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Urban Ministry and
Theology Project
Newcastle East Deanery

Annual Report May 2001– May 2002

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Introduction

The past twelve months has proved to be a productive year for the UMTF. Its position amongst the communities of the East End has been consolidated and amidst the complexities of the social and economic regeneration of the East End of the City of Newcastle outlines of some major pieces of work are becoming clear.

New people.....

Key to any organisation's success is its staff and this past year has seen the appointment of two people associated with the Project. First of all, in October Ms Hazel Juggins was appointed to the post of Project Administrator. Hazel has brought with her many skills and the other Project staff is indebted to her for her efficient contribution to the Project's work.

Second, there was the appointment of the Rev'd John Sadler to the post of Church Development Worker. John joined the UMTF staff full-time on 1st December. He is licensed across the historic Byker parishes – St Michael's, St Silas, St Martin's and St Anthony's. John's appointment came after a long search for the right person to work across Byker on strategic issues in the church's life.

New premises.....

In June of last year the UMTF began to share offices with the East Area Community Development Team in the old Walker police station on Welbeck Road. Key to releasing the premises was a partnership not just between ourselves, who represent the voluntary sector, and the local authority but also with the East End Partnership. The staff that work from 'Partnership Building' realise how much working under one roof contributes to establishing effective working relationships in the local community.

Church Urban Fund support.....

The *Church Urban Fund* (CUF) grant awarded in September of 2000 has underpinned the financial side of the Project. Indeed it is true to say that the release of this grant has made partnership working possible. It has given the UMTF staff confidence and resources in order to make the churches an effective presence at the discussion table. Related to the CUF grant is process of evaluation. Our evaluator is Professor Hilary Russell who is the Deputy Director of the European Institute for Urban Affairs, part of the Liverpool John Moore University. In the past year she has made two visits during which she has begun to assess the impact the UMTF model of working is having in the context of Byker and Walker.

Parishes Advisory Group.....

The UMTF is a piece of work that was initiated by the Newcastle East Deanery and it arose specifically out of parishes working together across boundaries. Key to the success of the Project is the involvement and support of the local parishes in this part of the Deanery. The parishes that support the Project meet three times per year in the *Parishes Advisory Group* (PAG) to hear progress and to reflect on important strategic themes that arise. Under the leadership of Jennifer Ross, it has focused this year on the many community networks in the East End and on church development. Members of the PAG were involved in interviewing John for his appointment and four members went the Faith in the City Conference in February. There is a need to develop its members during the coming year.

There have been a number of significant events in the third task area of the Project. These include:

A training day for trainee industrial chaplains was held, studying social and economic development in the local economy. The Project hosted one day's training in June (to be repeated in 2002) for 18 trainees and their tutors who visited three partnerships and met with local workers – The Ouseburn Partnership, Healthworks and the East End Partnership.

Ordinands from Cranmer Hall spent half a day on their urban pastoral studies unit looking at ways the church relates to social and economic regeneration in the inner-city. So far, there have been two ordinands placed with the Project as part of their training - each parish based – one at St Martin's and one at St Michael's. Another is planned for St Anthony's later in the year and another will be Project based, looking at issues to do with the growth of minority ethnic communities in the East End. We look forward to the relationship with Cranmer Hall growing in the coming year.

UMTF staff again taught the module on Regeneration: Theology and Practice on the Newcastle University MA in Applied Theology programme. The four students (all in some form of church ministry, ordained and lay) spent a day hearing about the work of the Project a visiting various parts of the East End. This was held towards the end of the course and earthed in a practical way the more theoretical discussions held in the university

The Project initiated a series of workshops on the theme of local theology. This was one of the large themes in the Faith in the City Report published in 1985, but since then the inner-city context has changed rapidly. How does this change in context effect the way we do local theology? This is the question we asked Bp Laurie Green to reflect upon when he visited in November – 'in the light of Globalisation' and the Rev'd Ken Leech in April – 'in the light of regeneration'. Others will be contributing to this series during the next year. To date there have been around 30 people attend the workshops held in the East End.

The Coming Year

There are four key areas that the UMTF staff and the management committee will need to address during the coming twelve months.

- The CUF funding for the project will come to an end in mid-2003. A key objective for the next 12 months is to next stage of the project
- Development of the EECVSF and the succession to the East End partnership.
- The results of the feasibility study at St Michael's, Byker and the planning of the next step in the development of the church in Byker.

The UMTF will be taking part in a response to a recent report on theological training; out of these discussions will emerge new shapes for theological training and education in the Church of England and the Project has an opportunity to make an impact on the delivery of training in the urban context.

St Martin's Church

St Martin's hosted Computer Gym over the last six months of 2001 and this made everyone aware of the need for a greater level of computer access and information technology training in the Monkchester Ward.

- Discussions are in progress about an open access computer suite to be set up in the office (with the help of Peter Hill)
- Proposed work with the congregation to take further the work already done on a Vision Statement – in order to identify appropriate ways forward for the church.
- The development of a 'Byker IT Employment Project' – working closely with Peter Hill – which will be a project for unemployed people in the Byker and Monkchester wards who wish to receive training and employment experience around the area of IT support (i.e. not just being able to use computers, but to mend them!). It is planned that the project would then, in turn, provide free (for the first two years) IT support to low-income groups (community and voluntary groups, churches etc). Application has been made for European Funding, and also to Northern Rock – with a planned starting date in the autumn of 2002.

St Silas Church

St Silas PCC have been thinking about the future of their building for some time. The church development role has enabled them in a few ways.

- Work with the PCC to identify a vision for the church – bearing in mind its massively changed circumstances over the past number of years (and the future – where the church building will be in a car park surrounded by shops). This work is on going and is shortly to involve the whole of the congregation – particularly in confidence building.
- Taking up work already started on a partnership between Byker Bridge Housing and St Silas – with the idea that Byker Bridge build an accommodation block for vulnerable people on the south side of the church, and have the north aisle of the church for their offices. The remainder of the church building would be re-ordered to include a hall, kitchen and toilets, a large foyer, and a large worship space. The work of the church would include working with Byker Bridge in a ministry to vulnerable people, and working with the new Morrisons and the Shields Road in the provision of crèche facilities. The expectation is that there will need to be a development of what it means to be church during the week.

Contextual Bible Study

In partnership with the University of Glasgow (John Riches) we are developing a way of bible study that originates from the developing world. Using some of the insights from Liberation Theology, this 'way' has the potential of increasing participants self-confidence – and has a particular 'bias to the poor'.

Theological Training and Education

Sharing our learning.....

This past year has seen the UMTF spend more time sharing its experience and thinking beyond the boundaries of the diocese. One highlight was the invitation to present at the Faith in the City Conference held at the High Leigh Conference centre in February. Eight persons – five lay and three ordained attended – and presented the project's progress. The presentation was well received and our experience produced a great deal of interest across a number of other dioceses and has generated some visits to Newcastle.

During this past year we have had visits from the town centre parish in Rotherham and also from clergy from the East End of Glasgow. We have shared with members of the Board for Mission and Social Responsibility in this Diocese and also with a group from the Norwegian Diocese of Møre, Newcastle's exchange Diocese with the Porvoo Communion.

Also, Project staff were invited to share their experiences and thinking at a conference on Re-generation at Reconciliation at the University of East Anglia to mark the 900th anniversary of Norwich Cathedral. They gave a paper analysing some of the trends in the programmes of the social and economic regeneration in the City of Newcastle and reflected upon the nature of the church's response. A similar paper was given at the Urban Theology Unit in Sheffield to a group of urban specialists.

Working together.....

Central to the achievements of the UMTF over the past year has been the inter-relationship between the three task areas – community engagement, church development and theological education (see below). The Project staff has met monthly to ensure the links are made between the areas. It is increasingly important, as the projects become larger and more complex that these relationships are handled carefully since it is in the overlaps between the three areas that one of the novel ways of working occurs.

The Project staff would like to acknowledge the support they have enjoyed from the many colleagues in the East End. In particular, the support gained from ecumenical colleagues, from the UMTF Management Committee and from the officers of the Newcastle East Deanery.

Community Engagement

One of the strands that the UMTF has sought to continue is the longstanding involvement of the churches in the structures of regeneration in the East End of the City of Newcastle. Therefore the Project has continued to support the work of the East End Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (EEC&VSF).

The UMTF has acted as the Forum's bank and has provided administrative support to the steering group and the Forum meetings. The development of the Forum is vital to ensure that the Voluntary and Community groups across the East End are properly resourced, and can collaborate rather than compete when it comes to funding, clients, and activities. The Forum must also make sure that it is able to form a credible part of the succession to the East End Partnership, which ends next March.

To assist in the sustainable development of the EEC&VSF, the Project applied for and won a Millennium Award thereby securing expert support from Durham Business School.

The Project is also involved, through the EEC&VSF, with the:

- Newcastle Regen Forum, with a seat on the steering group.
- Community Empowerment Fund, with a seat on the interim steering group
- Pentagon Partnership, the Voluntary Sector forum of the TyneWear partnership
- VONNE, the regional voluntary sector network
- Regen School – an agency being set up to provide mentoring and help to new social enterprises

We support, through the EEC&VSF:

- Community Education Forum
- East End Youth Strategy
- East End Community Health Project
- Byker Advice and Information Project
- A number of Resident's Groups and Networks

The EEC&VSF also provided a representative (a member of the project) to the Walker Riverside Advisory Group (WRAG). The WRAG, comprised mainly of members of NCC Cabinet also had representatives from the Walker Riverside Community Network. Their job was to select the preferred consortia to participate in the regeneration of the Walker Riverside area. After many, sometimes difficult meetings and presentations, the property development group *Places for People* was chosen. They will create a master plan for the area, and then, if approved, will through a Development Company and Trust work with the community and council. The Project was represented at a Health Impact Day which attempted to gauge the impact Going for Growth is having on local people. We will be pressing for the exercise to be repeated at suitable intervals.

Growing out the work with the East End Partnership has come involvement with a number of city-wide schemes for the voluntary sector, through which UMTP staff has gained a wide knowledge of funding regimes and availability as well as helping local organisations attract funding:

- Community Economic Development Panel assessing projects for support through European Structural and Regional Development Funds
- Newcastle Community Chest
- SRB6 Grants panel.

There have been other important initiatives supported by the Project:

- The Project has supported the creation of the *East Area Asylum Seekers Support Group*. Providing administrative support, and helping to secure premises for a clothing store and employment of a worker. The work with asylum seekers and refugees is a vital service in our community. In addition, EAASSG is encouraging and supporting many volunteers to work in the clothing store and in befriending schemes. Most of the impetus for the Group and many of the volunteers come from local churches.

- The Project, working on behalf of the Community Work Assessment Consortium in the North-East of England (CWACNEE), has enabled 14 people to be trained in basic community work skills and 10 of them to proceed to assessment for NVQs level 2 or 3. We will be setting up a Community Work training network (within the C&VSF) to provide a rolling programme of training and assessment across the East End.
- UMTP have given their support to the work being done by Byker and Newcastle Waste Group (BAN Waste) in its work, through a special select committee, on the alternatives to waste incineration.
- UMTP members have played a full role in HealthWorks. We have been involved in both the local groups and partnership and the citywide steering group. HealthWorks recently gained a £2.5m Lottery grant.
- The project has led the Anglican Diocese of Newcastle's project proposal bid to the Newcastle Gateshead Initiative's City of Culture 2008 bid. Whether or not the bid is successful, moves will be made to establish a faiths council across the Newcastle-Gateshead area.

Church Development

John Sadler writes: 'The past five months, since coming to Byker, have been exciting and revealing! Exciting because so much has happened, and revealing because I have learned so much. The particular focus of my work has been St Michael's, Byker, and this has included a degree of responsibility for the pastoral care of that community, but I have also become involved quite significantly at St Martin's and at St Silas'. The highlights of the church development work over the past few months are:

St Michael's, Byker

When the originally proposed scheme (working in partnership with Byker Bridge Housing) was not accepted and the PCC agreed to decide to make the church redundant, St Michael's sensed it was at an important crossroads. Since then, a number of things have happened:

- The congregation have engaged in a process of reflection which has formulated a vision statement which gives a real sense of direction for the future.
- The PCC has agreed to the carrying out of a feasibility study which will not only identify feasible' (in every way) options for the future of the St Michael's site, but will engage with the Byker and wider communities in trying to decide what those options might be. The funding for the study has almost been secured and a partnership of Comm-ad and Xsite have been commissioned to do it. The first meeting took place last week with wide representation from the community, identifying the best ways to gather information, and a brainstorm of possible future uses. The results of the study will be presented in September and decisions about the way forward made then.
- The PCC is also setting up a photographic project – probably with 'Community Photography' – with a view to recording the process of change over the next months (using local Byker people – who will be trained as part of the project). The results will be displayed in, for example, the Post Office on Shields Road, and possibly made into a brochure.
- In the meantime, the church will need to find another meeting place, so it is proposed to move into a shop at Raby Cross where we will develop a 'community engagement' model of being church.