are challenged to find ever more creative ways to live out and share our faith, generating hope in the midst of perceived hopelessness. Here at GRASSROOTS, we try to discern, reflect and do what we can, where we are, to bring peace, reconciliation, justice and flourishing of life for all. How about you?

WHY INTERFAITH?

STORIES, REFLECTIONS
AND CHALLENGES FROM
RECENT ENGAGEMENTS
IN NORTHERN EUROPE

Edited by Andrew Wingate
and Pernilla Myreliid

We have a small number of **Why Interfaith?** books, featuring articles from many authors including **David Jonathan and Revd Bonnie Evans-Hills** from **GRASSROOTS**, for only **£10 each!** If you are interested, please call **01582 416946** for details.

Grenfell Families Supported by Luton

GRASSROOTS was proud to support and administer the 'Rebuilding Lives' campaign launched by Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF) this summer, raising £3000 to help bring relief, respite and recreation to some of the families and children involved in the Grenfell Tower tragedy. A fun day out at Wicksteed Park has already taken place, with 80 participants. The day included a trip to a theme park, the opportunity for children to cook a free lunch with their families, and a memento from the gift shop to take away.



Children from Grenfell taking part in fun activities in Wicksteed Park

'The Big Question' Interfaith Panels

'How can we make our town more respectful?' This was the theme for a number of special assemblies held in Luton schools in May and June led by Luton Council of Faiths (LCoF), and presented as BBC News Specials. The assemblies featured a panel of faith leaders from within the town, including GRASSROOTS team members, offering brief insights into their respective faiths before responding to deep questions posed by the children, including 'Why do we have religion?', 'Was Jesus a Christian?' and 'Do you ever doubt that there is a God?'. By explaining how people from different backgrounds in Luton live well together, share and maintain friendships, a positive message of respect and solidarity was left in the minds of the young.



School children offering questions to the multi faith discussion panel

Other GRASSROOTS News

GRASSROOTS Volunteer Receives Papal Blessing

Maureen Borbone, a long-time volunteer of GRASSROOTS and member of the Luton Fairtrade Steering Group, was the gracious recipient of a Papal Blessing and letter of thanks from Bishop Peter Doyle on 1st September 2017. For many years Maureen has given much of her time to the Roman Catholic Parish of The Holy Family and St John, CAFOD and GRASSROOTS, blessing those around her with endless passion and enthusiasm, being a voice for the voiceless, and increasing awareness about issues of injustice and poverty. She continues to be a rich source of inspiration for the entire GRASSROOTS team.

Peace Pilgrim visits GRASSROOTS

On 21st August 2017 GRASSROOTS was blessed to welcome Tanausú Herrera to Luton. Following the terrorist attack in Manchester earlier this year, Tanausú - a Spaniard living in London, decided to trek across the UK and Europe on a Peace Pilgrimage, and upon his arrival in Luton he had already walked 1000 miles! Tanausú brings a message of peace to those he encounters, expressing the need to engage with the 'other' and remember that there are more good people out there than there are bad. Along with his visit to the GRASSROOTS office, Tanausú also visited Luton's Quaker, Muslim, Sikh and Christian communities, and called in at Youthscape, Luton Town Hall and Discover Islam to witness some of the important work that takes place in the town.

50th Anniversary of Bedfordshire Progressive Synagogue (BPS)

GRASSROOTS was pleased to join the 50th Anniversary of the BPS on 22nd July 2017 at Clophill Village Hall, which saw a large number of people from across different faith communities come together in celebration. The event featured a traditional Shabbat morning service, a blessing for the newly repaired Torah scroll, the laying and then a talk from Gillian Merron, Chief Executive of the Board of Deputies of British Jews. BPS Leader David Young was presented with a Fair Trade gift by Natu Bhai Solanki, the Vice Chair of Luton Council of Faiths, to mark the special occasion.

Catalyst Youth Leadership Programme – applications now OPEN!

A new Catalyst programme is being delivered by GRASSROOTS, Near Neighbours and Luton Council of Faiths from Monday 23rd to Friday 27th October 2017. Catalyst is an innovative youth leadership programme designed to help young people aged 16-26 become positive role models, develop confidence, grow their skills and opportunities, and strengthen their employment prospects. If you or someone you know is interested, please email near.neighbours_luton@btconnect.com or call 01582 416946.

Luton Annual Peace Walk 2017

A great deal of work is underway in the build up to this year's Peace Walk, taking place on Saturday 23rd September 2017. The event will begin at High Town Methodist Church at 1:30pm, where a new Peace Garden will be launched featuring the unveiling of beautiful Peace Poles which have been painted by schools and community groups from across Luton. Other activities will take place as the walk visits Hope Church, the Bury Park Jamia Mosque and the Guru Nanak Gurdwara, ending at 5:30pm. For more details please visit www.grassrootsluton.org.uk or call 01582 416946.

Dates for your Diary

Annual Luton Peace Walk 2017 on 23rd September 2017 from 1:30pm to 5:30pm starting at the High Town Methodist Church. For details call 01582 416946.

Catalyst Youth Leadership Programme from 23rd to 27th October 2017 (times TBC) at High Town Methodist Church. Please note this is for 16-26 year olds only. Please email near.neighbours_luton@btconnect.com or call 01582 416946.

LOOK OUT FOR details of 'Real People Honest Talk' discussion groups coming soon! This new initiative will be seeking to identify the issues and challenges that affect our lives in Luton, and look at what we can do to address these issues together.



GRASSROOTS team member Sr Maire Hayes handing letter from Bishop Peter Doyle to Maureen



Tanausú Herrera with GRASSROOTS team members and Colin Hall from the Luton Quaker community



People from a wide range of faiths joined the Bedfordshire Progressive Synagogue for their anniversary



Young people from Luton engaged in discussion during a Catalyst workshop



A range of beautiful Peace Poles are painted and ready for installation in the Peace Garden