

## **Searching for Identity: The Social, Economic and Cultural Context of Newcastle Diocese**

In the 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the diocese of Newcastle the communities within its boundaries are increasingly complex and fragile, full of potential yet also of uncertainty, eager to re-position themselves within a rapidly changing economic environment, yet with a slightly doubtful attitude towards the consequences of doing so. There are tensions between the visions being generated, the struggle to compete globally and being realistic about what is achievable.

Newcastle upon Tyne is the city from which the diocese takes its name. It is the centre of gravity of north-east England, sitting as it does within the Tyne and Wear metropolis of around 1.65 million inhabitants out of the region's total population of 2.5 million. It is widely characterised as 'party city' and many are attracted to its celebratory instinct and the 'present-day noise, banter, affability and exuberant sense of social ownership of the city's central area'.<sup>1</sup> The city's ambition to be world class in its higher education, tourism and culture and creative industries, its desire to be a national leader in retailing, financial and health services symbolises the need for the region to position itself within a global, informational economy.<sup>2</sup> However, this ambition is also a stark reminder of the economic realities. Compared to other regions in the United Kingdom the economic performance of the North East is consistently weak and this is compounded by indicators of innovation such as self-employment, qualification levels and expenditure on research and development by local businesses, all of which are also below average.<sup>3</sup>

The diocese is often said to be 'a rural diocese with an urban fringe', something that is also true of the county of Northumberland which accounts for much of its geographical area, with its South East urban areas, influenced by the legacy of the coalfields. The diocese includes Alnwick, the market town voted 'Best place in Britain to live' by Country Life magazine in 2002 but it also has places with some of the highest levels of deprivation in the United Kingdom, in its urban areas and hidden away in rural areas.

The aim of this chapter is to focus on the social, economic and cultural factors which characterise the context of the diocese and in doing so to illuminate the region's contemporary search for a fulfilling and sustainable identity. Initially, there will be an account of two highly significant events in recent years, one from Newcastle itself and the other from the wide open spaces of Northumberland. The narratives and analysis of these events will lead into an attempt to characterise the structural changes within the diocese that are affecting every community and therefore every parish, regardless of location.

### **Reinvention of Newcastle**

Newcastle is a city in transition, needing to find its place within both Europe and the United Kingdom without the traditional industrial infrastructure that supported it throughout the middle years of the twentieth century. Amidst the gloomy prospect of a gradually declining population the city council launched a major programme for regeneration in June 2000. *Going for Growth*, with its plans for substantial demolition of

previously white working class communities in both the west and east of the city, contained a vision for a competitive, cohesive and cosmopolitan city. There was an accompanying economic analysis that was persuasive to many who held key decision-making positions within regional and national structures of governance. At the time of writing the overall branding of regeneration has changed but much of the former Scotswood has been cleared of its industrial housing stock and awaits firm plans for redevelopment whilst its former communities remain dispersed. At the same time, communities in the east end of the city are searching for economic stability within a growing retail and service sector around its fringe and working in partnership to create mixed communities.

A reflection on this episode in the regeneration of Newcastle highlights important themes for communities in the diocese. First of all, there is a high emphasis on the need for a reinvention of the social and economic basis on which the region exists and seeks to flourish. This was articulated by strategic thinkers in overarching organisations that have responsibility for mapping out the future. In the events of 2000, they had seen something with clarity – that in order to thrive in the future, Newcastle had to align itself with the underlying movements of the global economy and this meant changing dramatically. Secondly, there is the question of participation. The mistakes in the consultation process of *Going for Growth* revealed a deep-rooted assumption by the ‘City Fathers’ that they had merely to instruct their citizens in how the future would be and effectively ignore the wishes and wisdom of grassroots communities; ironically it was the local authority’s own community development teams that had learnt the value of such a contribution in the previous decade, but these were swept aside. Thirdly, questions relating to the role of the community and voluntary sector in the region were raised. Having established itself, it seemed, as a sector that could assist in the delivery of social and economic renewal through partnership working, it was suddenly marginalized in the consultation leading up to June 2000 and afterwards. *Going for Growth* suggested that community processes were now of little value and certainly not robust enough for the present moment, and the third sector entered a period of uncertainty about its strategic role.

### **Foot and Mouth Disease in Northumberland**

On 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2001 foot and mouth disease originated in Northumberland and it is difficult to overestimate the long terms effects of this terrible episode, which were devastating to the countryside. Three hundred farms in Northumberland experienced a livestock cull and nearly a quarter of a million animals were slaughtered. The tourism industry in Northumberland suffered as rights of way were closed and visitors had to be encouraged to stay away from the county. Ugly and environmentally detrimental funeral pyres dominated the television news for many weeks. The way that the national crisis was handled caused local anger and frustration not least because of the uneven treatment of farmers, disadvantaging those who did not have to cull their livestock. The public inquiry launched by Northumberland County Council highlighted the emotional impact of the crisis caused by the long period of isolation that the county experienced – Northumberland was the last county in England to be deemed free of the disease in November 2001 – and also by the long term health implications for its inhabitants and especially for children.<sup>4</sup>

Like *Going for Growth* in Newcastle, the impact of foot and mouth disease in Northumberland highlighted key themes for the communities of the diocese. There is the future of the countryside itself. The farming industry was devastated and many who had been working within it were compelled to adopt alternative employment and even lifestyles. The local economy's reliance on tourism as a long term investment was underlined, as plans for the recovery of the rural economy emphasised. Also, many city-dwellers did not fully appreciate the deeper impact of foot and mouth disease on underlying issues to do with patterns of food consumption, the dominance of supermarket consumerism and consequent pressures on the agricultural sector to farm more intensively. The rural and the urban were often seen as unrelated and distinct spheres but the experience of 2001 highlighted for many the importance of a 'city region' – the concept that cities have permeable boundaries with their surrounding areas and that the relationship between town and countryside is one of mutual dependence. Finally, questions to do with the environment, so often seen as exclusively rural issues, were now seem to be linked to all contexts.

### **Searching for Identity**

Whether a community within the diocese regards itself as rural, city centre, market or county town, suburban, former coalfield or urban the issues highlighted by these two paradigmatic events are currently having a key impact. In other words, there are some fundamental changes happening beneath the surface of everyday north eastern life, brought about by the relentless activity of the global information economic system. Individuals, communities, groups and governing bodies face challenges in responding to these underlying shifts and the need to respond is an imperative. Across the North East there is a search for new ways of being, for new and sustainable economic patterns, for new links with other parts of the United Kingdom, Europe and beyond that will be adequate to the task. Forces to do with the participation of individuals, communities and the voluntary sector, to do with an economy that requires greater innovation and a wider skills base, to do with a new understanding of the interrelatedness of the disparate parts of the region's life and to do with environmental awareness, all these are meeting with responses in the actual lives of communities throughout the diocese.

How are the communities, institutions and patterns of living in the North East region being shaped? To express it in sharper terms, what is the identity of the communities that make up the diocese of Newcastle? If there are fundamental shifts beneath the surface of the social, economic and cultural life of the region what is happening above it? Five themes will show the lines of development in the region's identity in the early twenty first century – increasing ethnic diversity, changing structures of local governance, the growth of partnerships, the nuancing of regeneration and the importance of tourism and culture.

#### **1. Ethnic and Social Diversity**

The North East has a reputation for being predominantly ethnically white although the extent and impact of Irish and Scottish immigration during the nineteenth century is often overlooked, as is the migration of local people away from the city.<sup>5</sup> The

exceptions to this are well known: the West End of Newcastle which experienced immigration from the Commonwealth in the post war period, South Shields which has hosted a Yemeni Arab community since the late nineteenth century and Gateshead which is home to an orthodox Jewish community.

Within the diocese there are some small but significant trends. In North Tyneside where the numbers of the Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese and Afro-Caribbean communities are small - 1% of the total population in 1991 with a very small increase since - it is only possible to say that significant communities are just beginning to form in neighbourhoods such as Whitley Bay and Wallsend. In Northumberland such communities are even smaller and even more dispersed with virtually no representative pattern.<sup>6</sup>

In Newcastle there is a difference of scale. The major minority ethnic communities are Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Indian, Chinese and Afro-Caribbean, and membership of these communities is not much more than 15,000 persons. Yet, this is not the whole story. In the decade between the 1991 and 2001 censuses the minority ethnic population increased from 4.1% to 6.9% of the total population. Those of ethnic origin in South Asia increased from 2.9% of the population to 4.1%. There are significant other communities also: for example the Italian community and eastern European nationalities that for the moment are not revealed in the statistics. Then in 2000 there was a significant increase in asylum seekers settling in Newcastle as a result of a larger Home Office dispersal programme. In the west end there was continuity with previous experiences of migration to build on. In the east end, where there was little experience of non-white ethnicity it is now common to see Afro-Caribbean families queuing at the bus stops to attend church on Sundays or shopping in the new Morrisons on Shields Road. The figures are difficult to estimate but some put the new level of non-white ethnicity in the east end at now over 3%. There is anecdotal evidence of some Newcastle communities now hosting over thirty language groups – Farsi, Kurdish, Afghani, Albanian, French, Russian Czech, Turkish, Yugoslavian, Spanish, Turkic, Gujarati, Singhalese, Tamil and Servo-Croat, Mongolian are just some and this is not to mention the large variety of native African languages.

The voluntary sector has led the way in supporting such incomers, making practical efforts towards integration and enabling struggling communities to recognise new energy and talents in their midst. Alongside the statutory agencies and regional charitable organisations such as the North of England Refugee Service, grassroots community groups supported by many leaders from within churches of all denominations been the most effective local agencies.<sup>7</sup> Also notable is the work of The Black and Ethnic Community Organisations Network (BECON), a relatively new group that seeks to challenge the social exclusion of minority ethnic communities, provide training opportunities and facilitate the networking of black and minority ethnic groups throughout the region.

There is a challenge here that needs greater recognition and discussion: that of a growing ethnic and, by implication, religious diversity within a social milieu that has been traditionally ethnically white and religiously Christian. How is the north east of England and the communities of Newcastle diocese in particular to respond? In a recent short article the Tyneside novelist, the late Julia Darling, made the point that the communities of the North East already have within them the inner resources to embrace diversity, or as she called it cosmopolitanism: she believed that, 'we could only be truly cosmopolitan if we studied the place where we lived, our family histories and the stories of our past'.<sup>8</sup> If the diverse elements that have traditionally made up local life in North East communities, features of our neighbourhoods that we have probably overlooked, can be treasured then we have a resource through which to embrace relationships with people who have very different ethnic origins and therefore interact creatively with increasing social diversity. Self-discovery of a regional culture that is much more varied, more diverse and more dynamic than the traditional stereotype that has been offered, either from within or from a distance, offers a way forward. The growth of local studies, for example in the recent work of Robert Colls and Bill Lancaster, is an important step in this direction.<sup>9</sup>

## **2. Local Governance**

One of the features of the North East, in common with other regions has been the growing complexity of local governance. This is something that has happened at all levels and has been particularly intense during the past decade. In 1999, central government established the North East Assembly. As a representative rather than elected body it has a specific responsibility to ensure that broad regional interests, and long term ones, are represented as regional strategies are drawn up. The Assembly represents the region to central government to ensure that the region gets the best possible deal as government policy is drawn up. The North East Assembly holds the regional development agency One North East accountable in its allocated expenditure of public finance and, in turn, it is One North East that is responsible for driving forward the Regional Economic Strategy. Other government agencies focus specific areas of work, so for instance the region now has the Arts Council North East which is part of a national development agency and oversees the distribution of public finance for arts projects. Alongside such agencies a Government Office North East now exists, representing central government and its policies as they are shaped for regional application.

However, as these layers of regional governance have developed and perhaps expectations of new levels of participation have been raised, there continues to be a continued democratic deficit in many communities. In some urban areas turnouts in local elections can fall well below 15% of the electorate and although local arrangements have changed to include area committees alongside ordinary electoral ward meetings, in theory to allow more points for communities to engage, there has been little improvement in participation levels. Many thought (or perhaps, hoped!) that the referendum in the autumn of 2004 to bring into being a Directly Elected Regional Assembly would herald a rejuvenation of the electoral process but the

resounding 'No' result suggested that there would continue to be more governance alongside a continued decline in involvement.

However, there are two nuances required to place the changes in local governance in perspective. First of all, the rejection of proposals for an elected regional government was understandable in the light of the proposals themselves which did not offer substantial delegated decision-making. As the Bishop of Newcastle remarked in the House of Lords a few days after the referendum, 'if the people in the North East had felt that they had been given a real opportunity to exercise some real power to shape their own destiny, the vote might well have been very different'.<sup>10</sup>

Secondly, recent research in some of the region's most deprived communities has posed sharp questions about the ability for apparently more open structures at local level to assist in the overcoming of social exclusion, particularly in urban areas. A stark conclusion said something about the overriding emphasis on survival rather than involvement: whilst families and whole communities continue to have low living standards, limited opportunities for personal and community development and insufficient access to key facilities then their engagement with representative structures in both their participative and democratic forms is going to be less than ideal.<sup>11</sup>

These observations indicate the barriers to making progress. It might be suggested, however, that the future of governance in the region will be guided by the impact of other factors, one of which is the recent development of partnership working.

### **3. Partnership**

It is widely accepted that for solutions to local problems to be successful and sustainable local people themselves need to be involved in finding solutions through working with those who can best support them. Such is the complexity of the social and economic problems that communities throughout the diocese face that the concept and practice of partnership is now being brought into the foreground. The key to good partnership goes beyond the demands of government policy to an acknowledgement that no one organisation has the answers, whether it be a community or voluntary sector group, a local authority, government agency or even a religious institution.

The past decade across the diocese has seen a substantial growth in formal partnerships. Each local authority area now has a Local Strategic Partnership. The Newcastle Partnership, committed to 'a new way of getting better services for local people'<sup>12</sup>, is responsible for the delivery of central government's Neighbourhood Renewal National Strategy Action Plan through a multi-agency approach and also, as one of the most statistically deprived local authority areas in England, for apportioning the Neighbourhood Renewal Fund to struggling areas. The Northumberland Strategic Partnership describes itself as bringing together 'all the stakeholders in the county within a supportive framework to work together in the interests of economic, social and environmental development' and seeks to promote

the bold vision that by 2010 Northumberland is 'well connected and proud of its people, heritage, excellence and ambition'. Working on a vastly wider geographic scale than its urban counterpart it coordinates the work of six other local strategic partnerships aligned to the district councils boundaries.<sup>13</sup> North Tyneside Strategic Partnership embodies its values and hopes for the communities of the borough in what it calls the Shared Plan. Top of the list is the desire to 'increase opportunities for people to be listened to, to make a difference and to be kept informed.'<sup>14</sup> Supplementing the strategic partnerships there are many neighbourhood partnerships often taking a substantial level of responsibility (including funding) for improving difficult areas.

In 2006 in almost every community across the diocese local people are being invited to be involved in partnership working. The language used, the promises held out and the concept of partnership itself are significant developments in a region that has not always sought to involve local people in determining the shape of their social, economic and cultural environment. For this reason, in rural Northumberland, in the former coalfield areas and in urban areas there are cultural barriers to developing the capacity of communities for this type of participation. If a community has been used to the guaranteed provision of employment, housing and other services by dominant institutions during a previous era then living in a global, post-industrial era when those institutions can no longer provide is a real challenge to an ingrained dependency culture.

Partnership working, therefore, represents something of a renaissance of participative democracy but it's not known for its simplicity! Without a doubt such a new style of governance has introduced a greater complexity to local communities than a decade ago. Challenges remain: to make intelligible the language of governance, to empower local people in working with well-resourced personnel from statutory agencies, and to catalyse a truly creative contribution from local communities rather than burden them with a disproportionate workload. Partnership working, therefore, requires new styles of working from all participants. Often elected members have been providers to dependant communities and now need to assume the role of leaders who can enable communities to articulate realistic hopes. Equally, local residents need to be encouraged to take appropriate responsibility for the future rather than rely on the traditional providers. Recent research asks the poignant question: can the distribution of power be negotiated in such a way that effective trust is established between grass roots communities and agencies that in the past have acted in a well meaning but top-down fashion?<sup>15</sup>

#### **4. Regeneration**

The task of social and economic regeneration now is a challenging one for all sectors because of its timing within the history of the North East. David Byrne has recently shown how 1970 was the point where the region became more industrial than it had ever been. Although the collapse of the mining industry from the heights of the early 1920s had already been substantial the outcomes of two important factors worked positively together - the growing opportunity for the employment of women from the

1930s onwards and the successful male re-deployment in new manufacturing industries in the 1960s.<sup>16</sup> However, by the turn of the millennium the effects of globalisation had become unavoidable as the nineteenth and twentieth century industries had all but been eliminated and manufacturing accounted for less than 15% of all employment. There is a general feeling that an epoch is closing for Newcastle's economy, that there is a need for the region to be 'rescued from the stigma of industrial decline' and that the 'old staples' of the Newcastle economy – commerce, leisure and retailing are leading the way to an economy based on consumption rather than production.<sup>17</sup>

Regeneration, to take its stated outcomes at face value, seeks to look at the renewal of the whole of society and must not be judged solely by the story already told about *Going for Growth* earlier. Questions to do with the population's needs in terms of education, housing, the nature of communities and access to services are crucial since societies living within an outdated industrial framework have little chance of relating effectively to a contemporary world without experiencing severe exclusion. Lessons still need to be learnt from the property led, private sector driven approach to regeneration experienced through the work of the Tyne and Wear Development Corporation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, but a fresh impetus of programmes offer a very different starting point. The difficulty then becomes one of genuinely placing the communities at the heart of the practice of regeneration, given the sharpness of the economic realities and the requirement for the North East to compete with other regions.

In the midst of these challenges, however, there are good examples of communities taking responsibility for developing their own futures in a rapidly changing world and realising potential by building strategic alliances both within and outside their own communities. This is the case in Northumberland where the low density of population across the county presents a particularly challenge.<sup>18</sup> Northumberland Community Council, an umbrella body for the voluntary sector, has been influential in the development of a wider range of voluntary and community organisations across the county. It has supported the growth of a number of Development Trusts in places such as Amble, Belford, North Sunderland and Seahouses and Alnwick. These trusts aspire to lead the task of regeneration by shaping their locality's infrastructure and residents' involvement so that confidence and participation can be improved such that economic prosperity is achieved. Another example of a way of working to meet the challenges that Northumberland poses is the Rural Voices Network, using information technology to improve communication between the members of the farming community, the voluntary sector, business people and the public sector working across the county.<sup>19</sup> The Northumberland Strategic Partnership, mentioned earlier, supports the development of the whole, currently through its efforts to produce a community strategy that will influence future patterns of coordination, and therefore governance, throughout the county.

## **5. Culture and Tourism**

As the North East has attempted to develop in a sustainable ways, through partnership and all the good examples of regeneration, a central place has emerged for the cultural and tourism sectors.

The focus for the cultural agenda was the Newcastle-Gateshead bid in 2002 for the accolade of European Capital of Culture in 2008. Unsuccessful as it was, it did act as a vehicle for debating the place of culture within the life of the region and gave birth to 'Cutlure'<sup>10</sup> ('Culture to the power of 10'), a decade of high profile cultural events, an early example of which was the hosting of the Tall Ships race in 2005. The Regional Cultural Strategy for the North East of England, drawn up by the consortium Culture North East, builds on the distinctive character of the people and also of the place: it is about celebrating this distinctiveness, about recognition and therefore also about competition with other regions both nationally and throughout Europe. The region's many recently started music festivals – in Rothbury, Berwick upon Tweed, at the Mouth of the Tyne, Orange Evolution on the Newcastle-Gateshead Quayside and in Alnwick are just some – are all designed to attract new visitors and promote the image of the region. Sporting events such as the Great North Run which is now one of the most popular half-marathon's in Europe and the marketing of the region's premier division football teams are also important ingredients.

Tourism has been identified as a key growth area for the local economy which will contribute to the growth of the region's pride.<sup>20</sup> Already supporting around 10% of jobs in the North East there are now precise targets for the growth of tourists who stay and also for day visitors and their spending on each visit. The North East is the least visited region in the country and it is hoped by 2010 for there to be an increase to 1.3million domestic visits and 700,000 international visits annually. Within the diocese the rural and coastal areas of Northumberland – now branded 'the Blue Sky County' - are one focus: Alnwick Castle and the Gardens, with its recent investment in the Tree House, is now marketed overseas and seeks to attract international visitors as part of wider itineraries. The UNESCO World Heritage Site of Hadrian's Wall draws many visitors a year. The Northumberland farming community is diversifying not only in finding a fresh use for redundant farm buildings to provide tourist accommodation but also in the supply of meat and bakery products together with local arts and crafts products, through farm shops, building on the Northumberland brand through internet marketing.

This emphasis on culture and tourism brings with it tensions that remain to be resolved. One lies between an understanding of culture as the lived expression of values and beliefs that are held locally and an understanding of culture as represented by the arts and performance located within significant institutions. The Newcastle-Gateshead bid for the European Capital of Culture attempted to hold together these two perspectives. For the author of this article this tension is embodied by the view from Newcastle's east quayside – now dominated by the Sage Music Centre, the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, the Gateshead Millennium Bridge and highly priced riverside apartments – into the community of Byker, clearly visible because of

its distinctive architecture, representing contemporary disadvantage and yet also a vibrant cultural heritage of its own reaching back to the industrial revolution.

Another tension exists between culture as a replacement industrial base for the region and culture as art. Cultural regeneration is bringing new jobs into the region: new hotels jobs, retailing opportunities and employment for graduates from local universities within the arts sector all give expression to the stated aim of stimulating 'vigorous and sustainable economic growth of the region's tourism, cultural and creative industries.'<sup>21</sup> However, this concerns many who see culture being commodified within an overall rebranding of the North East region, something that fits within a consumerist worldview and potentially de-values the creative aspects and compromises the distinctiveness of the region's contribution to a national cultural project.<sup>22</sup>

It's important to add one other factor. Northumberland is often described as one of the best kept national secrets. 'Sh! Don't tell anyone!' is a common response to the tourist who discovers and expresses its delights. Whilst the economic benefits of high profile cultural and tourism strategies are urgently sought, negotiation continues between the demands that a global economy makes on a small region within a growing European Union and an internal desire for a more insular existence.

### **What are the Implications for the Church?**

Each of these five areas impacts on the life of the Newcastle diocese itself and its parish churches. A full discussion lies outside the scope of this chapter but, by way of conclusion, some lines of current development and some of the strategic issues for the church can be outlined.

The gradual growth of religious pluralism in the North East, particularly on Tyneside, has led to the establishment of Newcastle's Council of Faiths in 2005. This is an important and indeed bold anticipatory sign that a new configuration of religious groupings is required in the years to come. It signalled a willingness by the major faith groups to work together on issues of common concern and will require the churches to see interfaith dialogue in a new framework of action focused on the regeneration of local communities. The Church of England with its ecumenical partners will undoubtedly play a key role but formal space has now been created for perspectives from other faith groups who will experience north eastern life quite differently from more established communities.

As governance patterns are changing and partnership working is being developed there are implications for the church's ministry. Recent research highlights the contribution that faith groups make to the development of human relationships and social networks as one basis for the flourishing of whole communities.<sup>23</sup> This contribution has sometimes been overlooked, not least by churches themselves, and more strategic thinking is required to see how parishes might make best use of their resources to serve their localities and help take responsibility for determining appropriate patterns of community life. In recent years the church has aligned itself with the growth of the voluntary sector and its involvement in the governance of local regeneration programmes, not only in

Northumberland but also in Newcastle in the New Deal for Communities programme, the Ouseburn Trust and the Walker Riverside Partnership Board. In some places parishes are entering into neighbourhood partnerships with statutory agencies, voluntary groups and community organisations around specific themes - for example at St Martin's, Byker in working with children and their families and at St Silas', Byker around the issue of homelessness. Many parishes are reordering their buildings as resources to allow new alliances to come into being through a much wider community use – among others, recent work at St Christopher's, Gunnerton, St Mary the Virgin, Stannington, St John's, Percy Main, St Mary's, Fawdon and St Margaret's, Scotswood illustrate this creative involvement. Other parishes such as St Mary's, Longbenton, Holy Sprit, Denton and the Benwell Team are discovering partnership through their involvement with community youth work. Since the launch of the Church Urban Fund after the publication of *Faith in the City* in 1985 over £2million worth of grants have been made to projects such as these and the Partners in Community Action (PICA) board will continue this momentum. Taking responsibility for the future of civil society, in partnership with others, has many implications for the local identity of the church and for its patterns of ministry. Further reflection is required on the distinctive nature of the church's contribution, the values that the Christian tradition enables worshipping communities to bring to bear and the place of outreach within new networks of relationships.

In the activity of regeneration clergy and lay people are involved at many levels and a key recent theme has been that of vision. In 2005 the Bishop of Newcastle held a series of 'Good City Hearings', asking the question 'what would make Newcastle a good city?' The events included one for young people and some of the results were reported in the national report *Faithful Cities*.<sup>24</sup> The findings have the potential to inform a wider debate around the diocese not just about developing a realistic vision in itself but also about how that vision might be brought into being.

Finally, when it comes to tourism and culture there are important questions arising out of the region's Christian heritage. This is a resource that has the potential to deepen an overall understanding of local culture and also enrich the local tourism offer. The church on Holy Island and at Hexham has a central part to play but other initiatives are being taken - for example, in the Hexham deanery through information leaflets on local churches, in the north east of the diocese with a publication 'In the Steps of the Saints' and with plans in Wooler to develop a staging post on St Cuthbert's Way. It has been easy in the past for the Christian heritage of the region to be overlooked and even eclipsed by the emphasis on the Roman Empire's heritage. Creative uses of information technology and a greater integration of the Celtic spiritual tradition within the region's strategies for renewal, the schools of the diocese and the life of church communities will be important steps forward.

As the North East region continues to search for its new identity within a globalising world the local church is called to join in this search and play its own distinctive part. It does this however, recognising that its own identity will be reformed in the process. Newcastle diocese for the majority of its 125 years has been a symbol of the church's commitment to the lives of those who were engaged in the project of the industrial

revolution. Today, it is important that the diocese continues to be a symbol of the church's commitment to finding the love of God in the processes of change required for the development of sustainable communities. Perhaps the greatest contribution that could be made is for the church to live within the tensions this chapter has identified, to be a travelling companion with a region that is searching for its new role and to ensure that the voices of the weakest within its boundaries are given a dignified hearing.

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<sup>1</sup> Bill Lancaster. "Sociability and the City." In Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster (eds). *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History*. Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore & Co Ltd. 2001, pp. 319-340 traces the roots of 'party city' in an antiestablishment sentiment born of ordinary folks exclusion from civic celebrations and reaching back to the early nineteenth century.

<sup>2</sup> Tom Cosh. "Knowledge as a Basis for Local Competitiveness – A Newcastle Case Study". *Northern Economic Review*. 32. 2002, pp.182-189

<sup>3</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development. OECD Territorial Reviews: Newcastle. 2006 ([www.newcastle.gov.uk](http://www.newcastle.gov.uk) viewed 25<sup>th</sup> July 2006)

<sup>4</sup> Northumberland County Council Public Inquiry. *Report of the Foot and Mouth Disease Inquiry Panel*. 25<sup>th</sup> February 2002 ([www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk) – viewed 25<sup>th</sup> July 2006)

<sup>5</sup> Mike Barke. "The People of Newcastle: A Demographic History". In Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster (eds). *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History*. Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore & Co Ltd. 2001, pp.133-166

<sup>6</sup> Veena Soni, Government Office North East. *Ethnicity in the North East: An Overview* (c.2003)

<sup>7</sup> *West End Refugee Service* has led the way, followed by the *East Area Asylum Seekers Support Group* and *Walking With* in Wallsend.

<sup>8</sup> Julia Darling. "My Kind of Town." *Guardian*, 11<sup>th</sup> September 2004

<sup>9</sup> See Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster (eds). *Geordies; Roots of Regionalism*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Northumbria University Press. 2005 (second edition)

<sup>10</sup> House of Lords. Hansard Index, 8 Nov 2004: Column 681

<sup>11</sup> Ali Madanipour and Tanya Merridew. 'Neighbourhood Governance: Capacity for Social Integration. Newcastle upon Tyne, Walker Case Study'. December 2002 (see website for this project involving ten European Countries [www.infra.kth.se/sb/sp/forskning/index.html](http://www.infra.kth.se/sb/sp/forskning/index.html) - viewed 26th July 2006)

<sup>12</sup> *Newcastle Partnership Handbook. Working to Plan*. August 2004 (see [www.newcastleplan.org.uk](http://www.newcastleplan.org.uk) – viewed 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2006)

<sup>13</sup> See [www.nsp.org.uk](http://www.nsp.org.uk) – viewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2006

<sup>14</sup> See [www.nsp-online.org.uk](http://www.nsp-online.org.uk) – viewed on 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2006

<sup>15</sup> Fred Robinson and Keith Shaw. "Regeneration, Partnerships, 'Community' and Governance in the North East of England." *Northern Economic Review*. 31. 2001, pp.4-19

<sup>16</sup> David Byrne. "The Nature of Post-Industrialism: South Tyneside in the Twenty-First Century". *Northern Economic Review*. 36. Summer 2005, pp.1-14

<sup>17</sup> Natasha Vall. "The Emergence of the Post-Industrial Economy in Newcastle 1914-2000" In Robert Colls & Bill Lancaster (eds). *Newcastle upon Tyne: A Modern History*. Chichester, West Sussex: Phillimore & Co Ltd. 2001, pp.47-70

<sup>18</sup> There are only 157 resident persons per square mile and 200 villages with less than 500 residents across the 2000 square miles of Northumberland.

<sup>19</sup> See [www.ruralvoices.org.uk](http://www.ruralvoices.org.uk) – viewed 13<sup>th</sup> July 2006.

<sup>20</sup> Interim Regional Tourism Forum. *North East Tourism Strategy 2005-2010* ([www.tourismnortheast.co.uk](http://www.tourismnortheast.co.uk) – viewed 26<sup>th</sup> July 2006)

<sup>21</sup> Culture North East. *The Revised Regional Cultural Strategy for the North East of England*, p. 9 ([www.culturenortheast.org](http://www.culturenortheast.org) – viewed 26<sup>th</sup> July 2006)

<sup>22</sup> David Byrne. *Understanding the Urban*. Houndmills, Basingstoke: Palgrave. 2001 (see chapter 6)

<sup>23</sup> Commission on Urban Life and Faith. *Faithful Cities*. London: Church House Publishing/Methodist Publishing: London. 2006, p. 25

<sup>24</sup> Commission on Urban Life and Faith. *Faithful Cities*. London: Church House Publishing/Methodist Publishing: London. 2006, p.54ff (see paragraphs 6.37 to 6.49)