



# Mustard Seed

## *Growing disciples in places where life is tough*

### Overview

The Diocese of York takes in much of North and East Yorkshire, a diverse area which alongside the three urban centres of Hull, Middlesbrough and York, includes market towns, coastal communities and sparsely populated rural areas.

We are committed to seeing the body of Christ thrive in all of our communities, and long to see people flourish and enjoy life in all its fullness. The reality is that life can be tough for many people living in Hull, Middlesbrough and our coastal communities, as well as smaller areas scattered across the Diocese. People in these communities are living within a context of 'multiple deprivations' and are trying to do the best for themselves and their families, whilst struggling to make ends meet. More than a quarter of the people of our Diocese live in 54 parishes ranked within the most deprived decile nationally. Middlesbrough contains 7 of the 100 most deprived parishes in the country, and Hull contains 5 (more detail is available in Appendix 1).

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. There is outstanding ministry in many of these places, and some excellent examples of churches serving their local communities, however, the proportion of people who attend a Church of England church is around half of that for the rest of the Diocese. We want to support and develop mission in these places, growing disciples who lead others to faith, seeing local expressions of worship take root and indigenous ministry flourish in these urban and coastal communities.

### The Mustard Seed Programme

The Mustard Seed programme has been developed in response to a careful listening exercise, spending time with clergy and lay people in Middlesbrough, Hull and our coastal communities. We wanted to hear their stories, longings and vision for sharing the gospel where they live. We pray that the Mustard Seed programme will be a source of new life and hope in 'places where life is tough.'

Our vision is to see worshipping communities developed as places of welcome, hospitality and support for local people in the challenges they face. Whether in a church or other community building, they will offer opportunities for prayer, experiencing the love of God, exploring faith, and encountering Jesus. Pathways of discipleship will help to build communities of local people who are followers of Jesus.

The Mustard Seed programme will work with local parishes towards this vision through developing two key interventions **Stepping Up** and **Ambassadors**, which are detailed below.

## The Parable of the Mustard Seed

What is the Kingdom of God like?

*"It is like a mustard seed, which, when sown upon the ground, is the smallest of all the seeds on earth; yet when it is sown it grows up and becomes the greatest of all shrubs, and puts forth large branches, so that the birds of the air can make nests in its shade."* Mark 4:31-32

## The Stepping Up Programme

*When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realised that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that they had been with Jesus. (Acts 4:13)*

The Stepping Up programme will be a movement of courageous ordinary people who spend time with Jesus. Many local people who come to faith in our deprived communities perceive themselves as *just* 'unschooled ordinary people.' In reality they have huge potential as experts on their own communities, who already have a variety of gifts to offer, and with additional support and encouragement can 'step-up' and into their vocation.

The path that led to Peter and John stepping up was an apprenticeship in the presence of Jesus with encouragement and challenge, receiving and giving, learning and practical experience, failure and forgiveness, empowering and commissioning. 'Stepping Up' will be a transforming journey, an extended encounter with Jesus that will identify and develop gifts, give new perspectives and provoke courageous choices in a highly supportive environment.

### Level 1 – Equipping local witnesses

Stepping Up Level 1 is designed to encourage local people who show the desire and potential to grow in their discipleship, and to equip them to become more confident and effective in reaching out, sharing their faith and making new disciples. Each year in Hull, Middlesbrough, Scarborough, Bridlington and Redcar & Cleveland, lay people will be recruited from a number of parishes to form local learning communities. The criteria for identifying participants and their sending parishes include:

- The incumbent and PCC have a heart for mission and are committed to developing lay leadership and ministry.
- Participants show a desire and commitment to growth in missional effectiveness and understand the nature of Stepping Up and the type of ministry for which it will equip them.
- Parishes undertake to prayerfully support the participant and provide opportunities for mission experience in the local community.
- Both participants and parishes are clear that each person's primary pastoral responsibility continues to belong to their own church under the guidance of the incumbent and PCC.

Each Stepping Up learning community will meet for half a day each week, during term time, for one year. Every week the sessions will include prayer, bible study and reflection, and learning around key themes, with take away activities to be implemented by participants in their church and community. As local lay people already rooted in their community, it is intrinsic to the design of Stepping Up that

they are not 'going off' to another church for the year and then returning at the end with enthusiasm and ideas which may not fit. The weekly learning within the group is worked out as they serve in their own church and community. At the end of the year participants will have grown into more effective local witnesses, serving in the community engagement of their own church, with confidence and clarity about what it looks like to reach and grow new disciples.

## **Mentoring**

Each Stepping Up participant will have a mentor, who will accompany them through the programme, providing prayerful support and encouragement. This key role will provide support to participants in their personal learning and development, helping them to apply the learning in their parish, and to share within the learning community what they have learnt from this practical ministry experience. Each participant will have a journal to record their learning and development, in a way that suits them.

The Associate Programme Leaders (APL's) will work with the Programme Leader to recruit a team of mentors for each Stepping Up cohort. The APL's will mentor one or more participants themselves and oversee the mentors in the locations where they are leading Stepping Up. Working with the Mustard Seed Programme Leader the APL's will contribute to the quality of the mentoring programme.

During the year, the APL's will explore with the mentors, which Stepping Up participants are showing pioneering leadership potential. Working with the Programme Leader there will be a discernment process to identify a small number of people who are emerging pioneer leaders. This process will include discussions with the potential pioneers, their incumbents and sending churches, in particular looking for opportunities to develop or plant new worshipping communities. Where that twin discernment is positive, the emerging leader will be invited to Level 2 of Stepping Up.

## **Level 2 Equipping Pioneer Leaders & Planting New Worshipping Communities**

Stepping Up Level 2 will have the character of 'on the job' training. With support from the Mustard Seed team, the local pioneer will work towards planting a new worshipping community from the mission activity that is already happening within their parish church. Each worshipping community will provide a place of welcome, hospitality and support for local people with opportunities for prayer, exploring faith, and encountering Jesus. Pathways of discipleship will help to build the new worshipping communities of local people who are followers of Jesus. Current examples within our poorer parishes, include work with people in recovery, toddler services, worship and discipleship with asylum seekers, family meals, Messy Church and community choirs. They meet in a variety of spaces including church buildings or other suitable community venues.

As part of learning to lead others, Level 2 participants will also help to lead the next cohort of Stepping Up Level 1 in their location. Working alongside the APL's they will contribute to the group learning and be a mentor for at least one of the participants. There will be the opportunity for these Pioneer Leaders to be remunerated, at the Living Wage, for two days per week during the two years of Stepping Up Level 2.

## Mustard Seed Ambassadors

*They asked only one thing, that we remember the poor, which was actually what I was eager to do.  
(Galatians 2:10)*

The Ambassadors programme will develop a network of people across the Diocese of York who support mission within Mustard Seed parishes. The APL's will work the Programme Leader to identify potential Ambassadors to support those churches that have sent people on Stepping Up and where new missional activity is growing.

A Mustard Seed Ambassador is someone who is able to build a supportive relationship with and commitment to a Mustard Seed church and its community. They will be involved in the life of the Mustard Seed church to a degree that enables them to understand the opportunities and challenges within the church and community. Ambassadors will be people who are able to receive and learn from the Mustard Seed church, recognising that the relationship will enrich their own discipleship.

An Ambassador will be someone who recognises that being more fortunate, they have a responsibility towards 'their neighbours' and are therefore called into action. In many cases they will contribute financially to the Mustard Seed church and be a catalyst to generate generosity of prayer, support, and financial giving.

Ambassadors will share good news stories of 'faith where life is tough' to inspire others in their home church and deanery, and help to change the culture of the whole diocese. They will have the whole diversity of the people of the Diocese in heart and mind, recognising that we can all benefit from each other spiritually and practically; releasing and offering gifts beyond 'our patch.' They will understand that there are many people in the Diocese who are struggling, and yet have a richness of faith and gifts to share with others. Ambassadors will work with the Mustard Seed team to share this understanding across the life of the Diocese so that our hearts and minds are renewed and our actions are transformed, remembering the poor in all our decision making.

## The Mustard Seed Team

The Mustard Seed Programme Leader, Heather Black was appointed in February 2020 to develop the [Mustard Seed Programme](#) across the Diocese. The Associate Programme Leaders will form the Mustard Seed team, led by Heather, working across the five deaneries of Hull, Bridlington, Scarborough, Guisborough (Redcar & Cleveland) and Middlesbrough. Each APL will have a particular geographical area, where they will develop the Stepping Up programmes the size of this area and the number of Stepping Up locations will be allocated according to whether the APL is full or part-time. We are now looking to recruit a full time APL to work across the deaneries of Middlesbrough and Guisborough (Redcar & Cleveland).

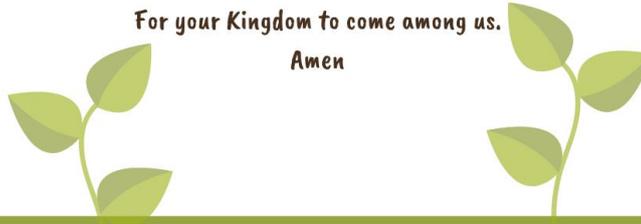
The whole team will work together to develop the Mustard Seed Programme as a prayerful and life-giving resource to serve the people and parishes, where 'life is tough' in the Diocese of York.

As you consider your application to be an Associate Programme Leader, we invite you to pray the Mustard Seed prayer.

# Mustard Seed

*Lord Jesus, you show us what life could be.  
Help us to plant seeds of hope in places where life is tough,  
So that people can find your love and your way.  
We offer this small prayer, like a mustard seed,  
For your Kingdom to come among us.*

*Amen*



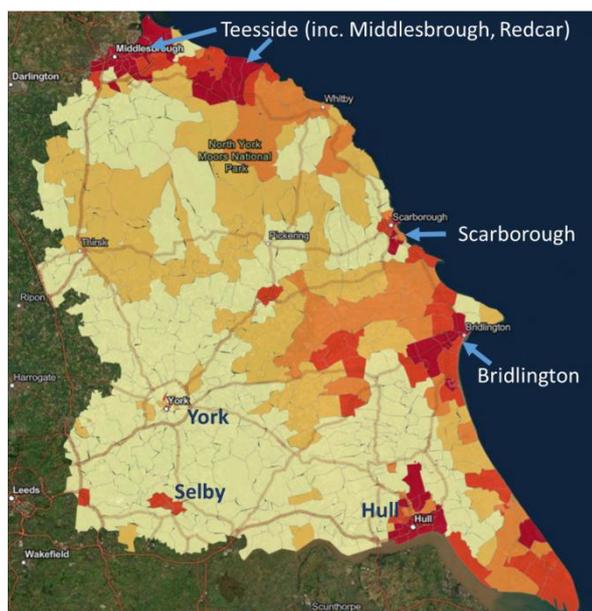
Heather Black, Mustard Seed Programme Leader

December 2020

## Appendix 1: Deprivation in the Diocese of York

The Diocese of York is a place of contrasts, even extremes. It has some of the highest population density in one of Europe's largest housing estates in Hull, but some of the lowest population density in the country just down the road in South Holderness. Middlesbrough has the second and third most deprived parishes in the country and elsewhere in the Diocese there are some of the least deprived communities, with the fourth least deprived in the East Riding near Beverley. These contrasts impact on the everyday life of the people living in our communities, both in the quality and length of their lives. Life expectancy for males in the Diocese ranges from 85 down to 69.

### Diocese of York Deprivation Map



This map of York Diocese is colour coded using the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD). It shows the concentration of communities facing multiple deprivations in the urban areas of Hull, Middlesbrough and coastal communities, with smaller areas of deprivation scattered around Selby and some rural communities.



Hull is the largest city in the Diocese, with a population of almost 330,000 people. There are large areas of the city where 'life is tough' with 43% of the population living in the most deprived 20% of LSOAs in the country, and over one third living in the most deprived 10% of LSOA's<sup>1</sup> There are areas of extreme poverty with five of the 100 most deprived parishes in the country.

Middlesbrough has a very high concentration of deprivation, with almost 60% of the population living in the most deprived 20% of LSOAs in the country, and 50% living in the most deprived 10% of LSOA's. There are areas of extreme poverty with seven of the 100 most deprived parishes in the country. The neighbouring area of Redcar & Cleveland (within Guisborough Deanery) is also significantly deprived, with almost one third of the deanery population living in most deprived 20% of LSOAs,

There is significant deprivation in our coastal communities. One third (33%) of the population of Scarborough Deanery and 32% of the population of Bridlington Deanery live in the most deprived 20% of LSOAs in the country.

These statistics represent the challenges that people face in their everyday lives in places where 'life is tough.' We use this data to paint a picture of our Diocese, but we are mindful that each number represents a man, woman or child created in the image of God.

<sup>1</sup> LSOA – Local Super Output Area. There are 32,844 LSOAs in England and they are ranked from 1 (the most deprived) to 32,844 (the least deprived).