

- John attended the Faith Based Regeneration Network Conference in London and will be involved in the planning of another FBRN conference in the North East this autumn.
- Linda Billany (a trustee of St Martin's Centre Partnership) and John attended the Daycare Trust conference in London on the link between childcare and education.
- John is attending a project development management course which is being run by the directory for social change.
- Steve has represented UMTTP in discussions at the Youth and Community department at Durham University, exploring ways of delivering experience led training for trainee youth and community workers.
- Peter gave the opening address at the Walker Riverside Gateway Placemaking Event and also spoke to the Walker Riverside Regeneration team at their team building day at Linden Hall Hotel.

People

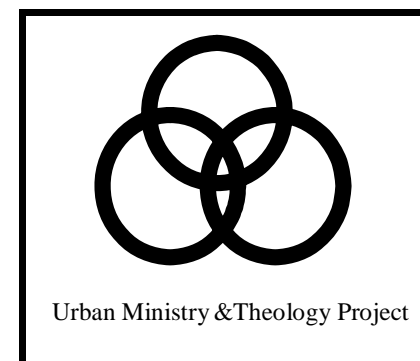
Our administrator for two days a week this past year has been Helen Eltringham of Barnardos who has been seconded to us. Helen moves on to work part-time at St Martin's Centre in mid-June and we are very grateful for all her assistance. We will be recruiting a new administrator later in the year.

The UMTTP staff would like to record their thanks to all who have served on the management committee this year – for their support and encouragement – and also Bishop Paul as chair for his hard work on our behalf.

31st May 2006

Urban Ministry and Theology Project

Newcastle East Deanery



Annual Report, 2005 to 2006

It is clear that urban contexts are not spiritual deserts. Longing, hope, thanksgiving, celebration, penitence, lament, sorrow, forgiveness, healing and renewal are all evident in Byker. Through faithful Christian presence and some exemplary pastoral ministry the Church has got a 'good name' again. Perhaps some of this energy and fortitude needs to become more explicit? Encouraging the churches to name what they dream of becoming and what they thank God and ask him for might be a constant source of spiritual development and a way of supporting each other on the journey.

This paragraph appears in the recently published *Faithful Cities*, the report of the Commission on Urban Life and Faith. You will remember that it is the last paragraph of the Bishop's evaluation report on the work of UMTF that we presented at last year's AGM. The quotation appears in a section about how theology is done in the city which has the title *Everyday Theologies*. Facing it is a quotation for the Newcastle Diocese's framework for urban ministry speaking about a church that is transforming (both of its own life and engaged in the transformation of society) and UMTF staff had an important role in helping to shape this thinking. In the final chapter of *Faithful Cities* there is almost half a page on UMTF's contribution to finding new ways of training ordinands and other trainee ministers in the inner city.

We mention this at the beginning of the report to help us all remember that the efforts we have all made working together over the past seven years are recognised more widely than we might have imagined. There are signs that the lessons learnt here in the East End of Newcastle as we have attempted to develop the life of the local church amidst enormous social, economic and cultural changes are being absorbed elsewhere, something that can be of real encouragement to us as we move to the next phase of development.

The inaugural meeting of UMTF took place in May 2001 and

an act of worship together, through informal conversations or by telling the stories of transformation during a session on a module, helping students to understand what it means to experience change in the shape of the church's ministry and indeed to be involved in the planning of such changes. Our experience so far is that we are all growing in confidence and skill as we tell our stories – we might not get it right every time but the communication of the good news is powerful to those who visit it us from the outside.

The UMTF staff has been active this year in sharing our experiences here in the East End with those in other parts of the country and even abroad:

- In September Peter and Steve attended the National Estates Network Conference in Birmingham at which George Lings from the Church Army was the key note speaker.
- In March Peter took part in the Urban Congress held every two years in Chicago presenting two workshops on UMTF's work.
- Dorothy Craigie (St Michael's) and Margaret Temple (St Martin's) accompanied by Steve went to *Mission 21* a large conference on Fresh Expressions of Church in Sheffield in March.
- John Sadler presented the fund raising strategy used at St Martin's to a day conference hosted by the Churches Regional Commission at which there were over 50 delegates.
- Peter contributed an article with the title 'Opening the Future of the City; Masterplanning, Culture and a Cause for Celebration in the East End of Newcastle' that was part of the journal *Crucible's* edition on the work of the churches in English Core Cities.
- Sue has represented the Byker churches on the diocese's Domestic Violence Task Group.

second year Readers and trainee OLMs and an urban theology pastoral studies unit to Cranmer Hall and Wesley Studies Centre students.

UMTP has now become part of the Regional Training Partnership, a new organisation set up across Newcastle and Durham Dioceses and part of York Diocese to reconfigure the way that people are trained for licensed ministries – lay and ordained in the Church of England, the Methodist Church and the United Reformed Church. The importance of the work that we are doing with students is therefore being recognised regionally as well as nationally (see the reference to *Faithful Cities* at the beginning of the report). There is a challenge for us over the next year to build on this achievement and develop the current work of UMTP into a *Centre for Contextual Urban Theology* which will be able to relate fully to the regional theological training institutions and draw down appropriate resources to support the development of a local theology across Newcastle-Gateshead.



One of the features of our theological training programmes is becoming the major contribution being made by members of the congregations to our students learning. This might be through sharing

this is the fifth AGM of UMTP. We need to remember that UMTP was set up for a five year period to address the situation amongst the Byker Churches as they were at the end of the 1990s and so this is a significant milestone for us.



In twelve months time UMTP will be significantly different. Final plans are being made to the proposal to form a Mission Initiative across the four Byker parishes. The Byker parishes themselves, the deanery and the diocesan pastoral committee will approve plans over the next couple of months and we anticipate that there will be an inaugural event in the autumn. In short the four Byker parishes, alongside Christ Church, Walker will embark on a way of working that builds on what has been achieved over the past few years and with the purpose of giving,

enhanced value to the Byker churches, the Byker community and beyond through a way of being and working that gives support to and enables each faith community, working in partnership with each other and the wider community, to fulfil its own purpose and mission more effectively.

To reach this stage the churchwardens and representatives of the Byker parishes have met regularly for the past 18 months to consider the way forward. The Mission Initiative meets the hopes of the Byker parishes for a greater stability, for a deeper way of working together and for fulfilling our vision for what the future holds. What is proposed is a major step forward and represents a 'coming of age' for the parishes after a difficult period of time.

Community Engagement

The past twelve months in the community engagement sphere have been demanding ones for UMTF staff due to the vacancy at St Anthony's. There have been key developments in three areas – on Walker Riverside, at the southern part of the Byker Estate and in the voluntary and community sector:

Walker Riverside Regeneration

Peter Robinson has been the voluntary sector representative on the Walker Riverside Partnership Board for 18 months now and attends the board meetings every couple of months. He chairs the panel of residents' representatives which is responsible for representing community views to the board. He also has been part of the Community Facilities sub-Group which is developing plans for the Community Focus on the present Lightfoot Sports Centre site down to Walker Road.

In the autumn of 2005 there was a major consultation across Walker Riverside and communities were asked for their views on various planning scenarios. Of those who were consulted, around 9%, the majority were in favour of a significant development of new housing and community facilities. This result reflected the lack of family housing that is available in the East End (and indeed the city of Newcastle as a whole) but it was disappointing that more people did not take part in the consultation, even though everyone was offered the opportunity. There is much more to do in terms of helping people move

Culture takes time to change and the work of the UMTF through its three areas of focus is beginning to make a difference by creating more sustainable churches. Theological training offers new perspectives and experiences and allows congregations to reflect on their experiences through interaction with outside students. Community engagement offers a strategic understanding of the changing nature of our communities and built environment allowing churches to make informed decisions which affect the future of churches' place within local and national life. Church development is working to enable congregations to participate more fully in the life of the church and discover their gifts as we seek to reach out into our parishes. It is creating partnerships through which responsibilities can be shared and interdependent relationships fostered. Local Ministry is moving congregations towards greater participation and is broadening the numbers involved in key decision making in our churches.

So sustainability is rooted in the model which the UMTF operates, changing the dependency culture and creating the means by which people can reflect on their history, grow into new areas of responsibility, and make informed decisions affecting the church of the future.

John and Steve both draw our attention to a vital point in our development as parishes – the need to sustain ourselves and become even more self-sufficient as the Mission Initiative takes shape later this year. Sue will say more about the development of Local Ministry during the AGM itself but one important theme for the coming twelve months must be an increased attention to our own education for discipleship and training for ministry as God's people called to mission here in Byker.

Theological Education and Training

During the last academic year UMTF staff have taught *Theology in the City* to MA students, *Theology and Practice in Context* to

have consequences on those who come after us. Our communities are the product of previous generations and reflect the decisions and attitudes of the past which have made us who we are today. The same applies to the next generations and the decisions we take and attitudes we generate will affect the next generation. So as we work towards a sustainable church we need to be conscious of our past, self-aware in the present, and working for the future.

Our work in the UMTF often meets with the legacy of past generations, particularly when we face a dependency culture which is embedded into our communities, stemming from the often patronising relationships with the heavy industries around which communities grew, and perpetuated through the benefit system and local authority.

But dependency culture is also reflected in the lives of our churches. This is not an uncommon challenge faced by churches and can disable the life of Christ's body. If our understanding of church is based on St Paul's description of the church as many functioning parts of one body then it implies that we all have a part to play in making that body effective through interdependent relationships.

Dependency culture creates relationships built on a shift of responsibility from the majority onto a powerful minority. It is easy for this to develop where the majority feel under resourced and reliant on the powerful minority to provide for the needs of the body. This can feel seductively comfortable; the majority need do little but make their demands heard and the minority enjoy the power given to them and the feeling of being indispensable. However, this can be crippling to the life of the local church as the minority do not have sufficient time or energy to carry out all the work of the church and the majority end up feeling de-skilled, undervalued and lacking in confidence.

from consultation to involvement. There is also more work to do in making the information about future change more accessible. This must be the immediate goal not only for UMTF staff but also for other community organisations in the East End. It's only if we all get involved that the decisions taken on which will affect all our lives—will be the right ones. Only then will we create inclusive communities that will flourish in the long-term.



One of the key issues for the churches is how existing communities south of Walker Road are supported as new facilities come on stream in the proposed Community Focus during the next few years. St Anthony's Church will have an essential role as it will be one of the few organisations that can provide a focus for local people during regeneration and afterwards. This is an opportunity for local Christians and an occasion to which we must rise. John Sadler been working with the PCC to determine what the next steps might be for the congregation.

Another issue for St Anthony's is the relocation of the school which is to merge with Wharrier St Primary School to create a two form entry Church of England primary school that is lo-

cated in the Community Focus. We need to be able to support the Governors, Headteacher, staff and pupils as they prepare for such a big change in the next few years. This would also be a focus for the church's ministry within the Community Focus area alongside the Methodist Church which is also seeking a presence.



Byker Regeneration

Over the past year the Byker Design competition has come to an end and the award has gone to Letts Wheeler from Nottingham. For many months now we have been involved in consultations about the future of the southern end of Byker – below Commercial Road and St Lawrence Square. There have been some good aspects to the consultation process in that residents have been asked for their views at every stage and invited to comment on models from competing architects. On the other hand it has not always been easy to relate the models to the reality communities face on the ground and nor has there been chance to present a consistent voice from the voluntary sector given the structures of representation that the local authority decided upon when the design competition was first muted. There are signs that, as the community proceeds to the next

ment strategies. The PCC also invited a NSM priest who has a wide experience of children to observe a drop-in session and give an independent view to help us move forward.

Another example of the importance we are attaching to sustainability is in the development of St Martin's Centre where John has led a development process to produce a business plan for the new building. This was important for many of the funders who wished to reassure themselves that once built the centre would be viable for the years to come. Included within the business plan is a comprehensive budget for the next three years showing how the centre would generate enough income to employ a Centre Coordinator and pay all the bills!



Steve reflects on how the concept of sustainability is rooted in the way that UMTP has enabled us all (staff members, congregations and the deanery) to work together:

The Old Testament phrase 'and on your children's children' is a familiar one to many of us and is accompanied with either a blessing or a curse. It is a powerful reminder that the actions of our current generation can

Over the past year a great deal has happened. The congregation of St Silas' have settled in to their re-ordered building and it is becoming used more and more. St Michael's have continued to develop their work at St Michael's Centre and, meanwhile, St Michael's Church building has been rid of all its dry rot and has been totally re-plastered and painted. St Martin's have a new building which is being acclaimed by many in the community as the 'community heart'. And St Anthony's is carefully trying to look to the future and discover what it is that God is calling them to be and to do in that soon-to-be regenerated community.

We are, increasingly, becoming better equipped to live out God's calling to be Christ in the various neighbourhoods of Byker and to build community. The opportunities being offered to us through having 'state of the art' facilities are second to none and we have the skills and the resources to take advantage of all of this. The challenge, however, for the church development 'part' of UMTP, is to see whether we can all grow and make full use of all these opportunities – building community such that the church isn't just surviving but thrives and buzzes with life – making us more able, in the Byker community, to serve the God of love we all believe in.

One of the key themes in all our work is that of sustainability something that is focused by the question – what do we leave behind us for the generation that is to follow us? This has been important, for example, at St Michael's Centre as the PCC supported by Steve Dixon has been working towards enabling the daily Drop-in - which hosts over fifty children every week – become more self-supporting. In partnership with Kids Kabin, we have been working with the

volunteers who staff the drop-in to help us understand better our objectives and develop more effective behaviour manage-

stage, that the voluntary sector will gain a formal voice in the design process. This is very necessary if the southern part of Byker is going to retain a community infrastructure that will allow local residents to flourish in the next phase of the estate's life.

East End Community Development Alliance

The Alliance, as it is now known throughout the East End of Newcastle, has now made important progress towards independence. It has a business plan that includes becoming a Development Trust later in the year. The two original partners in the Alliance were HealthWorks and the East End Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (EECVSF).

HealthWorks has come to the end of its funding stream and has been replaced across the city by the Health Trainers Project, a partnership with the Primary Care Trust, which is focusing on helping local people to live healthier life-styles. EECVSF is also coming to the end of its natural life and next year it will be absorbed into the Alliance. As the needs of the East End change and the voluntary sector responds appropriately the continuity with the East End Partnership which the churches have supported over the past decade continues to be important – this is because it modelled a way of working that brought statutory, voluntary and private sector partners together.

EECDA will be an increasingly important organisation in the East End and will continue to represent the voluntary and community centre during continued regeneration. It aims to be one voice among the many that are needed in the continued debate about the future shape of the East End, and through UMTP we will continue in our leadership and support role.

Church Development

This past year has been an important one for the development of our church buildings. *St Silas'* church community continues to benefit from its refurbishment. Sue Faulkner now serves on the

Byker Bridge board. There are an increasing number of groups using the building, including some (for example Age Concern) with which the church is able to forge longer term relationships including the provision of worship. *St Martin's Centre* is now finished and at the time of writing we are just a few days away from practical completion. The grand opening with the Bishop of Newcastle is on Saturday 15th July. As a community-based project there is much excitement and anticipation around St Martin's, although we need to remember that the past couple of years have demanded a great deal of time and energy on the part of the PCC, the trustees of St Martin's Centre Partnership, UMTF staff and our consultants. Over £1.7million has been raised and this is an enormous achievement.



In the Byker Estate, *St Michael's Parish Church* has had the benefit of an English Heritage National Lottery Grant to restore the roof and repair the plaster work on the interior walls. The result is spectacular and the next step is to remove the pews and create a performance space for local groups to use. After that attention will have to be paid to creating a fully functional area that can be used in all sorts of ways – the heating, lighting, flooring, security and landscaping will all need to be improved and then a mezzanine floor will be inserted which will allow the church to be devel-

oped for use by community and voluntary sector groups. We are currently looking for partners and there is a presentation in July to help potential users and supporters see what opportunities are offered by a culture, heritage and arts centre in Byker. The *Aspire Partnership* under the leadership of Phil Kitchen continues to grow and is very aware of the hard work that lies in front of it and also the need to widen its membership. *St Michael's Centre* continues to flourish – the Drop-in and the Crew have given us a very solid base for developing our work with young people in future years and have enabled us to build up a great deal of trust between children, families and the church community. The *Community Information Technology Academy* supported by John Sadler is moving on to a new phase in its life but has made a very significant contribution to our own learning about fundraising and also to the lives of those whom it has trained.

All this is very exciting and we have come a long way in terms of how our buildings are now available for ourselves to use and also for members of the community. But.....where is all this leading us? What difference is it making? On this John reflects:

There's a story of how, some years ago, a brand new hospital was built in an African city. It was a state of the art facility with all the latest equipment - and it promised a level of health care never experienced in that country before. The sense of expectation, in terms of the difference it would make, was very high indeed and you could almost feel the sense of excitement in the streets of that place.

Ten years later, however, nothing had changed. The hospital was there but much of the equipment wasn't working because no-one knew how to repair it and hadn't taken the time to find out, and the staff were the same as they had always been, unwilling to accept the challenge of a new facility which could have changed the whole city.

But what's this got to do with church development?!