

Introduction

For many people life is tough, trying to do the best for themselves and their families, whilst struggling to make ends meet. The current cost of living crisis will have a significant impact on the poorest households, where budgets are already severely stretched.

In the Diocese of York, this is particularly true for people living in areas with 'multiple deprivations' in Hull, Middlesbrough and our coastal communities, as well as smaller areas scattered across the Diocese.

In these communities, people face many challenges and that is why we want churches to be present, walking alongside people in the ups and downs of life. Providing places of welcome and support, reaching people with God's love, creating opportunities to discover faith and growing disciples of Jesus.

What is the Mustard Seed programme?

The Mustard Seed programme began in 2020, it was shaped by carefully listening to clergy and lay people in parishes 'where life is tough.' The parable of the Mustard Seed helps us to understand how the Kingdom of God grows, people and parishes in our poorest communities often feel small and insignificant and yet are full of potential, like a Mustard Seed.

Local people from Mustard Seed parishes are invited onto the Stepping Up programme, a year-long journey of discipleship, growing in faith and mission. Each person discerns with their parish how God is calling them to Step Up in mission, serving within their local community. They use their own particular gifts and skills, in some places renewing and developing existing mission activities, and for others embarking on a whole new adventure in mission.



The vision is for each church to grow as a hub within the local community, offering a place of welcome, hospitality and support for local people in the challenges they face. Whether in church or other community buildings, they offer opportunities for prayer, experiencing the love of God, exploring faith, and encountering Jesus. You can find out more by reading stories about Stepping Up and Mustard Seed mission here: <https://www.mseed.org/stories>

How is Mustard Seed Funded?

Mustard Seed was awarded £1,369,281 funding from the Strategic Development Fund in 2020, which will support the programme to run until the end of 2026. In addition, a grant from the All Churches Trust (renamed Benefact Trust) of £531,785 provides the Diocese of York contribution to the programme. Mustard Seed provides an annual report to both funders to evidence that the grants are providing value for money and achieving the planned outcomes.

How is the money being used?

The primary focus for the Mustard Seed programme is to equip and develop lay people for mission in their parishes 'where life is tough.' A year-long programme called Stepping Up provides formation and development so that people can Step Up in mission, developing existing missional activity or pioneering something new.

At the end of the Stepping Up year, parishes can apply for a small grant to support the development of mission (grants of up to £250), or a start-up fund of up to £4,000 to pioneer something new. Most people, who complete Stepping Up, continue to Step up in mission, giving their time in service to the church (i.e. they are self-supporting, giving one or two days week). Where people are pioneering something new, and financial support is needed, remuneration for up to two days per week is available for two years to help establish a new community of worship.

How is this good value for money?

The total funding of £1,901,066 for Mustard Seed is roughly the equivalent to the basic cost of ministry (£50,083) for six FTE clergy posts over six years.

Over the life of the programme, we expect to work with up to 60 parishes to help them develop mission in their local community. There is no cost to the parishes for Stepping Up and grants are available to support mission.



Funding is available to support 25 lay people, for up to two days per week for two years, to pioneer new forms of mission.

How will it make a difference?

The parable of the Mustard Seed teaches us that the Kingdom of God grows from the smallest of seeds. We believe in the potential of people who want to grow in discipleship and mission. The witness of local people is probably the most effective way of sharing the gospel, as people encounter Christians 'just like me.'

Early signs show that as people complete Stepping Up, they are developing mission and inspiring other people in their parishes to get involved. Parishes are reporting greater vision and energy for mission and churches are growing.

How will finances be sustained?

Mustard Seed churches serve Low Income Communities. The Diocese of York receives £1,195K Low Income Communities Funding (LICF) from the Church Commissioners^[1], which is allocated according to parish size and levels of deprivation. This funding is provided to sustain mission and ministry, where due to financial challenges, local giving cannot cover the costs of ministry.

When Mustard Seed churches grow this is not matched by significant growth in income, people coming to faith often have complex lives, including financial concerns, which can take years to resolve. Many people rely on benefits as part of their income, which barely cover the essential costs of living. There is generosity of giving, but the amounts that people can give are often limited.

How can the Ambassador programme help?

In the Diocese of York we encourage generosity amongst our parishes, the free-will offer enables churches to give to the mission and ministry of churches across the whole Diocese. Many people and parishes also giving directly to mission, at home or abroad. As Mustard Seed mission grows we hope that people will be inspired to direct some of their 'missional giving' to support mission in places where life is tough in our own Diocese.

The Mustard Seed Ambassador programme provides the opportunity for people and parishes to give direct help to sustain mission in our Low Income Communities. Examples of giving might be:

- A PCC decides to commit part of its annual missional giving
- A Church holds regular fundraising event(s) for mission
- Individuals commit to regular giving towards mission
- People/churches use their networks to encourage giving



Grants may be available to help sustain some aspects of mission, especially where there is clear community benefit, and a contribution to the wellbeing of individuals and families. The Mustard seed programme provides information for parishes to be able to access grants. Giving through the Ambassador programme can be used to match grant funding to add value.

How can I find out more?

The Mustard Seed website is full of information and stories to inspire you. If you would like to find out more about the Ambassador programme download the leaflet on our 'Get Involved' page or drop us an email using the contact page below.

[1] <https://dioceseofyork.org.uk/uploads/attachment/5357/lcs-consultations-2-resourcing-our-diocese.pdf> p3

CONTACT

Mustard Seed Staff Team



Heather Black | Programme Director

heather.black@yorkdiocese.org



Paul O'Neill | Associate Programme Leader

Guisborough & Middlesbrough

paul.oneill@yorkdiocese.org



Liz Holdsworth | Associate Programme Leader

Bridlington & Scarborough

liz.holdsworth@yorkdiocese.org



@DioYorkMustardSeed



@MustardSeedDofY



mustard.seed@yorkdiocese.org



Mustard
Seed

www.mseed.org