



**Christmas Issue 2015** 



St George's Crypt 2015 Christmas Appeal Special



# Velcone to your Christmas Newsletter Chris Fields Chief Executive Officer

### "Are there no prisons? Are there no workhouses?"

Hi everyone and welcome to our Christmas Newsletter. I think that apart from the greatest story ever told, "A Christmas Carol" is my favourite. I try to watch every film version of it over the Christmas period and to my family's despair I never tire of it; there's always a film of it recorded for me to watch.

The old curmudgeonly embittered Ebenezer Scrooge has no heart for others, no love for his family and a great desire and misguided love for money. But by the visitation of three spirits showing him how it was, how it is and how it could be, he is reborn into a world of light and happiness with a heart for sharing and a love for all of mankind.

# Is that too soppy? Is that a pastiche of a Utopian world? Or is it real?

I think Dickens was a genius, as simple as that. I read that he had his faults like the rest of us but he was light-years ahead of his time in bringing the desperate needs of the poor and vulnerable to a society rich from the Industrial Revolution (who could actually read and could afford to buy his works) and believed that they were "God fearing Christians".

Does anyone watching the film or reading the book see the similarity between the darkness of a faithless life, and the understanding of God's love and desire for us to live in love and peace?

The worship of material goods at the cost of sacrificial giving and sharing of resources is at the heart of both the Dickens story and the story of the gift of Christmas.

God gave his greatest gift sacrificially,

without strings, without any expectation of anything in return so we could learn what true love is.

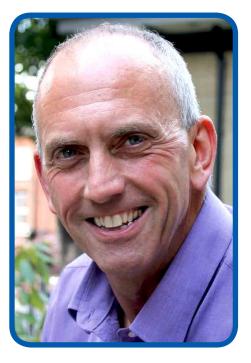
This time last year I described the times ahead on a radio interview as "possibly Dickensian" which made me think about this piece for the Newsletter. We have a widening gap between the haves and have nots, just how far does it have to go before even we cannot bridge the gap?

We have given out more food parcels and beds to people this year than ever before. We have cooked more meals and handed out more hot drinks than ever before. Thankfully God provides food and drink for the hundreds of people we see every week. Sadly, he cannot provide electricity or gas, nor wages for that matter. We rely on the generosity of donors for that and hopefully this Newsletter will prove our good stewardship of all our precious resources, money, time, skills and most of all love.

# It's a great privilege in this secular world to talk about Christian love. We have a gift that never dates, never runs out and never asks for anything in return. Truly precious.

The love shared and shown by staff, volunteers and residents is the thread which runs throughout the charity and has been mentioned by many people "on the outside" during our 85th birthday celebrations. People say they can feel it when they come through the door, they see it in small gestures and kindnesses that people give to each other.

Poor old Scrooge, what a life he had in the loveless, dark and cold wilderness, disliked and ignored by everyone and left to his own devices. But oh, what great joy he has when the true meaning of Christmas is realised and seen through his own experiences.



How soon he wants to share the spirit of true kindness and generosity of spirit, how he takes great joy in his family and of course his help to Tiny Tim and Bob Cratchit.

Some say Victorian philanthropy has no place in modern society and the Big Society should take over. I say we have to start somewhere and all charity starts with a big heart and a desire to help.

If it wasn't for big hearts and a desire to help someone, somewhere, someday, we as a charity would not exist.

Our founder Don Robins gave away food (we do). He gave away toys at Christmas (we do). He opened the doors to the most in need (we do). He offered hope and love in the name of the Lord and thanks to all of you we still do. A Christian charity island offering refuge, hope and love in a dark and Dickensian world.

We wish you a wonder filled Christmas and may God bless you and all you hold dear at this time, and thank you from the deepest part of our hearts for 85 years of support, understanding and love for our brothers and sisters all of whom are on a journey through life and faith.

Now then; "You boy, yes you!, Pray tell, is the prize turkey still hanging in the poultry department at the supermarket? Go and ask them to donate it to St George's Crypt as we have 180 people to Christmas lunch! And here's a quid for your trouble and two if you return within the hour!"

# **Nurture Successes**



# It's always great to hear of successes in any walk of life and none more so than here at the Crypt.

We set up Nurture catering with this in mind - yes we wanted to provide a service that would help fund the work we do but more than that, we wanted a way to train people, develop people, give people jobs and hopefully watch as they fly the coop.

This past quarter we have had some major developments within our staffing team. Two full-time members of staff who experienced homelessness and prison have been taken on by the same employer to work across their service.

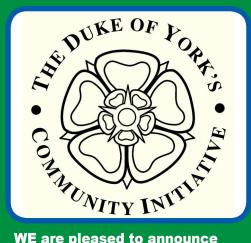
Two more have been hired in the kitchen of a major Leeds hotel and are doing very well.

This has opened up positions across the service and we are happy to say that we will be hiring Tony to our staff team.

If you have bought a copy of the new book you will be able to read about all their lives, how they found the Crypt, what life has thrown at them and why they needed a non-judgemental, Christ-led service to support and train them. The proof is in the name and we pride ourselves on nurturing those that society has left behind.

We wish them all the best and welcome Tony to the staff team.

# Duke of York Awards



WE are pleased to announce that we have been awarded a prestigious Royal accolade; the Duke of York's Community Initiative.

Day in and day out we provide accommodation, training and support for homeless and vulnerable people.

The Duke of York Community Initiative has recognised the vital role we play in the lives of thousands of the worst off in and around Leeds.

Presented annually to organisations who are seen to be making a very real difference to the communities they serve, the award will be given out to a total of 34 different groups by HRH The Duke of York at a ceremony to be held in the New Year.

We are very proud to have been chosen to receive the award.

# Dates for your diary

### Saturday 28th November 2015

Murder Mystery Night - delicious three course meal and a whodunit mystery to solve. Almost sold out.

Tickets £25.

# Thursday 17th December 2015

The Choristers of Durham Cathedral return to start off our Christmas celebrations. Free concert in St George's Church.

### Friday 22nd January 2016

Burns' Night Ceilidh @ Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds. Haggis and dancing! Contact Fundraising for tickets (£12) or more info.

We wish you a merry Christmas!

## Christmas Toy Appeal

Since the days of Don Robins we have been a lifeline to parents at Christmas who would struggle to give the Christmas their children deserve.

Toys are way down the list when electricity, gas or rent are racking up and there's just too much month left at the end of the salary.

Churches, schools and individuals donate new and pre-loved toys for boys and girls of all ages which we then give out to families.

This was always done at the Crypt and we had a lovely "Grotto theme" going on. We then looked at how we could improve this and involve local communities in helping their neighbours.

To this end, we now have links with numerous churches across the city who distribute toys on our behalf and develop relationships with the families. This is proving to be a real success and we asked Rowena (a trustee) for help as she used to manage this as part of her job when she worked here.

Rowena has developed friendships with many people across the city. Her team of volunteers led by Charlie and Diane are now squirrelling, grading and distributing toys to help Santa make dreams come true.



### **An Insider Story from RT**

I arrived at Regent Terrace, as pretty much everyone else does - a homeless alcoholic. However, I don't remember much of the finer detail.

Plucked like recyclable rubbish from the rest of the detritus on the street by the Outreach Team, I do remember being deposited next to a radiator that was hotter than the melting point of tungsten in the office at Regent's Terrace.

My sense of paranoia immediately began to increase, not because I had no idea where I was; the genuine homeless deal with that fact all of the time, but because I had absolutely no idea where to locate my next drink; a situation that the dependent alcoholic obviously avoids at all costs.

I know that I was sent to hospital that first day to deal with physical ailments, and was detoxed as a kind of happy coincidence during the time I was an inpatient. The medical staff were treating my broken body, not my fractured mind, and so the need and desire to drink was always there, constantly nagging.

The days, weeks, and months following my discharge from hospital dropped into a pattern familiar to every dependent alcoholic.

It's a life - but not much of one - and the sad fact is that when you're the one on the inside looking out, there genuinely doesn't appear to be any way of breaking out of what is obviously a self-perpetuating cycle.

It doesn't matter one iota what caused me to start drinking too much, because once I became dependent the problem was self-perpetuating - and I estimate that I was probably a functioning dependent alcoholic for at least fifteen years without ever either acknowledging or admitting it to myself or others.

People change for any number of reasons - some positive and some negative. Some people change because they want to be something;

others decide that they don't want to be something.

I was angry at not being in control. I was angry at not being able to do anything without alcohol. I was angry that an external influence was dictating every aspect of my life, influencing every decision. I wanted control of my life back. I didn't want to be controlled anymore.

Fortunately, I'd been engaging with the Dual Diagnosis team at the Addiction Unit for a couple of months at the suggestion of both my Key Worker and my doctor, and so my anger could be acted upon by arranging five days of Librium to help with the withdrawal symptoms, both physical and mental.

Regent Terrace has been great. When I arrived they sorted out all the important stuff that gets lost in the ether when you're homeless - the housing benefit, sickness benefit, doctors' appointments, etc.

When I was drinking, they quietly monitored me - made sure that I ate properly, drank reasonably sensibly, attended any necessary appointments, sorted out any necessary paperwork, kept up with my chores, and generally ensured that I didn't come to any harm.

I am not a great 'talker'. I don't really do all that deep and meaningful, New Age, 'happy-clappy' stuff, and if I'm honest, I prefer my own company - but they were there if I needed to chat, and I know I could have called on them a great deal more and they would have obliged.

They didn't try and force me to change my drinking habits. They didn't insist that I cut down or stop completely.

No sanctions were imposed, but when I made the decision to change they were there to offer any support I needed - and they continue to do so as I soon embark on a new journey. I hope that they know I do appreciate them - in my own peculiar way.

### **Christmas at the Crypt**



What picture do we all have of a Christmas day? Families gathered together? A big tree with lights, baubles and presents or tables groaning with food? Perhaps a roaring fire with garlands and glasses of egg nog? Okay, you get the picture.

Christmas at the Crypt is a bittersweet time. We have to play it very carefully and consider the journeys that all our guests are on. Families are estranged, alcohol is a demon to be fought, friends few and far between and presents unaffordable.

Thanks to the kindness and generosity of our supporters reading this Newsletter, we can make Christmas a time of peace and joy in a time of chaos and loneliness.

There's a really great scene in "The Good Life" when dear old Margo Leadbetter declares that "Christmas is cancelled" due to Fortnum & Mason failing to deliver her shopping. However, Tom and Barbara cobble together a Christmas made of newspapers, bad jokes and love which turns out to

be their best Christmas ever!

It's not quite as basic as that here but we do make do with what is given. We are lucky to receive socks, underwear, toiletries, chocolate and lots of small items which are lovingly wrapped and put in a big stocking for each resident (keeping a few spare just in case!)

Before lunch there's a short Chapel service where the meaning of Christmas is the theme (carols are always popular).

Lunch is a family affair with volunteers coming in and preparing a lunch fit for a king with all the trimmings (all donated) and then perhaps a singalong and a few games. Like most families a good snooze and some TV round off the day.

We can only fill the gaps.

Standing in for a missing family, making the most of what we have, sharing food and gifts, helping someone feel special – can you think of a finer Christmas day?

If anyone from Fortnum & Mason happens to read this, our address is on the back page!

# A Resident's Story

'About 18 months ago I found myself homeless due to my relationship breaking down. I lost my job, my home and partner all at the same time and I was in a bad way both mentally and physically. The Crypt not only gave me shelter and fed me during this difficult period of life but also helped me to regain my confidence again.

I had lost all confidence in my abilities to work in a kitchen environment and thought I would never work as a chef again. After chatting with Dave Pilling, I agreed to volunteer in the kitchen and the cafés.

Little by little my confidence came back, which subsequently led to me getting back into full time employment where I soon moved up to run the kitchen where I was working.

Whilst staying at the Crypt I happened to attend The Lighthouse service. This really helped me to get back in touch with my faith. The service really struck a chord with me and made me realise what was missing from my life.

I started to read scripture for the first time in years, was trying my hardest to walk that righteous path and then decided to reaffirm my faith by baptism a few weeks ago.

Although not perfect, my life has been the best it has ever been for a long time since I walked into The Crypt that cold February afternoon. It just gets better and better.

The staff are really caring and I can't thank them enough for all the help they have given me, Leeds is truly blessed to have such a great place for people in need. I really cannot thank them enough for helping me in my hour of need.'



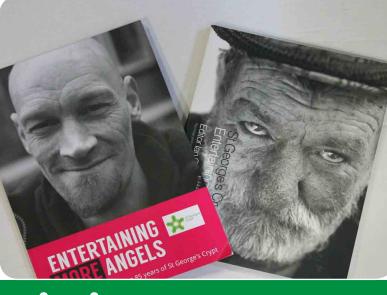












# Happy 85th Birthday

How time flies! 85 years ago
Don Robins could not have
conceived that the small
local charity he started in the
Crypt of a church in central
Leeds, would have grown and
flourished into a supportive
environment tending to
the needs of the homeless,
vulnerable and marginalised
across five sites; building on
the foundations he set with the
support of the city.

The community that has grown in the foundations of the Church is one to behold. Expectations of violence, bad language and smell give way rapidly when faced with the heart-warming boisterousness of the place. Everyone getting along, no discrimination, people holding doors open for the broken bodies coming in from the hospitals, helping carry dinner trays, cleaning

up, taking part in activities, leading the activities, growing and moving on. As lan, Don's son said at the birthday celebrations, 'he (Don) will be standing up in Heaven and rejoicing!'

And the wealth of activities that we offer, the myriad of ways that we try and showcase our work, push the message that we are more than a soup kitchen, that we are a vital part of the tapestry of Leeds keeps on growing. We have physiotherapists, mental health specialists, drug and alcohol counsellors, art programmes, opera sessions, theatre, drama, singing, cooking; the list goes on.

But sometimes we forget to tell people about what we do. Sometimes we need an excuse.

On 14th October just such an excuse appeared. We celebrated our 85th Birthday. Starting off in the Crypt over

lunch, we welcomed in over 300 people to look around our much changed facilities and talk with the staff about the work we do. We then decamped to the Banqueting Suite of the Civic Hall, kindly donated to us for the night by Tom Riordan, CEO of Leeds City Council, to launch our new book. He spoke about the work we do, the importance we play in the city and the hope we bring to those without.

It was a great day to remind ourselves and the city about everything we do, how far we have come in providing a service that not only meets the need but tries to give people a chance, build people's confidence, remind people that they do have a place, can change their lives and people do care; it's strange to think that we don't want to have to be here in 85 years but if we are then we will hopefully still be working as we are now, trying to make better lives.

# How We've Helped



### During the period 1st July to 30th September 2015

#### **Accommodation**

We have provided accommodation for 421 different individuals including 384 in our Care Centre as emergency provision, 8 of which were individuals discharged from hospital without suitable accommodation to return to. In Faith Lodge, our home for men in recovery from addictions, we supported 24 individuals, and we have helped 13 men in Regent Terrace, our supported housing for men who are alcohol dependent.

#### **Meals**

Nurture served 3968 three course lunches at the Crypt, an average of over 60 hot meals each day for the hungry.

#### **Food Parcels**

Our food parcel service at Armley Shop provided for 179 adults and 87 children.

We also provide food parcels from our Care Centre. Here, we gave food parcels to families totalling 86 adults and 165 children, plus 4 expectant mothers and 9 independent young people under the age of eighteen who were considered too vulnerable to eat at our Centre and are not sufficiently supported elsewhere.

#### **Training & Engagement**

109 different people took part in Training and Engagement activities during September alone. These activities included accessing Health & Wellbeing sessions such as our Monday Meditation group, and Soft Skills sessions such as the Ministry of Food cooking group where 6 of our service users learn how to cook healthy meals. Last month 37 clients volunteered 126 hours of housekeeping and cleaning, learning skills needed to maintain a tenancy.



### It's Never too Late to Learn or too Early to Start

The Crypt is pleased to announce that we are a becoming a registered "Living Wage" employer.

This is a great step for the city of Leeds to encourage as many employers as possible to commit to their staff.

We are also pleased to report that we have our first apprentice. This was a long process as we decided to look in places that other employers would shy away from. We looked at ex-offenders, people with learning difficulties and similar areas but decided upon young people leaving the care system.

We know through experience that a lot of our residents have been through the care system and for whatever reason, life doesn't take a good path once independent.

We interviewed a number of young men and women all looking for a job who all presented really well. Sadly, we could only afford to take one.

The decision was also left to the successful applicant to "choose" which area of the charity they would prefer to work, the choices being retail, catering or administration (all in need of an apprentice).

Our successful young man chose catering and is now a full member of the team, attending college and working towards his NVQ qualifications. We know he will do well as we have such a diverse catering system with the cafes, outside catering and the in-house food for the homeless every day.

We wish him all the luck in the world and have committed to his wellbeing and training whilst with us.

We would really like to take this to another level if funding allows and look to expand the opportunities for care leavers to work with us and have a great start in their new lives.

### Christmas with the Choristers of Durham Cathedral



Tempus fugit! The Crypt is delighted to welcome back the Choristers of Durham Cathedral who have performed at our annual Carol Concert since 2012.

This year it is the turn of the girls, who last performed in 2013 to wide acclaim.

The girls sing in the Cathedral every other day, singing Choral Evensong and in the Sunday service. They have appeared on BBC1's Songs of Praise and Radio 3's Choral Evensong. They have also toured many locations throughout the world.

We are very happy to welcome them back and are looking forward to another great performance. We hope lots of you will be able to come along and hear their beautiful voices.

The FREE Carol Concert will take place on Thursday 17th December at St. George's Church, Great George Street, Leeds. Doors open at 12.00pm for a 12.15pm start. Please RSVP.

### **Trinity Church Burns' Night Ceilidh**



Dig those kilts out from the back of your wardrobe! Ceilidh Queen Ann Nicholl will once again perform hosting duties at our annual Burns' Night celebration on Friday 22nd January 2016.

This popular event will take place at Holy Trinity Church, Boar Lane, Leeds. A traditional supper of haggis, neeps and tatties will be served by Nurture, the Crypt's award winning catering social enterprise.

The night will come to a close with a traditional Scottish Ceilidh - a set of dances led by our resident Scottish local MC Revd Roger Quick.

We are sure that following on from the fun of the past few events, this will be a night to remember so book quickly!

For details on both events and tickets please contact Fundraising by email at fundraising1@stgeorgescrypt. org.uk or call 0113 245 9061.

### **Chaplain's Corner**

'When they saw the star, they rejoiced exceedingly with great joy.' Matthew 2:10

Since the very first Christmas at the Crypt in 1930, we have distributed toys to some of the poorest children in Leeds. One of those children was a lad just seven years old; his father had died; the family was struggling. That Christmas, Don Robins took them presents and food from the Crypt. The lad never forgot it, and throughout his long life he gave every year to our work, and told his family the story. When he died last year, aged 90, his family asked me, as Crypt chaplain, to conduct his funeral; I counted it as a privilege.

The good which we are able to do by your generosity can change people's lives, and bring hope out of despair. Thank you for your help, and for your prayers.

Please pray for our work, done on your behalf in the name of God:

**Monday**: Please pray for the work of the Care Centre, that the love of God for all those in need may shine out.

**Tuesday**: Please pray for staff and residents at our dry hostel, Faith Lodge; for love, wisdom, and strength to persevere.

Wednesday: Please pray for staff, and residents still in addiction at our house on Regent Terrace. Especially pray for those who have moved on in recovery, that they will be able to continue in their development.

Thursday: Please pray for our shops in Armley, Oakwood and Pudsey; that they may be places of blessing to all who use them. Especially pray for our new Shops Manager, that she will be able to steer our shops and the team will

support her.

**Friday**: Please pray for our cafés: for the Nurture initiative providing good food and training. Especially pray for the two members of our staff team who have moved on into independent employment, that they will be sustained and excel away from the Crypt.

**Saturday**: Please pray for all those battling against addiction; that God may ease their sorrow and answer all their need.

**Sunday**: Give thanks for all who support our work, that they may be blessed in their generosity of time and resources.

# **Christmas Appeal**

For one off donations: Please complete this side only For regular donations by Standing Order: Please complete both sides

Title and Full Name	
Title and Full Name	
Home address	
City	Postcode
Email	
Telephone No	
I enclose a cheque/postal	

Bank/Building Society name:	
Bank address:	
	Postcode:
Please pay St George's Crypt Leeds LS1 1LD. Sort code 40-	(HSBC, PO box 105, -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 <sup>.</sup>

#### 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 confirm I have paid or will pay an amount of Income Tax and/or Capital Gains Tax for each year (6th April to 5th April) that is at least equal to the amount of tax that all the charities or Community Amateur Sports Clubs (CASCs) that I donate to will reclaim on my gifts for that tax year. I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify. 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.

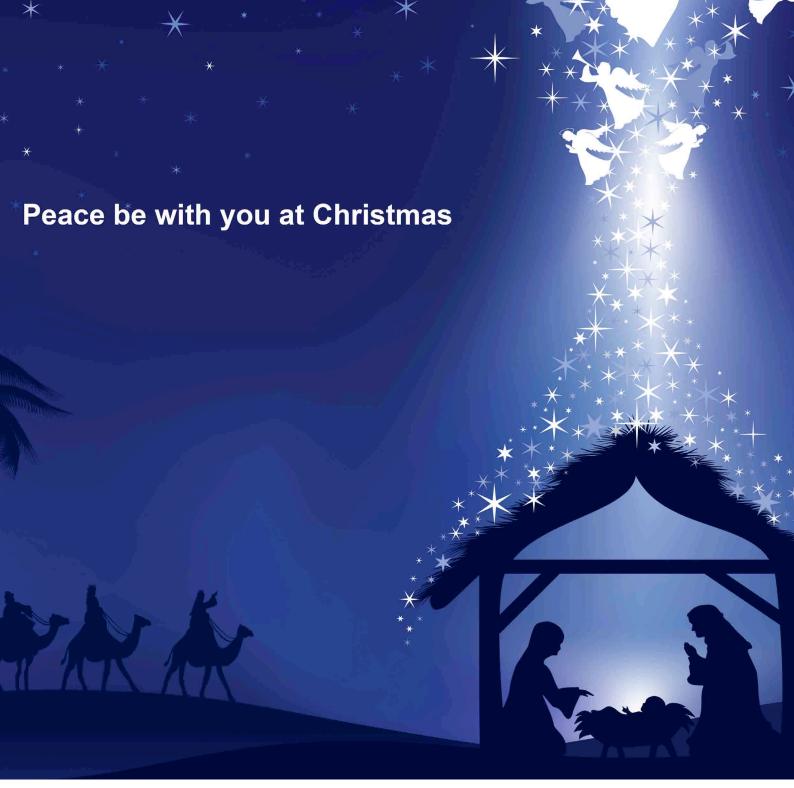
Signed:	
9	

Date of declaration:

Please let us know if your address or your tax circumstances change.

Please send me information on supporting St George's Crypt with a gift in my will.

(Post your completed form to: St George's Crypt, Great George Street, Leeds LS13BR)



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 receive by email please provide your email address to: martyn.croft@stgeorgescrypt.org.uk



St George's Crypt, Great George Street, Leeds LS1 3BR.

Telephone: 0113 245 9061

Email: admin@stgeorgescrypt.org.uk



www.stgeorgescrypt.org.uk



'St George's Crypt, Leeds'



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