



Family
Ministries

Having faith in the family



JUMP In!
Leaping into Faith with Little Ones

THE MUSTARD SEED

A special session for use in the National Month of Prayer for Parent-and-Toddler Groups based on Matthew 13:31-32.

SUGGESTED RESOURCES

- Percussion instruments.



INTRODUCTION

The National Month of Prayer (NMOP) is an ecumenical initiative of 1277 Make Them Count and happens throughout June each year. It encourages churches, individuals and toddler communities to pray three ways – in groups, for groups and across groups in the UK. The theme for 2024 is based on the story of the mustard seed found in Matthew 13:31-32.

Our toddler groups offer an amazing space for babies, toddlers, parents and carers. The time together provides a space to play, learn and support one another. Groups come in all shapes and sizes and are a place where the love of God can be experienced in so many ways, especially through the warm welcome offered to all who attend.

On average it is estimated a child has 1,277 days from birth to attending preschool education. These are important days for a young person's growth, and 1277 aims to 'make them count'. You might like to join the 1277 National Month of Prayer Facebook group, where ideas, prayer requests and stories can be shared.



Mustard Seed



BIBLE STORY

Matthew 13:31-32 ERV

Tell the story below with actions.

Jesus was really good at telling stories that help people understand what it means to be part of God's family. One day he told a story about a mustard seed. He said that mustard seeds are very, very small. **Can you roll up into a ball and pretend to be a tiny mustard seed?**

But when the mustard seed is planted in a field, it starts to grow. **Can you slowly begin to uncurl and start growing?**

Eventually the seed grows so big that it becomes an enormous tree. **Can you stretch up as high as you can and wave your arms to look like branches of a tree?**

In the end, the tree is so big that birds are able to come and build their nests in it. **Can you flap your arms like a bird flying to make its nest in the tree?**

I wonder what Jesus meant when he told this story.

Sometimes we may think that because we are little we can't do very much to help God's family grow. But this story helps us to see that great things can grow from small beginnings, and that all of us, no matter how big or small we are, can be kind and caring towards others and to tell them how much God loves them. We want to make sure that our parent-and-toddler group is a place where everyone feels welcomed and included too.



SONG SUGGESTIONS

1. Theme Song
(Tune: 'Have you seen the muffin man?' (Backing track
<https://youtu.be/8Rx2h0pJfjk>)

Have you seen a mustard seed, a mustard seed, a mustard seed?
Have you seen a mustard seed? It is so very small!

But it can grow into a tree, into a tree, into a tree,
But it can grow into a tree, where birds can build their nests.

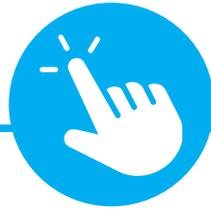
God's family is a place for all – if you are small, if you are tall,
God's family is a place for all, he welcomes everyone.

2. 'Faith as small as a mustard seed', Doug Horley <https://youtu.be/AFEUjy42xNk>

3. 'Have you ever seen a mustard seed' <https://youtu.be/MELWNRaEAAA>



Mustard Seed



SENSORY PLAY

- Fill the tray with bird seeds and use it to draw patterns or pictures in.
- Hide seeds in edible sand and challenge children to find them.
- Get children to taste different edible seeds, eg pumpkin, sunflower, poppy. Be aware of allergies and supervise carefully.



PRAYER

You could use one of the creative prayer activities that can be shared with the whole church congregation (see next page).

Thank you, Jesus, that you told stories that help us understand what it means to belong to the family of God. Help us to be kind and caring towards others and to share the good news that you love us all very much. Thank you also for our parent-and-toddler group and for making it a place where everyone feels welcomed and included. Amen.



CRAFT/ACTIVITY IDEAS

- Make a bird feeder by threading hooped cereals on to a chenille stick and bend round. Add a piece of string to hang from a tree or bush in the garden at home.
- Plant mustard seeds in small pots or eggshells. Add face decorations on to the pot or shell so when the plant grows it looks like hair.
- Muddy Church Resource – Growing Tomatoes <https://ko-fi.com/s/60d0cef0ba>

For other craft ideas see <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/FamilyMinistriesUKIT/the-mustard-seed-national-month-of-prayer-2024/>





PRAYER

Creative prayer activities that can be shared with the whole church congregation.

1. Prayer tree

Take a large sheet of paper and create the bare trunk of a tree and branches. You can do this by using either brown paint or by using brown paper.

Give the children a leaf template to decorate using finger painting in bright colours. Use a marker pen to write their name on the back. Adult or family names can be added too.

When dry, stick the leaves to the tree using sticky tack so they can be removed easily.

Explain to the group that you will be using the tree in the church service on Sunday and asking the congregation to take a leaf home and to pray for the people whose names are on it.

2. Bird prayers

Using cut-out bird outlines, write each child's first name on the back and then get the children to decorate the front using paint, crayons or collage materials. Add a piece of string and hang on to an artificial twig tree or some large, natural twigs in a vase. As above, explain to the group that you will be using this in the church service on Sunday and asking the congregation to take a bird and to pray for the person who has their name on it.

3. Mustard Seed prayers

Create mustard seed cards, either by simply using a glue dot to fix the seed, or by recycling old paper to make a mulch and add some seeds

<https://www.pinterest.co.uk/FamilyMinistriesUKIT/the-mustard-seed-national-month-of-prayer-2024/>. You could also create little packs of seeds in small envelopes and decorate them.

However you decide to share the seeds, write on the card/envelope either the first name of a child or just the family name, and ask church members to take a card/envelope, plant the seeds, and to pray for the child/family as they watch it grow.

You can also give cards to the members of your parent-and-toddler group that say 'We are praying for you', and encourage them to plant the seeds at home, or plant them as an activity in your session.

