

@Crypt Leeds



St.
George's
Crypt

Christmas Issue 2020



Christmas Appeal 2020

Welcome

to our Christmas newsletter

Chris Fields
Chief Executive Officer



“The Hopes and Fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.”

If I start with “what a year this has been” who would disagree?

It has been so difficult on so many levels, I can't begin to explain. We pray constantly for protection and for the ones who have suffered greatly, locally and all over the world.

We could be accused of being somewhat flippant when we say “all we need now is locusts and boils” but that's just how it feels. In my 20 years here, we have never had to realign, restructure and rethink the entire charity (daily) and how to best serve our brothers and sisters in need. We are in no way different to every other charity and agency, but it “feels” so personal. Maybe I am holding things too close?

As I pen this, we are working around staffing rotas and cashflow projections which simply doesn't feel like our core work. I suppose it's akin to other great events in history which just throw everything out of kilter.

The one thing we have is the constant Love of God. The knowledge that He is with us throughout all our difficulties and that He will provide if He wants us to carry on.

In a meeting someone said, “all we can do is pray, plan and hope for the best.” I held onto those words so carefully when reflecting later in the day. We constantly pray, we plan by the hour... what we need to do is hold onto hope. Hope seems to be used as “wish” or “desire” which doesn't always sit easy as a Christian.

I looked up the biblical meaning of hope

and was amazed at how perfect a word it is for where we are now...

“Hope is a confident expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in his faithfulness”. An expectation, a promise held within a gentle yet strong hand of faithfulness.

We could use that as a description of Christmas; the expectation of God sending his only son into a life of poverty and servitude, coupled with the other promise of eternal life and forgiveness.

Christmas will certainly look a little different here. We are now planning the logistics of delivering hot meals to dispersed groups all over Leeds. We will still provide a meal for our residents here at the Crypt and for the guys who still choose to sleep rough for whatever reason. I think it's going to be a busy day!

David and the kitchen team will be “procuring” turkeys. Lisa will be especially busy trying to find enough presents to wrap. We estimate we will need 139 individual pressies for everyone on Christmas Day.

Cheryl and her fundraising team have not had it easy and it's not looking like it's going to get any easier as the year progresses.

It's such a shame that during our 90th year and our 10th decade, which offer so many opportunities, all have been snatched by Covid-19.

It is worrying that, as all our community and corporate fundraising has stopped, we get busier as the weather closes in. We can't even have the cathedral choristers for our annual Carol Concert.

Getting back to Hope....

As much as winter brings its issues for many, it is a time for reflection and rest. I am spending time in reflection and focusing on Hope.

Hope for the future.

Hope for mankind.

Hope for the people we minister to.

Hope for our supporters that they stay safe and well.

Hope that we go forward in faith “in the expectation of what God has promised and its strength is in His faithfulness.”

May I wish you a wonder-filled Christmas and a New Year full of hope. I leave with one of my favourite pieces of poetry which resonates with all we believe.

When the song of the angels is stilled

And the star in the sky has gone

When the kings and princes are home

And the shepherds are back with their flocks

The work of Christmas begins

To find the lost, to heal the broken

To feed the hungry, to release the prisoner

To rebuild the nations

And to place music in the heart.

Howard Thurman

With all blessings for Christmas and 2021, Chris.

Delivering Christmas



Picture: Leeds Rhinos Legends, Jamie Peacock and Kevin Sinfield

This year things have changed. What we can do, how we interact, how we meet, socialise, love and share; will we even have a Christmas?

Imagine being alone this Christmas; it's looking more and more likely. Add to that being on the street, insecurely housed, not knowing where your next meal is coming from.

In the past we have taken pride in our Christmas service; last year we offered meals on Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day. We worked with celebrity friends who volunteered to help serve. We worked with professional kitchens to cook the food. We decorated, full bells and whistles, so that those who would go without didn't.

This year we could have been

forgiven for not knowing what to do, how to provide, how to serve, or not known how to offer a Christmas meal.

This might have all started to sound rather depressing! It could have sounded like we're setting you up for a fall. Don't worry; we're not!

This Christmas we will go above and beyond to make sure that everyone in need has a Christmas. We will provide meals, we will provide food parcels, we will provide presents. Everything we have done in the past will be built into a takeaway service that makes Leeds, makes you, our supporters, proud.

We will be providing Christmas meals for all the people in the accommodation that Leeds City Council set up in response to Covid-19. We are still providing three meals a day for the 15

residents staying in the Crypt itself. This will continue over Christmas. We are also supporting the 20 residents on our drug and alcohol recovery project with Christmas supplies and presents.

Every person who comes to our Christmas Day takeaway service will get a Christmas meal (we're aiming for turkey with all the trimmings...!).

We've been squirrelling away, being good stewards of all we receive, so that this year, as with every year, we will be able to give presents too. We are aiming to give a gift to everyone in all our services; those staying in Leeds City Council provided accommodation and those coming to our lunchtime takeaway services. We won't have Santa, but there may be a few elf hats and Christmas jumpers!



St George's Christmas:

As you can imagine, 90 Christmases is a lot of turkey! Plenty of wrapping! Hundreds if not thousands of smashed baubles!

Here at St George's Crypt, it is also a lifeline to thousands of families and individuals, adults and children, who would otherwise go without.

Looking back through the old books and documents relating to the Crypt, we've put together a series of quotes that bring to life that ever-evolving narrative. Painting a picture up to the present day, we then look to the future; where will we be, will there still be the need, how will we work to meet it?

'Just before Christmas Day, cars would appear, lent by willing drivers, and transporting scarlet-robed Father Christmases, taking the Christmas trees out to the homes for which they had been lovingly prepared. I remember one year when we were short of a Father Christmas. I was crammed into a Father Christmas

outfit, and sent out to the slums of St Andrew's Parish. I shall never forget scrambling down the spiral stone staircase of a basement hovel, to find partially dressed children staring in disbelief and excitement as I gave them their Christmas surprise.'

This story of giving of presents, the bringing of Christmas continues throughout the history of our work.

'Before Christmas the boys from Monkton Combe School at Bath would come up to help distribute toys. On the Golden anniversary of the Crypt I worked throughout Christmas Day to make table decorations for the Boxing Day meal. About 60 volunteers past and present had been invited. I plated everything up, including cutting four hundred pieces of cake. A box covered in icing had been made in the shape of the Crypt doorway; it had a slot in the top and seventy pounds was collected.'

The fact that, historically we have

worked with mainly men, never stopped us from offering a full Christmas spread. Many of our present day clients, fully grown men, still enjoy, and it might be the only time they have, getting a gift from Father Christmas.

'The Boxing Day dinner was one of my favourite days. We might serve up to a hundred me and about three women!'

But we must remember in the midst of celebrating how hard a time this is for our clients. We still see the after-effects of trauma and pain surface at Christmas. We work doubly hard to mitigate, to give our guys a strong memory of love and inclusion to start rebuilding their lives on a strong and positive footing.

'Lenny had slept rough for over 40 years at the brickworks on Gelderd Road. When the brickworks closed down in the 1980s, Lenny found his way to the Crypt.'



Past, Present and Things to Come

On Christmas Eve, Crypt Warden Don Paterson found Lenny up in his room crying. On Boxing Day Lenny told his story.'

He had once been dapper and handsome and he sang in Upper Armley Church Choir. One Christmas Eve his mother died. He couldn't cope and walked out of the house leaving everything to his sister. This was the first Christmas he'd had a present and a roof over his head since then.

Whilst the human pain and suffering has not changed, the way we operate as a charity has massively.

'There is no way that when Don and Joe stepped into that cat-ridden tomb, that he could have envisioned what the Crypt has now become with its fabulous facilities to meet the changed client needs. Yet his vision, in his preaching and in his personal action, with his overalls and barrow of rubbish clearing out the Crypt - his vision was always of a Church consumed by the

love of God. A love which overflows in practical care for the marginalised. That vision is fulfilled in the continually evolving ministry of St George's Crypt. "Faith without works is dead" said St James. St George's is the evidence of faith expressed through works.'

It is from this foundation that we wish to build. We understand that whilst the way we respond, diagnose and treat our clients' needs has changed, the root pain of homelessness, isolation and deprivation will always be the same.

We are working with specialist services, streamlined triage and multi-agency partnership when we are not able to provide or someone can do it better.

We are hoping to expand the work we do, build on successes and offer a chance to as many people as want and need.

At the same time we are walking on

our own journey of faith. Heading up a recent strategy document was the following quote, highlighting the strong links to the past, walking arm in arm with our vision for the future.

'Without faith vision is stillborn – it is but idle dreaming and vain imagining. But vision backed by faith has been and shall be the inspiration of all great lives. For, vision is realisation that things might be different, but faith is the conviction that they must be different, and the determination that they shall be. It is because humanity has lost faith that life has become frustrated, futile and disastrous. Most men are convinced that nothing but a miracle can save the human race – they are no less convinced that miracles do not happen. It is faith that believes that the love of God can yet work miracles, and it is through men of faith, eager, expectant, and believing, that God can work.'

Don Robins: A Miscellany



How We Are Fundraising



2020 has been a difficult time for everybody including St. George's Crypt. In typical style, we have stepped up to the plate and carried on regardless. For our Fundraising team, these challenges have been massive.

We talked with our Head of Fundraising, Cheryl Harrington, to see the impact of Covid-19, how you can continue to support the work we do and what our plans for the future are.

Why is it important to support St. George's Crypt?

Cheryl: The need for our services to help homeless and vulnerable adults is as great today as it was in 1930 when Rev. Don Robins first opened the doors. In an ideal world the Crypt wouldn't be here; there would be no homelessness, no addiction and no mental health issues. But you know as well as we do, that it isn't the case.

Coronavirus has hit us all hard, financially and emotionally. While the work continues to happen to support our service users, the fundraising methods are having to change dramatically.

What plans did you have for fundraising pre - Covid-19?

Our 90th Birthday on 14 October 2020 was going to be the start of a very special year of events, we planned to invite people into the Crypt, as we did on our 80th and 85th and the decades before.

With events like Leeds 10k, Total Warrior and Three Peaks all postponed, and most community fundraising activities cancelled until further notice, the impact is huge and we're having to rethink our whole fundraising strategy.

And, as we head into a second national lockdown, the re-thought plans have to be re-thought again!.

What are we planning for the future?

We are exploring online opportunities for virtual events. During the first lockdown phase we had many fabulous fundraisers coming up with their own ideas, bike ride round their cul-de-sac, dance-a-thon in the front room, Corona Arms pub quiz, online gig, virtual camp fire by the scouts .

Fundraising in this climate is a great challenge because every charity is in the same position. We are applying to charitable trusts and foundations for grants to fund parts of our work, alongside seeking support from corporates and local businesses.

How can people support the Crypt?

Keep a look-out on social media for the different activities we are planning. Sign up for updates to be emailed to you if you prefer, or simply call our fundraising team 0113 2459061 (opt 1) to discuss your own ideas for fundraising.

VirginMoneyGiving.Com is a great way to do a virtual collection or collect sponsorship. Set up your own page, chose to support to St George's Crypt. Share on your social media and everyone can see how well your fundraising is going.

The Leeds Big Sleep is temporarily becoming the **Leeds Big Sleep "In"** planned for 5 February with online entertainment, as a warm up for the actual event later that year!

Do you have a message for our readers?

Thank you ! We couldn't do what we do, without the amazing support of the people and businesses in Leeds. Whether you have donated £1 in a bucket in a supermarket, ran the Leeds 10k, done a bungee jump in a Spiderman outfit, or sponsored your boss to sleep at Headingley stadium. It's what we all do collectively as a city to look out for each other that counts.



Leeds Virtual 10 k

This year's Leeds 10k had to be postponed due to Covid-19 but don't let that stop you from putting on your running shoes.

Why not run a 10k on 22nd November, the last amended date of the event?

This kind of virtual event lets you "get out there" and pound the streets; fulfils the challenge of completing a 10k, is a great way to keep fit and boosts mental wellbeing!

It is a fantastic way to support our work with homeless and vulnerable people in Leeds.

Share your 10k stories and pictures online - tag us in and we'll make sure to retweet.

If you are able to, please make a donation as well. It would be appreciated and will go towards supporting the vital work we do.

We can provide a Team Crypt running top so everyone will know why you are doing it!

Please abide by all government regulations re: Covid-19 - we don't want anyone getting in trouble.

Most importantly - get running!



Leeds Big Sleep-in!

Around this time of year we would be gearing up to brave a night sleeping on the stands at Emerald Headingley Stadium, to give up one night of comfort in our own bed to raise money for three local charities. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic and government restrictions, we are unable to hold the event as usual, however Leeds Rhinos Foundation, St George's Crypt and St Gemma's Hospice are still working together to raise money for those most in need in our city.

The Leeds Big Sleep, now in its 4th year, has raised over £100,000. It may not involve sleeping out this year but we encourage you to still get involved. Sponsorship which will be split equally to support the valuable work that these charities do by

sleeping in instead!

On Friday 5th February 2021 we challenge you to find the most uncomfortable, unusual, odd place you can imagine and you can do this alone or with your family or support bubble, in your home, your office, your garden, your shed, it's your choice! All we ask is it conforms to the current government social distancing guidelines and restrictions at the time.

Virtual entertainment will be broadcast throughout the evening which you can join in, watch and enjoy whilst you prepare to sleep in and raise vital funds for these three amazing charities.

To sign up to the event please go to:
Virgin Money Giving
<http://bit.ly/LeedsBigSleepIn>



Retail Online



Due to the recent announcement by the UK government, our charity shops closed at 4pm on Wednesday 4th November until the government allows us to re-open.

In a bid to keep generating income for the charity, we have recently set up some online platforms to enable us to continue trading. Please look up our eBay shop at: www.ebay.co.uk/usr/stgeorgescrypt and also follow our Facebook page at St George's Crypt Retail, where we aim to be selling furniture and other goods on Facebook Marketplace.

It means the world to us for your continued support during these difficult times.

Thank you from the team at St George's Crypt Retail.



Last Christmas
(From 1st Dec to 31st Dec 2019):

1,148

Bed spaces provided - an average of 37 people in our emergency accommodation each cold winter's night

1,814

Free lunches served to anyone in need, averaging 95 each day

1,410

Hours of volunteering given by 138 amazing volunteers

53

Individuals accessed Health and Wellbeing provision, including dental treatment, opticians & physiotherapy

149

People supported with food parcels (including adults, children, expectant mothers and independent under 18s)

1,985

Children received a Christmas present from the Toy Appeal

Our Christmas Elves!

Since Revd. Don Robins first opened the doors of St George's Crypt, we have supported impoverished families and their children at Christmas.

For registered families there was a free shop. Over 500 families were clothed, given food parcels and presents from this store, and this on top of presents given to children living in poverty.

During our 90 year history we have continued this service, making sure that children do not miss out at Christmas.

Currently, we have the brilliant Charlie and Diane (pictured). They work voluntarily throughout the year collecting, sorting and getting the toys ready for Christmas. They have been

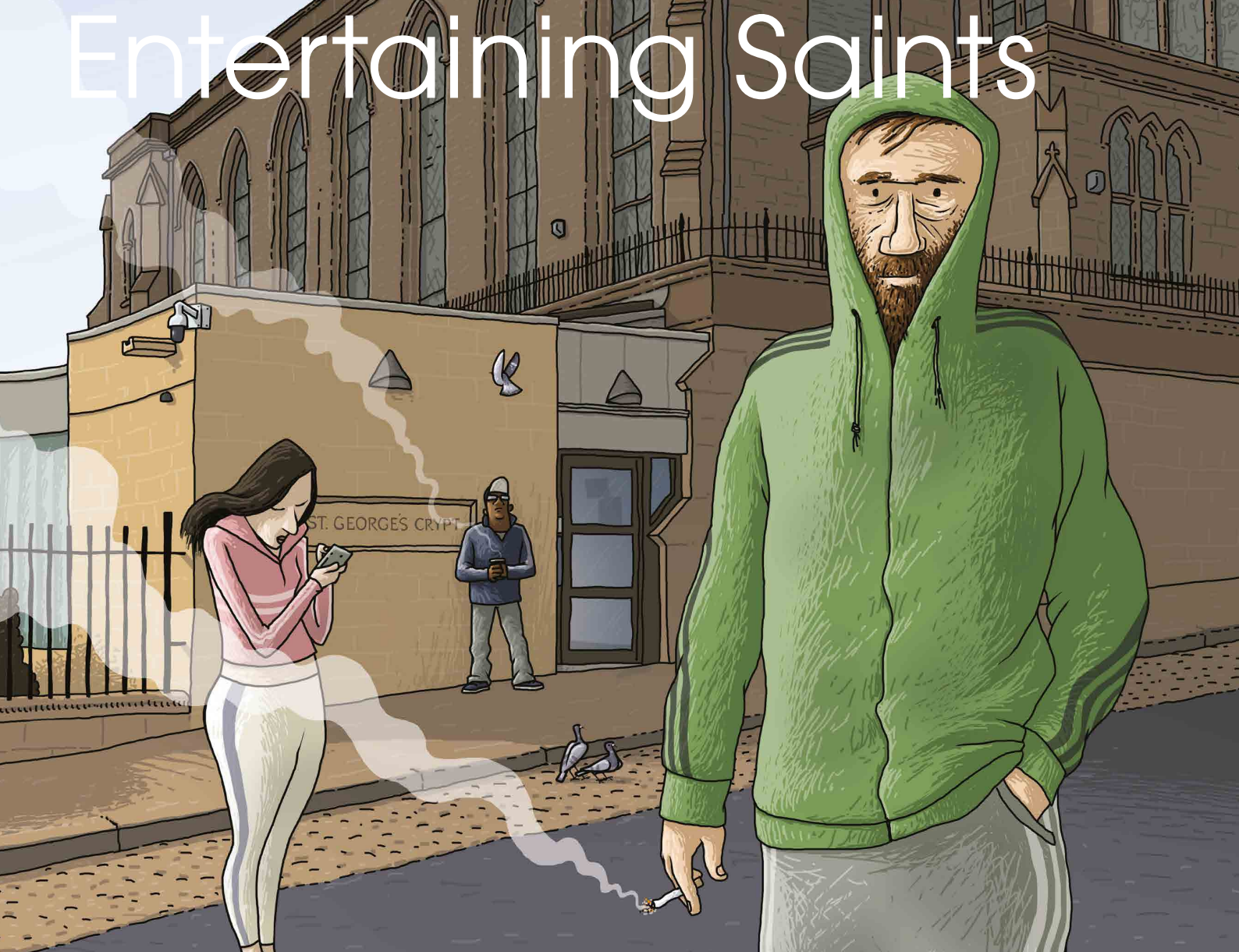
volunteering for over 10 years. They took over the mantle of Christmas toys and ran with it.

We now have a storage unit with Big Yellow Self Storage where they sort through the toys, arrange them by gender and age and, in the build up to Christmas, they distribute them to the churches and other partner organisations within the community.

It is amazing that, thanks to the kindness of the city and the diligence of these two volunteers, children experiencing poverty this Christmas will be able to open a present and feel part of the celebrations.

Thank you Leeds and thank you Charlie and Diane!

Entertaining Saints



Since the publication of Revd. Don Robins' sermons in 1949, we at the Crypt have archived our work in a number of different publications. These books offer a glimpse at the world of the Crypt through the ages, from a range of different perspectives.

There have been the historic perspectives of volunteers, staff and clients past and present in *Entertaining Angels*.

Their Father's House talks about the role of the Crypt in the city from its start up until the 50's, with content from the Chief Constable and other well known figures in the city.

Entertaining More Angels builds on the story of its namesake, with fresh case studies and stories from the time.

That leads on to the latest publication to come from us; *Entertaining Saints*.

Written by our chaplain, Revd. Roger Quick, this is a very personal insight into the work we do here, from the coal face.

Taking us from his first day arriving here, his fears, the needs of our clients, to the complexity and changing face of the job.

When pushed on his job description, Roger dismisses and says that he is here to bless people and pray with them; this book shows that he has excelled and surpassed this seemingly simple but actually very difficult need.

'It wasn't easy, that first day. I got home to my bedsit that evening, sat on the front step, lit a cigarette, looked upward and said to God:

You've got the wrong guy for this job. My marriage has fallen apart. I've just had a breakdown. I'm a mess. I can't do it.

Sometimes the answer to prayer comes very clearly. Whether I heard a voice actually speaking (which would have been a bit weird) or whether I heard it in my head, or whether I imagined it - in the end it doesn't matter - this is what I heard when I told God I can't do this.

No, you can't.

This was not very encouraging. Then came the second part.

But I can.'

You can buy the book from:

www.dltbooks.com

or in our shops.

Our Virtual 90th Birthday



Emma Jones - LUTV



Hilary Benn MP



Andrew Edwards - BBC



Tom Riordan - LCC

We've probably all had it; not being able to turn on the sound, our video's not working or we're upside down or back to front. Are we wearing our pyjamas for a business meeting? Is our background suitable for the boss?!

Because of the Covid-19 pandemic the way we work, socialise and interact has had to change immeasurably. Words have appeared that were never used; how many times in the past six months have you heard self-isolate, lockdown, the rule of six?! Now we have tiers, local lockdowns and second waves.

It's no different here at the Crypt. The majority of our meetings have gone online. All our major fundraising events, homeless conferences and learning seminars

are postponed or cancelled.

Add to this, we turned 90 years old. We had a full schedule of events lined up. We were going to have church services, an open house, conferences, exhibitions - a whole schedule of events lasting the year to shine a light on the issues surrounding homelessness, to highlight the work we have done and to thank the city for supporting us throughout.

We had to rapidly change our ideas in the light of Covid-19. We did. We contacted people with a connection to the Crypt or a strong connection to Leeds and asked them to record for us messages of support. We asked the Yorkshire Film Archive to use footage from Crypt films of the past. We have interviewed the new Archbishop of York, Stephen Cottrell. We have a new website.

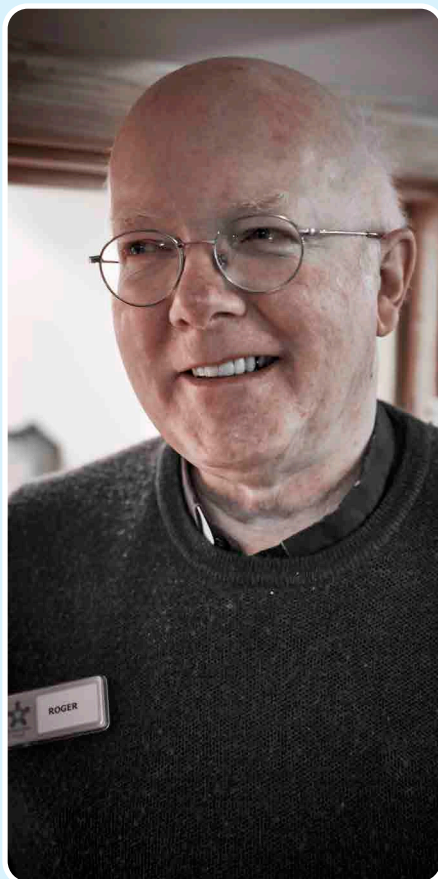
We have messages of support from staff, volunteer and clients. We are putting together an online interactive archive highlighting the work from the last 90 years. And probably more.

We received a call from someone who had seen some of our birthday content on TV. He had seen one of the archive pictures in the report and noticed that the person in it was him, 60 years ago. We have an interview with him and a nice photo to compare and contrast.

Anything we can do online to highlight the work we do, what we have done and how important you all are to the continued work we envision, we will do.

So thank you all for your support and keep an eye online - there might be a surprise or two!





I heard a new old saying recently. "If you can't see the light at the end of the tunnel, maybe the tunnel's got bends in it." Well, this year has had more bends than most.

At least so it seems; but we all have years that we shudder to remember, and others we look back on happily.

The difference now is that we have all been through it together. Shared experience – good or bad – draws us closer together, if we let it.

We may be frightened of being alone in the dark; but Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus, whose other name – Emmanuel - means God-with-us.

When we believe that, we are never truly alone again. It's in the dark that the light shines brightest.

Please pray for our work; that we may continue to offer hope to all those who come to us.

Please pray for our vision; that we may see the way ahead, and go forward trustingly.

Please pray for all who are sick, and all who care for them; that together we may share the love of God, and bear his light in the darkness.

Please give thanks that we have been able to keep going.



Christmas Appeal

1a. For one-off donations, please complete this side.

Full name.....

Home address.....

City.....Postcode.....

Email.....

Telephone no.....

I enclose a cheque / postal order
(made payable to 'St. George's Crypt') for £.....

Standing Order

1b. For regular donations by standing order, please complete both sides.

Bank / building society name:.....

Bank address:.....

.....Postcode:.....

Please pay St. George's Crypt (HSBC, PO Box 105,
Leeds, LS1 1LD. Sort code 40-27-15, account number 54703537)

The sum of £.....
each month / quarter / year (please delete as applicable)

commencing on.....(date) and until further notice.

Name of account to be debited:.....

Account number:.....Sort code:.....

Signed:.....Date:.....

2. Gift Aid Declaration

Please claim Gift Aid on all donations I have made within the past four years of this date and all donations I make in the future. I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and / or Capital Gains Tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference. I understand the charity will reclaim 25p of tax on every £1 that I give on or after the date signed below, or in the preceding 4 years.

Signed:.....

Date of declaration:.....

Please let us know if your address or your tax circumstances change.
(Post your completed form to: St. George's Crypt, Great George Street, Leeds, LS1 3BR)

3. GDPR Consent:

Do we have your consent to send you our quarterly Newsletter and interesting updates about the Crypt?

- ☐ Yes by post
☐ Yes by email
☐ No



Cooking up a Storm!

Recently our Growing Rooms residents, Luke and Neil, who volunteer at our Nurture kitchen, baked some pasties and a banana cake for our clients.

Growing Rooms is our drug and alcohol residential rehabilitation project. The programme offers our clients accommodation, group sessions and volunteering opportunities.

Nurture is the food and catering arm of the Crypt, providing a platform of training and engagement for clients to develop life skills and increase self-esteem and confidence.

It's great to see people, who have

come from often difficult and challenging circumstances, succeeding and achieving. It's also brilliant for the people who use our emergency accommodation to see their peers volunteering, training and developing new skills.

By offering people ways to build a solid foundation we have the privilege of seeing them grow. Their achievement also reinforces the potential for success for everyone who uses our service.

We work with a range of companies and individuals to offer work experience and job opportunities. We have successfully placed a number of people in a range of different roles.

The volunteering not only gives brilliant experience, it also develops all the skills that people who have been out of work may have lost; time keeping, professional interpersonal skills and many more.

So what is already a brilliant achievement of supporting our chefs delivering food across the city, becomes much more. It is the first step to laying a positive foundation that will, hopefully, lead to secure housing and a long-term job.

In these Covid times who doesn't want a tasty home-cooked pastie and some scumptuous cake?!



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**St. George's Crypt
Fundraising Team**

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Registered charity: 1144474, Company Number: 07780402



St.
George's
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