

@Crypt Leeds



St.
George's
Crypt

Christmas Issue 2021



Christmas Appeal 2021

Welcome

to our Christmas newsletter

Chris Fields
Chief Executive Officer



Greetings to all and a happy Christmas! Sorry... it's a little early but I have to prepare in plenty of time (Andrew makes me).

We all hear and say that things aren't what they used to be, and Christmas isn't Christmas anymore. It's all about the gifts, partying and mad shopping. I suppose I hear myself saying that more as I get older (big birthday just gone!) yet I still find myself getting scooped up into the frenzy! Is that because as a child of the 60's on a large estate there wasn't a lot to go around and I am making up for lost time? Or is that things are so much easier now and if they are why?

We have a society where everything is available whether you can afford it... or not. Those of us in paid work or retired on pensions have a guaranteed income of sorts and can plan for most eventualities or call upon help in times of need.

Take that privilege and cushion away and how do you think you would cope?

We recently saw that it only takes a couple of days for society to show signs of crumbling when we experienced the petrol situation. Imagine living like that day to day scrambling for clothes, food, warmth and even something as basic as a drink of water.

Here at the Crypt, we have to prepare in advance for the future, Harvest is now sorted and stored, budgets are set and hopefully managed, and Christmas is our time for carefully planning the year ahead as we rely on this time of year for our largest flow of income. Christmas has the ability to provide income for us which lasts into summer.

I suppose if we look at the Nativity the

Wise Men prepared Jesus for the future with gifts. The gold, I imagine, was spent keeping them safe in Egypt and the others sold as needs dictated. The last year has pushed us to the limit with staffing, costs and increased numbers to care for. We are currently looking after 114 bed spaces across the city when we used to have 45 (in the good old days).

Our founder Don Robins, who has been recognised by a blue plaque further in the newsletter, said "Where the battle is the hottest and the work is the hardest, that is where you will find me". We have never stepped back from the hottest battle or shied from hard work, but without your help, financial support and prayer we are just doing our best instead of ensuring the best for our guests.

I will be honest, the last year has tested our skills, patience and tenacity. We are not the only ones who have struggled, most people have in their own way. We have had to step up to the plate and deliver, no matter what the cost, financially and emotionally. We were like the Windmill Theatre, never closing. When services retracted, we became experts in lots of areas we never thought we would need to be. We look forward to planning for the next five years, in which we hope to provide better accommodation for emergency access, look at succession planning by developing our amazing teams and set the Crypt in readiness for the next 90 Christmases!

This Christmas we will be collecting toys as usual to distribute across the city, a tradition going back to our very beginnings. We will be providing Christmas dinners to around 175 people on Christmas Day.

We will be collecting items to make into presents for the lonely and vulnerable, our volunteers will be wrapping for England!

We will be preparing extra beds during the worst weather conditions but most of all, we will be singing and praising the birth of Jesus in carols and party songs as we try to ensure our guests experience Christmas ... as it should be. Family, love and security.

So from everyone here at the Crypt, staff, residents, guests and volunteers may we wish a wonder-filled Christmas to you and may God bless and protect those you love and hold dear.

When the song of the Angels is stilled,

When the star in the sky is 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,

to bring peace upon people,

and to make music in the heart.

By: Howard Thurman

With all blessings for Christmas and 2022 Chris.



A Home by Christmas



'My name is Mathew and this is the story of the last 12 months of my life and how things have changed.'

12 months ago I was running a well-populated public house but then the pandemic hit and affected many people's lives and businesses.

I was excited as I had just found out I am going to be a dad but worried about what sort of future we were going to be moving into.

Two weeks before my baby's due date I was evicted from the pub premises with four days notice leaving me in a difficult situation.

I knew I would need to seek some sort of help and Hilary, my Support Worker, has done exactly that for me and more!

She helped me not only deal with the problems and stresses caused by losing my home and job, along with trying my best to provide for my son, but she helped me look for houses and flats as I was sleeping in parks

and friends' sofas for the best part of a year.

Hilary told me about a new project build for housing support, called Don Robins House. The build is beautiful, I remember going for my assessment and viewing of the property.

I was blown away, standing in one of the rooms looking around thinking "do I really deserve to be here? are there others who should have this opportunity rather than me?" It's hard to explain exactly how you feel at the time going from sofa to sofa to then standing in a new building, being told this could be yours.

Later that day I receive a phone call offering me the very apartment I was standing in. I was stunned and stuck for words. I moved in four days after. Everything happened so fast I couldn't believe it or understand why so much luck started to come my way.

Furthermore, getting to meet and speak with staff members, I can't thank them enough! The support you

get, from help with setting up bills and any other personal issues you might want to talk about, they have always been there and supported me, checking how I am and being very friendly.

Simon, my key worker, goes that extra mile to ensure everything is okay and always open to having one - to - one chats if needed.

Now that I am finding my confidence, I am able to enjoy doing my cooking and baking which I hand out to other residents in my spare time.

I am looking forward to my next Christmas in a safe homely environment and a great start to a New Year.

At Don Robins House they have a big communal area which can be used for coffee mornings and other activities like games night, TV night, which is nice to meet and spend time with other residents' like one big family.'



Recipe for Citizenship:

As part of their recovery at **Growing Rooms**, the Crypt's abstinence-based drug and alcohol recovery programme, clients follow a five day a week structured programme. This includes three meetings per week of therapeutic group work, applying the principles of the 12-step recovery model and two days of volunteering.

Two of our guys have been volunteering at **Nurture**, the catering arm within the Crypt. They started on a structured CPD Certified City and Guilds catering course and recently both passed Level 2 Food Safety and Hygiene for Catering.

Here we follow their stories on life before joining Growing Rooms and their journeys so far.

Ben broke up with his long-term partner and started drinking because of the way he was feeling. He moved in with his mum. However, he was in a bad place mentally, and this affected his relationship with family and friends.

Ben moved to London and lived on the streets and in shelters for six months. He finally had enough of London, so came back to Leeds to get help with his alcohol dependency. That is how he ended up on St. George's Crypt's Growing Rooms.

Ben says: "I relapsed once and left the programme but I came back again and I was fortunate that they allowed me back. The reason I came back is that there is evidence all around the city of people who have done the programme and succeeded." As part of his volunteering, he chose to work in the Crypt kitchen.

"I wanted to be in the frontline, so to speak. You get a good feeling when you are helping people who are in the same situation as you were in once.

I hope that at the end of this I can get an opportunity to work in catering. I am enjoying learning new things. I enjoy the atmosphere in the Crypt kitchen.

To me, the kitchen feels like the hub of the Crypt. It is where staff, volunteers and clients all come together daily – this is the meeting point. I love being part of this."

Before coming to the Crypt, Will was using drink and drugs daily.

Will says:

"It gave me a bit of what I thought was confidence. It wasn't a life, from the moment of waking up everything revolved around drinking and drugs and how I could get them. I wasn't capable of work. I wasn't capable of having decent relationships with people, with my family."

Will was referred to the Crypt and was successful in joining **Growing Rooms**, he says he was not sure what to expect but knew that he had to find a different way to live.

"I wasn't strong enough to be able to come out of rehab after five weeks and live life on life's terms, get a job and do the normal things that normal people do in life. I wasn't ready for that.

I needed more support and more structure and routine back in my days and more help from people."

Like Ben, Will did relapse once but managed to come back onto the programme

Will says: "After my relapse, I had six months back out there on drink and drugs. It was just absolute mayhem.

My life was unmanageable again, just back to the same old problems I had before I went to rehab.

I feel different this time around because after having the six months out there, I knew that sort of life wasn't for me. I needed some sort of support, some sort of help from somebody else to get my life back on track.

It's all about the belief really that I can better myself as a person and be an upstanding member of society, so to speak."

On what it means to him to be on a structured routine, working at the Crypt kitchen, Ben says:

"It means quite a lot. I enjoy cooking and just being in the kitchen in general. So, for **Nurture** to pay for an online college course, for me to get my Catering certificate means a lot.

I can now take this on to the employer. To go into that sort of field of work would be massive for me. Getting a job, I love, a job that I enjoy doing, that would be amazing."

Recovery involves much more than just stopping drinking/taking drugs.

Here at the Crypt we recognise people as individuals and that addiction is only a small part of who they are.



Banking on Success

At St. George's Crypt, we work with a range of partnership agencies, organisations and individuals to offer a range of services for the homeless and vulnerable adults who use our service.

Currently, we are working with HSBC, supporting our clients without a fixed home address to open a bank account. The HSBC 'No Fixed Address' scheme gives our vulnerable clients a safe place to keep and spend their money, helping to protect them from financial abuse.

We, as a charity, provide the address to open the bank account. We support the client to fill out a form with as many identification details as possible and then accompany them to the bank, where the bank account is explained to the client in detail.

Since May, we have opened approximately 30 accounts for clients from our Care Centre.

We expect to open many more soon as more of our



projects start to use the scheme.

Jamie Wilson – Emergency Accommodation Service Coordinator, St George's Crypt said:

"I am so grateful to Lou Walker (Assistant Customer Experience Manager) and the team from HSBC for all the advice they have given us at St. George's Crypt to support our residents to access the No Fixed Address service. The process has been straightforward for staff and residents and is truly making a difference to those who have accessed it. A simple bank account can be key to making a life-changing difference for someone homeless and destitute, so this service has been vital for anyone in need".

By offering such services to our clients, we at the Crypt can open up a world of opportunities for our clients. We work with people from chaos to citizenship.



Re-opening Assisi Café

Since the start of COVID we haven't been able to offer our sit-down, three-course lunch service. We have been serving a fully COVID compliant takeaway service so no-one goes without.

We have also been offering people clothes, food parcels, support and guidance, but there is something missing. Takeaway isn't the same as eating in.

Last Christmas we had a commuted service; we were able to offer a sit-down meal at our Care Centre, as well as distribute Christmas presents to the various services we were managing across the city, but we were still at the centre of lockdown.

This year, we are starting to offer more. We restarted our sit-

down lunch service on our 91st anniversary. Coming into winter, this was very well received. We also are able to plan a wider and more generous Christmas provision. We will be serving over 200 turkey meals, with all the trimmings, across six services on Christmas Day.

These services support a range of different people, all coming from a history of homelessness, poverty, and vulnerability.

For some it will be their first Christmas in years shared in community, abstinent, supported and loved. For others, it may mark the start of a more positive chapter of their lives. For some it may bring back bad memories, and we will be on hand to support, to guide, to provide an anchor in the storm.



Summer of '68

Imagine our surprise when Peter Lavery, a famous photographer, phoned up saying that he had discovered four rolls of film that he took of the Crypt back in 1968, when he was studying at Leeds College of Art.

Then, imagine our amazement when he and his team offered to premiere

them all at an exclusive exhibition in Leeds to celebrate our 91st birthday.

The photos show a snapshot in the history of the work of the Crypt. They are an important archive, a testament to the work that we have been doing supporting homeless and vulnerable people since 1930.

We invited members of our *Growing*

Rooms project to the opening, to talk about their recovery, their journey and how practically, the work of the Crypt changes lives. The photos contrasted well with these real-life stories, a visual reminder of the work that the Crypt used to do shown alongside the living, breathing, vital work the Crypt does now.

Join our Trustee Board

St George's Crypt is seeking new members for its Board of Trustees.

We are currently looking for applications from people who have experience in developing, delivering or managing housing projects in particular within the social housing sector who can provide strategic direction as the charity continues to grow its housing portfolio. We are also interested in applications from people with PR and media experience who can work with our leadership team and trustees to develop our social media presence and relationship with partners.

Candidates should have a demonstrable Christian faith and a commitment to support the work of the Crypt. Previous Board or Trustee experience is not necessary as training will be provided.

If you are interested in exploring this further, please contact us by 31 December 2021. Email our CEO Chris to arrange a suitable time for an informal chat:

chris.fields@stgeorgescrypt.org.uk or contact caroline.schofield@stgeorgescrypt.org.uk to request an application pack.



The fun in Fundraising



2021 LEEDS BIG SLEEP

Thurs 25 Nov

5th year of our joint fundraiser with Leeds Rhinos Foundation and St. Gemma's Hospice Raising money for people in our own city. Visit our website for more details.



Christmas Carol Concert

Let's Sing 26 Choir
Thurs 9 Dec
St. George's Church
Free entry
Doors open 11:30 am
Prompt 12 Noon start



Christmas Cards

Pack of 10 for £4
Available from the Crypt, our three shops, or by post with P&P extra.



Crypt Big 3

Join in one or challenge yourself to all three:

Total Warrior

Sat 25 June
Leeds 10K
Sun 3 July

Yorkshire 3 Peaks

Sat 30 July



Burns Night

Ceilidh & Haggis Dinner

Sat 29 Jan in
St. George's Centre

Tickets £17
Table of 10 £150

LEEDS
MALE VOICE CHOIR
PRESENT

The Spirit of Christmas



Sat 11 Dec, 3pm & 6pm
Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane

Contact us

To sign up, join in, buy tickets or volunteer for any of our fundraising events and activities, please contact the Fundraising Team

Tel: 0113 245 9061 or email martin.barry@stgeorgescrypt.org.uk



A Mother's Love

At St. George's Crypt we not only work with individuals but families too. One of our residents, a 68 year old lady came to live with us at Don Robins House after she fell out with her sister and become homeless.

She then referred her homeless stepson, Mark to the service.

Mark was assessed by our team and it was agreed that his needs would be best supported at Regent Lodge, our project for alcohol dependent gentlemen.

We visited him at Regent Lodge for a chat to see how he has settled in. Mark told us his story:

'I used to work for Leeds City Council as a cleaner about six years ago then moved on to work at a garage. Unfortunately, I lost that job due to my drinking.

Me and my missus split up and I got kicked out of the house. I was homeless for a full year; staying at people's houses, sofa-surfing until it got to a point where I was just staying on the streets.

I got involved with Street Outreach who were looking to refer me to local homeless services. Luckily my stepmum

who had been homeless too was now accommodated at Don Robins House, she referred me to the service.'

Mark has been living at Regent Lodge for two months now:

'I love it here, it's fantastic and it means a lot for me to have a place of my own. I plan to rebuild my life while I am here.

The staff here are supporting me to cut down on my alcohol intake and due to my learning disability, they support me with filling housing application forms.

I get to see my mum on weekends, either she comes here or I go to her. We cook and eat together and just look after each other.'

Developed with close to a century of experience in delivering a homeless support service, close links with local council and NHS services, St George's Crypt housing pathways deliver a service that looks to change how Leeds as a city engages with some of its most hard to reach individuals.



Positive Move-ons



Don Robins House, our newest accommodation project for people who are vulnerably housed, has now been in operation since July 2021.

We have already seen supported clients move on to independent living.

We had a woman who was six months pregnant living in our Crypt Care Centre. She had become homeless due to a fallout with family and was clearly vulnerable.

The Care Centre emergency accommodation was not a suitable place for a pregnant woman.

We supported her through our resettlement assessment and she moved into Don Robins House.

She loved her new home and felt settled. She appreciated the support that she received because she did not have any existing support networks.

Within a month of being with us, she secured a house through Leeds City Council. She was very grateful but sad to leave us. She had to think of

the greater good for her and the baby, so she moved on.

Another client with a one-year-old child came to us after she was asked to leave home by her family. She was happy with her apartment and loved socialising with the other residents. She managed to keep in touch with her mother even though their relationship was strained. We supported her to secure a house through the Council and has now moved on.

Our third client had suffered a breakdown and had been moved to specialist accommodation.

After stabilising, with medication and support, she was desperate to get back with her children. Social Services told her she couldn't have access to her children until she got her own housing.

We were able to accommodate her, supporting her with bids for housing and benefits paperwork.

When she successfully bid on a property, our team helped her secure grants from various charities to furnish her new home. We are happy to say she is now reunited with both her children.

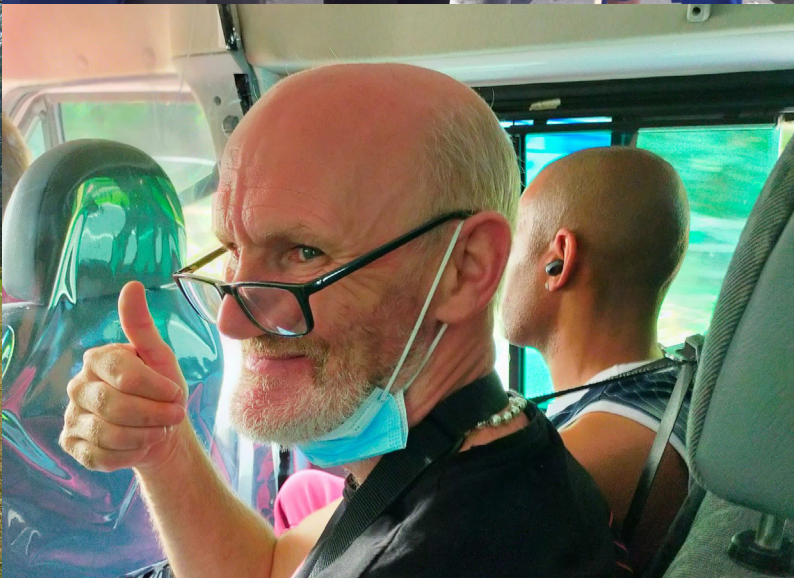
Don Robins House has 24 apartments, six of which are family units.

The support we offer is varied and dependent on individual client needs.

This ranges from aid with understanding the benefits system, finding spaces in school for children and accessing ESOL classes, setting up bills and letter writing to name a few.

We have clients here who may always need additional help whether it be here with us or somewhere else.

Here at St. George's Crypt we aim to give people the stability and security they need to rebuild their lives, helping them to move on independently, from chaos to citizenship.



The guys from *Growing Rooms*, our drug and alcohol abstinence programme, visited Marrick priory.

The guys took part in some outdoor adventure activities ranging from canoeing and kayaking, lake swimming, archery to high rope climbing.

At the end of the three days, they were all exhilarated, exhausted but mostly relaxed.

For many of them, this was the first time they had done any such activities. Not only did they relax, bond and gain new experiences, but they also learnt some essential life skills such as good money

management because they had to save up and pay for half of the trip's expenses.

Marrick is an annual trip in partnership with *Spacious Places*. The main aim is to promote mental wellbeing in peaceful, relaxing surroundings in the North Yorkshire Dales.





Christmas is never easy in St George's Crypt. We lay on a full Christmas dinner, sing carols and put up decorations, and in every way try to make it a time of celebration.

The thing we cannot provide is the family people are missing; that sense of being at home, of being loved. We do our best, together. If there is no room for our people in the rest of the city, at least they can find a welcome at the Crypt.

That makes us a bit like the stable; better than nothing. But it's a lot more than that. When everything else has been lost, God is still present. You only see the stars when it's dark.

May God, whose son Jesus shines in the darkness, give us all a blessed Christmas.

We ask you to pray with us, as we give thanks for:

Everyone resident with us, or coming for lunch: may we be a blessing to them.

Our new flats at Don Robins House: may everyone there find hope.

Those we look after who are still in addiction: may they find the will to recover.

Our *Growing Rooms* residents: thankful for mutual encouragement.

Our shops: may they be place of blessing as well as commerce.

Our staff: we are thankful for all we are able to accomplish together.



Gifts in Wills For 90 years St. George's Crypt has helped homeless and vulnerable people. Gifts in wills can be arranged in minutes but the impact lasts a lifetime. The only information your will writer / professional adviser needs is the charity name and registered charity number: St. George's Crypt, Registered charity number 1144474. Every gift will help transform lives.

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 £.....

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.

3. GDPR Consent:

Do we have your consent to send you our quarterly Newsletter and other interesting updates about the Crypt? Tick all contact methods that apply; we are happy to send you our newsletter by post and by email if you wish

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:.....

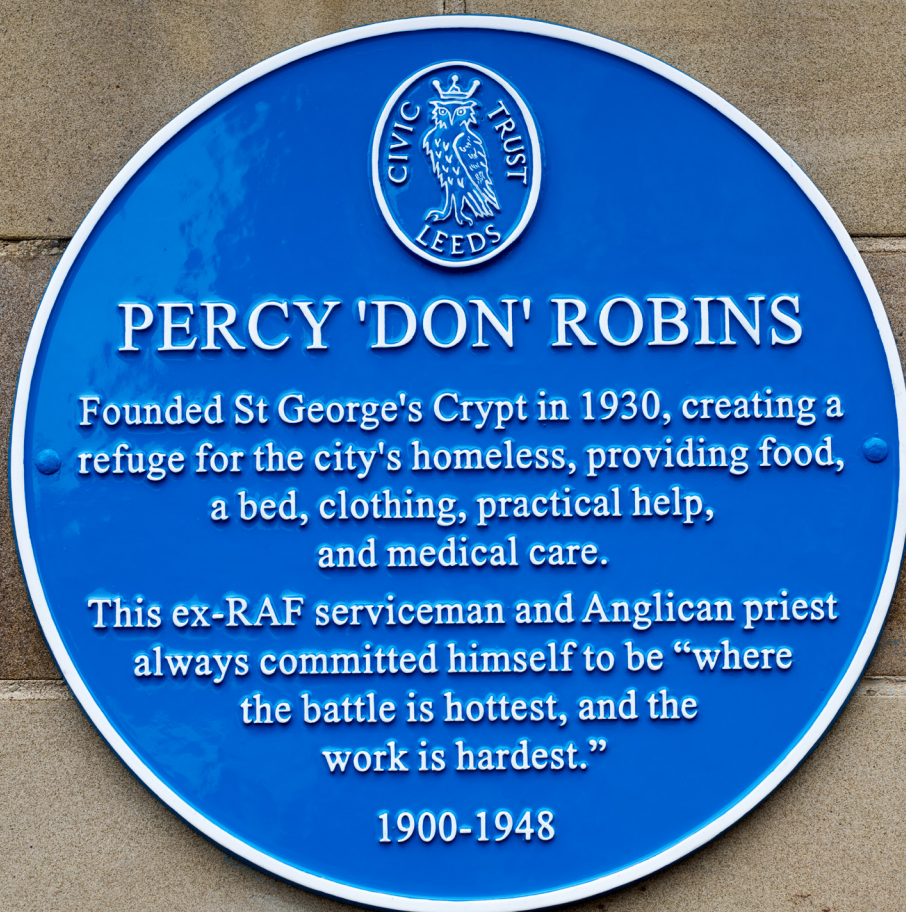
Signed:.....

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)

- ☐ Yes by post
☐ Yes by email
☐ No



Where the battle is hottest...

'Where the battle is hottest, and the work is hardest.' This famous quote, now immortalised on a Blue Plaque outside the main Crypt building, was one of the maxims that Revd. Don Robins said inspired the creation of the Crypt.

Don Robins dedicated himself to the homeless and vulnerable of Leeds, on becoming vicar of St George's Church in 1930. By his death, the Crypt was well-known and well-regarded across the city as a sanctuary for those not so well-off, a beacon of Christian love in the centre of Leeds. Crowds attended

his public funeral, and the city lost a visionary trailblazer who encapsulated the practical demonstration of the love of Christ.

The dedication was supported by our long term volunteer, Leeds Civic Trust patron and Crypt Angel Roger Garnett. It was unveiled by Revd. Robins' daughter-in-law, Delia Robins and Hilary Benn MP.

This dedication reinforces the importance of our work. The battle is still hot, the work is still hard, but it is the success that we see, the changes in the people who use the services we



If we send more than one copy of our newsletter to your address, please let us know and help us to reduce our mailing costs. If you would prefer to read it online, please provide your email address to: martyn.croft@stgeorgescrypt.org.uk

For more information, please contact
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St. George's
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