

*Grassroots*  
*... a different point of view*

## Grassroots Annual Report 2012-2013



*It is better to light a candle than curse the darkness*

-A Chinese Proverb

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***Dedicated to Judy Dixon, 1943-2013***

*Judy Dixon was a Community Liaison Officer for High Town Methodist Church. Since we moved to High Town in 2002, Judy's support and encouragement had been immensely valuable to the life of the Grassroots Programme. By dedicating this year's report to Judy, we want to pay tribute to an amazingly inspiring soul, who has departed from our world. We miss her.*



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## Message from Keith Brown, Co-Chair

Greetings from Grassroots as we complete another year of our work, reaching our arms out to Churches, to people of faith, and the cosmopolitan society in which we are placed in Luton. Through theological reflection we seek to be people of the Way.

We hope you find the contents of the report for the year 2012 – 2013 both interesting and informative. The encouragement of churches and the well being of society have been central in the work of Grassroots, and so it is quite significant that David Jonathan (Johny) should be co-ordinator of Grassroots as well as heading up Luton Council of Faiths. This level of co-operation has helped in the process of creating harmony where there are so many elements which seek to divide.



This year Funding Bodies are invited to be represented at the AGM, as Grassroots seeks to engage and strengthen relationships with its partners.

As I stand down as co-chair I would like to say thank you to everyone in Grassroots for their dedication to our work and to Anglican, Methodist, United Reformed and Roman Catholic Churches, for their financial support. Working together we recognise the need to engage with society at large.

May God use the vision of Grassroots to further Kingdom ideals in our day and generations to come!

The Revd. Keith Brown

## Acknowledgement of Thanks

### **Funders:**

Allder Trust - Church of England Diocese of St. Albans - Luton Council of Faiths - Methodist District of Beds, Essex & Herts - Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton - United Reformed Church Thames North Synod – Near Neighbours Fund – Awards for All

### **Partners:**

Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches - Churches and Other Faith Communities in Luton - Creative Muslim Network - Daughters of the Holy Spirit - Ghar se Ghar - Luton Borough Council - Luton Council of Faiths - New Creations - Reconciliation Walk Community - The Co-operative -The University of Bedfordshire Treehouse Chaplaincy, Student Union & Volunteer Services – Luton Town Centre Chaplaincy

### **Volunteers:**

From Churches, other Faith Communities and of no particular faith affiliation –Ciaran O’Brien - Fahad Matin - Kim Greig - Tanya Ducker (Social Work Placement Student)

# Message from the Co-ordinator

In the year gone by, Britain's citizens have experienced the negative impact of Government policies. This has reinforced the importance of engaging with politics - with a big or small 'p' – as a means of seeking changes in society, albeit at a certain scale and pace. This has felt particularly important as local communities have struggled with the effects of political decisions which seem to suggest “abandoning everything to the regulating, redeeming power of the Market”, in spite of the impact on people's lives.

Here at Grassroots we have witnessed the local effects of such policies. Luton's Food Bank is now fully operational, with an ever-growing demand for food, as economic circumstances and government policies continue to bite. Voluntary Action Luton – an umbrella network of the voluntary sector - has been closed down due to cuts in funding. The East of England Faiths Council has also been officially closed down due to lack of funding from Churches and local authorities.

At the same time, the political narrative of anti-immigration rhetoric has meant the economic and social benefits of immigration are being viewed more sceptically than ever before. The concern around British jobs for British born workers rises. So in our helplessly inter-dependent, postmodern western world, we understand that questions around justice or injustice, real or perceived, are shaping worldviews of people on all sides. It is with such a complex diversity of worldviews of common citizens that Grassroots is attempting to grapple.

In the midst of ever increasing 'multiculturalism' and 'secularism', will the Church grapple with the issues currently facing our communities, or will we be sidetracked by concern for our own survival? In Mark 10:32 we read “...and Jesus went before them ... and... they were afraid.” In marching forward, Jesus is not showing off His fitness. Instead He is showing the way, the truth and the life, part of which is to resist evil, oppression, corruption and take daring steps, challenging human understanding of this world and His word. No wonder the few who mustered the courage to follow Jesus were afraid, for they did not quite know the consequence of their daring start.

At GRASSROOTS, we remain keen to prayerfully engage with what may look difficult, or even, questionable to many. We want to reach out to kindle the flame of hope amidst what may seem strong blown winds of discord, suspicion, hatred and frustration. Through our actions, some of which are recorded in this year's Annual Report, and with much faith in our 'God of Surprises', we seek to fulfil our calling to be peacemakers, reconcilers and kingdom workers.

- *David Jonathan (Johny)*



Co-ordinator David Jonathan was presented a Luton's Best Award



Enjoying hospitality at a local Sikh Gurudwara



Bishop Richard visiting Muslim friends



Taking groups to visit places of worship in Luton

# Inter Faith Relations

Grassroots continues to work with Luton Council of Faiths and other partners to build a cohesive Luton, acting both reactively to local, national and international issues that affect Luton, and proactively to encourage and build a strong foundation of interaction, good communication and friendship. This year has shown how this hard work is bearing much fruit as the community of Luton shows its growing maturity and ability to respond quickly and effectively when tensions do flare up.

## **Challenges to Community Cohesion**

### **Reaction to the American film insulting Islam and the Prophet Mohammad**

A highly insulting film about Islam's Prophet Mohammad caused global offence, outrage and unrest, and led to protests across North Africa, the Middle East and Asia. Grassroots, Luton Council of Faiths and individual faith communities acted quickly to strongly condemn the film and the subsequent killing of innocent people in revenge for it.

### **Woolwich Crown Court Verdict & Woolwich Murder**

In March 2013 Woolwich Crown Court found 4 Luton Muslim young men guilty of planning a terror attack on Luton's Territorial Army base. A couple of months later the brutal murder of Lee Rigby in Woolwich provoked anger, hurt and upset across the nation. At very short notice, Grassroots convened an emergency meeting at a mosque in order to ensure that life in Luton remained as peaceful as possible after the Woolwich Murder. Luton Council of Mosques and Sunni Council of Mosques condemned the attack and called for justice. To show solidarity in paying our respects to Lee Rigby and standing for peace in Luton, a flower laying ceremony was organised on Friday 31st May 2013.

### **Gang related Gun & Knife Crimes**

Issues of gangs, drugs and gun crime in Luton dominated the local and national press, with 18 gun-related incidents January – 22<sup>nd</sup> May 2013, and 3 murders April-June 2013. 70 arrests have been made for gun-related crime. Grassroots helped organised and support 2 Peace Rallies in May and June that were led by Luton in Harmony, The Non Violence Alliance, Walk to Freedom and Tropical FM, where the community expressed a strong message of 'Enough is Enough'.

### **Faith Woodlands Communities Project**

Grassroots has been highly praised for its sensitive and diplomatic management role in the successful Faith Woodlands Communities Project, which came to an end this year. More than 4000 people, from so-called hard to reach BME (Black & Minority Ethnic) and faith communities, visited Maulden Woods during the life of the project 2010-13. The project facilitated groups to come together to learn about nature, and empowered communities to enjoy and engage with nature, considering our relationship with the environment around us and what our obligations towards it are. The legacies of the project are local developments of green spaces in Luton. The project culminated in a great celebration finale event with the launch of Dallow Downs & Runley Park as Luton's "Gem of Natural Resource & Heritage". Local residents and schools are now able to take advantage of this fantastic green space, which previously had been dominated by issues of drugs, crime, and anti-social behaviour.

### **Archery**

Grassroots & Luton Council of Faith's pilot Archery Project working with a Church, Hindu Temple (Mandir), Sikh Temple (Gurudwara) and Mosque has successfully empowered young people to develop skills and confidence, and interact across faiths and cultures through training them as community archery instructors. Subject to funding, we hope to build on this project over the next 3 years.



Colleagues from different faiths and members of the public expressed solidarity and sympathy for the friends & family of Drummer Lee Rigby by laying flowers



As part of our Archery Project, Guru Nanak Gurudwara, Jamiah Islamia Ghousia Mosque, and a Hindu Temple, have been set up as centres promoting archery



Children from St. Joseph's Roman Catholic School visited a local Mosque. They enjoyed learning how to play the Daff (drum) with Mehriah Primary School pupils



Pupils from 6 local primary schools created nature-themed artwork inspired by their trip to Dallow Downs & Runley Park, as part of the Faith Woodlands Project



Men and women from different cultures and faiths visiting Ely Cathedral and enjoying a guided tour of this historic Church Building



Bishop's Cup Cricket Match 2013. This brings together Muslims, Jews, Christians, Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs & those of no faith from Bedford, Luton, St Albans & Watford

### **Near Neighbours Funding & Related Activities**

Luton has been provisionally allocated £20,000 annually 2012-14 from the Near Neighbours Fund, co-ordinated locally by Churches Together in Luton. The fund aims to bring neighbours in diverse communities together, to build relationships and collaborate together in local community initiatives.



Luton Peace Walk. Over 100 people of different faiths, cultures & ages visited Al-Hira Mosque, Beech Hill Methodist Church, Shree Sanathan Seva Samaj Hindu Temple



Launching Dallow Downs & Runley Park as a Gem of Natural Resource & Heritage. The event included the unveiling of the welcome sign, music, a guided trail & picnic



Inter Community Meals & Get Togethers. Nearly 100 friends from different backgrounds came together to share the joy of Eid-al-Fitr at Jamiah Ghousia Mosque



Cooking Sessions across faiths and cultures. Various popular events throughout the year have brought neighbours together to cook, eat and socialise together



First Aid & Archery Training. Community volunteers who have been trained to become archery instructors have also undergone sports related first aid training



Neighbours Together Festival, initiated by a Pentecostal Church, inviting people from within its neighbourhood for fellowship & better understanding



# Spirituality of Justice

## Iona - Sacred Places

Grassroots participated in an ecumenical experience of community living on the island of Iona (Scotland). The five day workshop focused on the interaction between faith and ecology, and was facilitated by Martin Palmer of the Alliance of Religion and Conservation. Grassroots shared about the Faith Woodlands Project in Luton.

## Holocaust Memorial Day

Grassroots was involved in the planning group for Holocaust Memorial Day. This year's theme was "Building Bridges", with various groups sharing how they have overcome challenges to integrate into the wider community of Luton. The evening closed remembering not only the Jewish Holocaust but many other atrocities, and the words NEVER AGAIN were uttered in hope - yet again.

## Campaigning for Justice in the Global Food System

In 2013 the UK hosted the G8 summit, a unique chance to show that we will not accept injustices in the global food system any more. Grassroots was represented in the Religious lobby of Parliament and the IF campaign rally, calling for action on malnutrition, tax evasion and lack of accountability.

## Fairtrade

Despite producing 70% of the world's food, over half of the world's hungriest people are smallholder farmers in the third world. Luton's Fairtrade group, led by Grassroots and Luton Council of Faiths, continues to raise awareness of Fairtrade, encouraging people to think globally and act locally in a globalised economic system. Exciting developments in our work with schools are taking place as teachers are guided through teaching Fairtrade and local schools are working towards Fairtrade status. Luton's pioneering work has been so highly recognised by the Fairtrade Foundation UK that Luton was awarded the Outstanding Achievement Award 2012 at the annual Supporter's Conference. Luton is a featured case study in the Fairtrade Foundation's strategic report 2013-2015.

## National Justice and Peace Network

Grassroots is represented on the executive of the National Justice and Peace Network (NJPN). Areas of work included:

- A Networking Day held in the Northampton Roman Catholic Diocese where an overview of Interfaith work in the Diocese was given and the future of Europe was explored
- Planning the conference, *Breaking Open the Word-A call to Action*, exploring ways of integrating action and faith, in the light of St Luke's gospel and Catholic social teaching
- The planning group for the JPIC conference of the Northampton diocese, *The Theology of Justice and Peace*, highlighting how people, not the thirst for power and profit, must be at the centre of any economic and social development

## Film and Reflection

The Grassroots team watched and reflected on the following thought-provoking films:

- **The Lemon tree** - a film exploring Palestine – Israel relationship through the eyes of a Palestinian lemon grower whose land is taken by Israeli settlers
- **Even Rain** – a film showing an aspect of the exploitation of Latin America's poor
- **Of Gods and Men** - a film depicting the determination of Trappist monks to stay in Algeria in the face of persecution and death
- **Chasing God** – a film exploring belief in a higher power through journeying through various religious beliefs and interviewing people of different faiths



Different faith representatives attending Holocaust Memorial Day 2013. Community groups held displays illustrating their work to build bridges in Luton



The Religious Lobby of Parliament, calling for justice during the 2013 G8 summit, hosted in Great Britain. The lobby highlighted issues in the global food system



Raising awareness of Fairtrade through a stall in Luton Mall during Fairtrade Fortnight 2013. Free food samples were enjoyed as well as hand pampering by Lush



Presenting Fairtrade in the largest primary school in Luton. The school has over 900 pupils and an extremely high proportion of children from BME backgrounds



National Justice & Peace Event. The network focuses on global issues (e.g. Third World debt) and local issues (e.g. credit unions, refugees, homelessness)



National Justice & Peace conference. The network meets regularly throughout the year and holds various conferences and events

# Working with Women across Faiths & Cultures

## Women's World Day of Prayer

Women came together to celebrate Women's World Day of Prayer, this year themed 'I was a stranger and you welcomed me', prepared by Christian women in France. Team members were involved in planning and leading this event and reflections were given in St Luke's Anglican Church in Legrave and High Town Methodist Church.

## International Women's Day Events & Celebrations

These included:

- Capacitar: A women's holistic health day training course
- A Fairtrade presentation was given at Luton All Women's Centre
- Money Matters: an event looking at how benefits changes might affect women
- Celebrations at Luton Town Hall, UK Carnival Arts Centre & Farley Hill Community Centre
- Speaking on BBC Three Counties Radio & Inspire FM on the history of the day
- Precious Pearls Event, hosted by Ghar se Ghar. Themed *Women Together in Luton*, a diverse group of around 100 women shared an evening of song, dance and poetry, followed by socialising around a buffet. Presentations were given by groups including Luton Food Bank, Building Blocks Children's Centre, Luton All Women's Centre, Oasis, Holy Family Ladies Group, as well as freelance artist Liz Aldous, and Cllr. Tafheen Sharif, Deputy Police and Crime Commissioner

## Other Activities with Women

- Educational talks from health professionals and the Police
- A talk was given on good citizenship to Muslim and Hindu women
- Christmas celebrations with members from Ghar se Ghar's Ashcroft and Bury Park women's groups

## Ghar Se Ghar

Through Ghar se Ghar we have continued to work with women from different faith and cultural backgrounds to address their needs, concerns and aspirations. There have been 2259 attendances this year across all of the groups. Exercise groups continued to meet weekly in Bury Park Community Centre, and Sacred Heart R.C. Church Hall. Sessions at Beech Hill Methodist Church are open to men too. We also worked with other groups such as *Dilkhush*, *Sangham Ladies*, *Oshwal*, *Alzheimer's Carers* and Luton All Women's Centre.

## Referrals

Individuals have been supported and also signposted / referred to other support services as follows:

Domestic Violence	Police	Health	Social Services	Housing	Benefits	Counselling	Form Filling	Letter Reading	Letter Writing	Education
10	5	113	28	16	36	40	2	10	1	21

## Circle Dancing

Circle dancing featured in various celebrations including International Peace Day, One World Week, and Christmas. Workshops of specialised dances were choreographed to include the chair bound as well as mobile, with support from Luton Cultural Trust's Older Persons Project. Some of the sessions in Hockwell Ring, Blenheim/Biscot and St Anne's area, and High Town Prayerful Dance Group, were themed such as Harvest, Christmas, Lent, Easter, Remembrance and Peace. August Bank Holiday and Spring Bank Holiday events took place, with dancers gathering from across the UK..



Precious Pearls- The Ghar se Ghar core organisers performed a sketch celebrating memories of the things that they had done together over the years.

Remember When?...

*"...Cherie Blair came to visit us at one of the Bury Park exercise groups..."*

*"...Pari and Ann were interviewed by Matt for the BBC 'One Show'..."*

*"...We took a group of teenage girls to stay for the weekend at Dell Farm at Whipsnade..."*



Women's World Day of Prayer explored what it means to be a stranger in a nation, and the importance of welcome, as seen through the eyes immigrants in France



Women from different faiths and cultures visited a local Hindu Temple where they enjoyed a tour and talk, organised by Ghar se Ghar



Ghar se Ghar was presented with the runner up award for "Service with a Smile" at Luton Annual Community Awards Event at Venue Central



Women and men Circle Dancing to celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Blenheim Crescent Baptist Church

# Church Related Community Work (CRCW)

The Church Related Community Work project is in its 4<sup>th</sup> of 5 years, with the possibility of a continuation of another 5 years depending on the outcome of an external review. This has been a significant time of reflection and looking ahead.

## **Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches (BPBHCC)**

The CRCW project continues to seek and create opportunities for Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches to meet together socially to foster a deeper sense of belonging to each other, giving a greater confidence in being a Christian presence and witness in this multi-faith context. Some of these events and activities include:

- Over 80 people across denominations enjoyed a 3 course meal and disco at the Christmas Dinner & Dance held at Holy Ghost Parish Church
- A One World Week Celebration, '*This Is How We Do It*', of cultural dance, poetry and songs
- A diverse group of 66 people enjoyed the *Big Bus Ride* day trip to Clacton seaside, enjoying also the warm hospitality at Christchurch United Reformed Church and a time of shared fellowship including singing, reflections and poetry

## **Events with Neighbours of Other Faiths in Bury Park**

As part of the ongoing working out of what it means to be a Christian presence in a multi faith and predominantly Muslim context, friends and neighbours were invited to the Near Neighbours Cooking and Befriending Project. Over 40 men and women from diverse faiths and cultures cooked, ate and learnt about each other's backgrounds, countries of origin, families and careers. Invitations were personally extended to local places of worship to a Woodland Harvest Celebration, where following a recreational morning in local woodlands, approximately 50 people enjoyed a light-hearted afternoon of food, laughter & reflections. This saw Christians, Muslims, Sikhs & Hindus, ministers & lay-people, Black, Asian & White people, all dining together around shared tables. As one person reflected, 'Where else would you ever see this happen?' Fellowship shared on that day led to a warm invitation to visit a local mosque.

## **Luton Roma Church**

Work with Luton's growing Roma community could be seen as being at the cutting edge of 'living the Gospel' in Luton's context, as the Roma might easily be regarded as modern-day outcasts. Luton Roma Church meets weekly in Oakdale Methodist Church. This year significant progress has been made towards Luton Roma Church being *for the Roma, by the Roma*. Following the temporary break of the successful and growing children's work, a space is being developed where teenaged Roma boys can meet, talk and socialise. Wider issues relating to the Roma have been explored. A mock trial with a real-life judge, lawyers & witnesses, 'Europe on Trial', considered the treatment of Roma people by European governments, and Britain in particular. 'The jury', an audience of over 60 people, heard how Roma people are arbitrarily denied National Insurance numbers, contributing to unemployment, no access to benefits, and ultimately, families living in poverty.

## **CRCW Film**

In September 2012 Luton was one of the featured projects in a short film produced by the CRCW Office, with footage of Luton's cooking project and an interview with Luton's CRCW Karen Campbell.

## **CRCW Roadshow**

In October 2012 the Luton Project hosted the regional CRCW Roadshow, organised to promote the CRCW ministry, where aspects of the project in Luton were showcased through worship, a presentation and lunchtime discussions, followed by a tour through 'the patch' and a local church.



Bury Park Beech Hill Council of Churches' *Big Bus Ride* in August 2013 - enjoying hospitality at Christchurch United Reformed Church, Clacton



Luton Roma Church's Youth group trip to the cinema. For many of these young people, this was their first time of going to the cinema



Participants in 'Europe on Trial' event, organised by the Church of England St Albans Diocese in partnership with Luton Roma Church



Services were taken by the Grassroots team in various churches, reflecting on Discipleship of Christ and how this is lived out in the programmes of Grassroots

## Other Activities

Grassroots team members participated individually in a number of activities including:

- Giving talks on the themes of Discipleship, Meeting God in Friend & Stranger and Interfaith Dialogue
- Presenting interfaith and community work in Luton at the London Inter Faith Centre
- Giving an introduction to teaching Inter Faith in schools at Luton Learning Resource Centre
- The Africa Europe Faith and Justice Network's Jubilee Celebration and study event
- The Methodist World Mission Conference in Swanwick, themed Mission in Europe
- *Faces of InterFaith*, a workshop for United Reformed Churches with an interest in Inter Faith work
- *Living your Faith in Britain Today - How easy is it to live in Britain and keep your Faith?*
- Co-planning and leading various sessions of the Church Related Community Work Residential
- Convening *Cascades of Grace*, seeking to network and raise the profile of Black, Asian & Minority Ethnic women in the United Reformed Church
- Working with the United Reformed Church's *EMLOMA* (Ethnic Minority Lay & Ordained Ministers Association)
- The United Reformed Church's Human Sexuality Task Group

## Conclusion

Political slogans used in the last year have included: *A fairer future for all; Change that works for you; Building a fairer Britain; We can't go on like this; Rebuilding Britain* etc. No matter how refreshing these may sound, one has to only scratch the surface to find out that it is old wine sold in a new bottle. In Britain we have always been concerned with making our policies fairer for all, but the current political rhetoric seems to suggest that new problems have been identified, such as immigration and economic recession, as though dealing with these two will resolve all our problems.

We are failing to understand that our problems were never so inter-connected and overlapping as in current times. Guy Brandon writes in *The Jubilee Road Map; Biblical Directions for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, "Like bubbles under the wallpaper, if we push one down it often leads to unintended consequences elsewhere." He asserts how employment impacts family structures and family structures affect welfare budgets. Interest rates impact employment but they also affect families e.g. mortgage payments and credit card payments etc.

In this report, we do not claim that Grassroots has found *the* solution. In fact no one can claim to have a 'magic bullet' or a 'universal blueprint' of the perfect development model, which is fair for all. At Grassroots we feel it is more important to focus on the journey rather than on the destination alone. What matters is how much we are in solidarity with one another, and in particular with those who are on the fringes of our fast paced and action packed societies. At Grassroots we believe diversity and its inter-dependence are unavoidable. We therefore seek to work in ways which affirm multitudes of lifestyles and identities as strengths, and with a full diversity of people who together can contribute to the overall strengthening of our nation.

### Grassroots Team:

David Jonathan	Co-ordinator, and Community Cohesion & Inter Faiths Relations
Sr. Maire Hayes	Spirituality of Justice & Inter Faith Co-ordinator for the Roman Catholic Diocese of Northampton
Ann Hyde	Working with Women of Different Faiths and Cultures
Karen Campbell	Church Related Community Worker
Sarah Alexander	Administration & Project Work Assistance
Ryad Khodabocus	Community Relations Development Officer, employed by Luton Council of Faiths, working closely with Grassroots

*Grassroots welcomes co-workers, guests and visitors from Churches, other faith communities, and those of no particular faith affiliation for events, visits to places of worship in Luton, and conversations over a cup of tea or a meal.*

*Please do get in contact with us.*

## Financial Summary 2012-13

<b>Income</b>	<b>£</b>
Grants received	99,148
Donations	1,650
Interest	127
	<b>100,925</b>
<b>Expenditure – Charitable activities</b>	
Mission Education & Advancement	42,142
Spirituality of Justice	10,720
Work with Women across faiths & Cultures	8,580
Church Urban Fund – Near Neighbours	12,178
Bury Park Beech Hill Church Related Community Work	2,609
Awards for All	3,375
	<b>79,604</b>
<b>Governance costs</b>	
Total	8,204
	<b>87,808</b>
<b>Net Incoming Resources for the year</b>	
Total	<b>£13,117</b>
<b>Reserves at 31 August 2013</b>	
Unrestricted	<b>13,297</b>
Restricted	<b>21,155</b>



# Breathe

*Here we are,  
Here we stand,  
At one with sky & sea & land;  
At one with Earth, & all therein;  
Close your eyes  
And breathe life in.*

*Draw deeply now upon the air;  
Make every breath a silent pray'r,  
From heart, from soul,  
From deep within;  
Close your eyes  
And breathe life in.*

*May every second swell with praise  
And wonder at this best of days;  
The sounds, the smells,  
The touch, the taste -  
Let not one moment go to waste;  
But every heartbeat strive to tell  
Of life abundant,  
Life lived well.*

*So close your eyes, & breathe life in;  
Let life abundant flow within -  
Like sea & sky & all the land,  
Sustained, renewed, by Unseen Hand;  
With all the Earth, & all therein,  
Let's pause awhile  
And breathe life in.*

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