

Paper 1

The Urban Ministry and Theology Project (UMTP): East Newcastle upon Tyne

The Story so far:

UMTP was set up in 1999 to explore a new way of working over four parishes in the east end of Newcastle upon Tyne. The four parishes, St Silas, St Michael's, St Martin's and St Anthony of Egypt are in an area of high deprivation which has been and continues to be the subject of regeneration initiatives – and the churches have been quite vulnerable.

Prior to the start of UMTP, long interregna had been experienced, and it had been difficult to attract clergy to the area. Acknowledging, however, that the role of a parish priest in any parish must involve engaging with the community, developing the life of the church in the context of that surrounding community, and encouraging opportunities to reflect theologically with a great variety of people from both inside and outside the parish, UMTP was set up to enable this to happen in a much more efficient and effective way!

The way this was done was to appoint clergy to each of the parishes – where he or she would be responsible for the pastoral and liturgical needs of that church – but then to give him or her a particular responsibility to exercise over the whole of the four parishes. One person works with all the churches around the area of community engagement, another works with all four churches to help them think about church development, a third is responsible for enabling all the theological reflection and thinking that happens both inside and beyond the parishes and a fourth has, as part of the church development responsibility, the task of working with the four congregations to set up local ministry teams.

In some ways, this way of working might be likened to a team ministry. However, unlike a team ministry, very clear job descriptions have been drawn up so that the abilities and skills of potential new colleagues coming to UMTP can be measured against them. In addition, all four parishes, with their very differing traditions, remain distinct.

There is a sense in which, therefore, UMTP is not so much a 'project' as a way of working – and this has developed now into the proposed Mission Initiative Newcastle East (MINE). This new mission initiative (see attached sheet – *Paper 2* - setting out our vision, purpose, proposed outcomes and our way of working – very similar to the original UMTP ones), which can be allowed under the recent pastoral measure, is a way of affirming our way of working to date and also of passing 'control' of the way in which we work into the hands of elected parish representatives rather than it being managed, mainly, by people from other parts of the church.

In this way, it could be said that MINE is now in the process of taking over from UMTP - and that UMTP will no longer need to exist! This is true, except that UMTP has become a sort of brand name in urban theology circles around the country and we are loath to ditch it! We have decided, therefore, to transfer the UMTP name to the theological teaching and reflective part of our work (not least because UMTP's

reputation around the country is, in particular, to do with its training and educational role).

Our present situation:

Peter Robinson, who initiated the original Urban Ministry and Theology Project nine years ago and who, until recently, coordinated the work of the project (together with responsibility for the training and education part of our work), has now left, and we are looking for a replacement who would take his work forward. This would particularly be in terms of developing a centre for contextual theology which would be a resource for the whole church in the north east as well as further afield – and which would develop within the Regional Training Partnership.

In addition, the person appointed would coordinate the work of MINE as well as having responsibility for St Michael's and St Martin's (although, initially, he will have an assistant in the person of the church development worker – see job description). In turn, the MINE team (which works in a mutually responsible and accountable way) would work out together the best and most effective way of ensuring that MINE delivers the outcomes we propose.

With the MINE vision and way of working paper (*Paper 2* - see above) is also the job description for this post (*Paper 3*); reading the two in parallel will help towards a clearer understanding of our way of working and how it all fits together!