



Children's and youth work in rural and urban areas.

The Church of England has awarded nearly £8.5 million for projects to help churches spread the Christian faith, including parish renewal programmes and children's and youth work in rural and urban areas.

Grants have been approved for mission from the north of England to the Kent coast, much of it in low income areas, covering parish revitalisation programmes, 'hubs' for children's and youth work, church planting and the expansion of a model of family church that has grown 'exponentially' after it was set up in 2020.

The awards, to Canterbury, Durham, Hereford and Southwark Dioceses, have been made by the Church of England's Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB).

In the Diocese of Durham, £4.7 million has been awarded over seven years for plans including 20 new hubs, rooted in local churches, for ministry to children and young people. Training will also be provided for 600 people in youth and children's ministry.

The grant will also fund chaplaincy to secondary schools and support and seed funding for 25 churches to develop engagement with local secondary schools.

The Board has also agreed further funding in principle of £3.3 million – subject to further approvals – for eight parish revitalisations and for staff and ministry costs to support Sunderland Minster in its outreach and mission to the city.

In Canterbury Diocese, £3.2 million has been awarded for a programme of church planting, or setting up new congregations, and revitalisation over five years, focusing on parish churches in Margate and Maidstone in Kent.

Holy Trinity Margate will be re-established as a church supporting others in mission, working in partnership to revitalise the neighbouring parishes of St Paul's Cliftonville, St John's Margate and All Saints' Westbrook. The grant will be used to pay for ministry as well as much-needed repairs and renovation at St Paul's. Fundraising support is also included to help St. John's Margate with a major building project.

A second project in north Maidstone will aim to develop the partnership between St Luke's - a thriving church which has trebled its congregation over the last three years to around 150 people - and St Faith's, a church plant into a housing estate from last year that is already growing. St. Luke's will also explore how it can become a resourcing church to other churches in Maidstone.



The Diocese of Hereford (picture, below with Bishop of Hereford) has been awarded £457,630 to help pay for a series of 'hubs' or centres to support rural parishes in outreach to children and young people.

The centres will start with pilots in two market towns, hosting youth and community workers and providing training in youth ministry while working in partnership with other programmes.

A worshipping community for young families, that uses puppets and song to help tell Bible stories and talk about the Christian faith, has grown so fast that it has received a further award from the SMMIB to help its expansion.

The 'Bubble church' first set up in the Diocese of Southwark has grown 'exponentially faster' than was originally planned, from five churches to 30 since 2022, the SMMIB has heard.

The Board has awarded a further £145,423 to fund two support staff and to help churches with Bubble Church start-up costs in lower income communities.

This comes after they received £250,000 in 2022 for expansion.

The first Bubble church in Ascension Church, Balham, (pictured, above) was set up during Covid restrictions in 2020, taking its name from the socially distanced 'bubbles' in which parents and children gathered for the new church.

The Board also made an award of £45,000 under its People and Partnerships Fund to The Gregory Centre for Church Multiplication for research into how local churches support the living out the Christian faith in everyday life.

Carl Hughes, Chairman of the SMMIB said: "The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board is very pleased indeed to award these grants for promising plans that we believe will help support the local church in the core mission of spreading the Christian faith, many of which build on previous investments.

"All the proposals will help deliver the Church's Vision and Strategy for the 2020s whilst reflecting the different contexts and needs of the parishes and local communities in which they are rooted.

"We are really delighted to be working in partnership alongside these dioceses to ensure these proposals become a reality.

"It is exciting to see such a breadth of vision from pioneering work in helping rural parishes reach children and young people, to the proposal for work in Sunderland, the biggest population centre in the Diocese of Durham.

"We are also excited by the opportunities to gather learning from the variety of approaches to ministry in these programmes to share across the



More information

- The Strategic Mission and Ministry Investment Board (SMMIB) was set up in January 2023 to distribute grant funding that meets national Church of England priorities such as revitalising parishes, becoming a Church which better represents the communities it serves, and creating 10,000 new Christian communities.
- The Church of England's Vision and Strategy for the 2020s has aims including doubling the number of children and young active disciples in the Church of England by 2030.

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