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Dear Church Family,

I moved to Sheffield 20 years ago (the first time). I fell in love with the city and this church. I moved to the city to be part of what was then known as Tribal Training – based at our church. I learned quickly not to put that on my CV: ‘Tribal Training’ generates too many (not always positive) questions! Despite the iffy name it was an amazing experience for me personally.

There were loads of incredible experiences but today I’m reminded of a seminar led by Bob and Mary Hopkins. If you don’t know them – they’re legends. They are now part of St Phillip’s Church in the city. They have been plugging away in the background for years advocating church planting to anyone who would listen, whether it be Archbishops or Tribal Trainees. I got the sense back then that in those days they were a bit of a lone voice in the wilderness. 20 years ago very few Anglican churches were being planted in the UK.

20 years later in September 2021 we welcomed the Rt Revd Ric Thorpe (the Bishop of Islington) to our church, who is now the head of Church of Planting for the whole of the Church of England. It’s remarkable to think that now Church planting is very much something the Holy Spirit is doing across England in most towns and cities and now, I believe, building on all the amazing things that previous leaders have done, it’s time for STC to play its part in that call.

In order for us to do this, the 2021 Thanksgiving Offering will be for the brand new Nehemiah Fund launching this Advent. It’s been our usual practice to take a Thanksgiving Offering in October but this year (for many reasons) we’ll launch in Advent.

What is the Nehemiah Fund?

Our hope is to launch the fund starting on Advent Sunday 28 November 2021 which will grow and help fund STC's Church Planting in and around the City of Sheffield.

Many people were so excited by Bishop Ric's visit and have asked when we are going to get started. I can confirm that we are having conversations with the Diocese of Sheffield and the Yorkshire Baptist Association about how we can serve them in their church planting vision. It's not a quick process but it's really positive, and once plans are confirmed we will share more in the future. The Bishop of Sheffield is fully supportive of the Nehemiah Fund. Over the next few weeks, we'll send out information with details around what the Fund will be; how it will be managed; how we are going to partner with the Diocese and the Yorkshire Baptist Association.

Through this Covid season I have encountered a real openness among people to talk about faith. It's been really encouraging to see new people join STC but sad that some familiar faces have not yet returned. It seems to me that this is precisely the time that the Lord is going to push us out into the City of Sheffield to serve the city in many ways – one particular way will be church planting.

We can all play a part. If the Lord opens the door, as I suspect he will, then each of us will have a significant part to play: giving financially to the work, praying and supporting, or maybe even moving to a new part of Sheffield for the next adventure.

Thank you for all you do and your support for me. Let's pray that we can play our part in the next season of STC's life as we serve our beautiful city.

Tom

Revd Tom Finnemore, Team Rector