

ST GEORGE'S CRYPT



HISTORY

1930-1939

The challenge was given in the first evening sermon preached at St George's Church by the new Vicar, Revd Percy Donald Robins, aged thirty, who was to become known in a few short years to thousands of people in all walks of life as 'Don'.

He saw the familiar signs of the Depression: enforced idleness, hunger, hardship and despair. Beneath the Church lay a Crypt, this was the obvious place to meet the challenge of Don's own words.

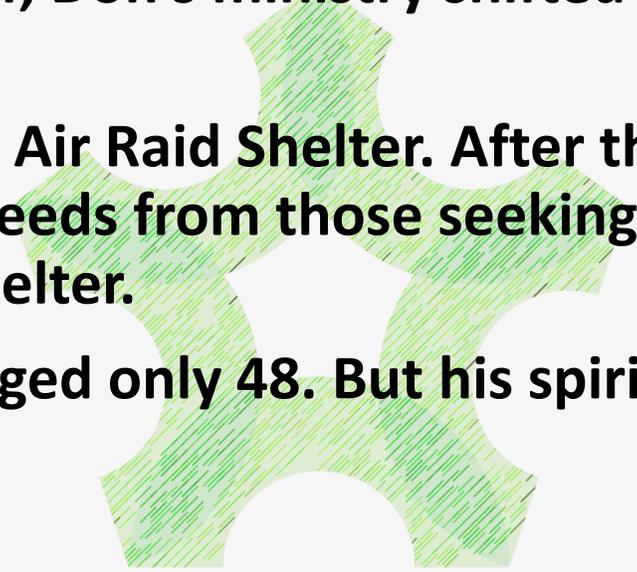
The Crypt was full of vaults and coffins, there were gaping holes in the walls and the floor was deep with dust. Don and a few brave members of the congregation opened up the Crypt and cleaned and cleared it as much as possible. The first £3 ever raised for the Crypt was spent on canvas to cover the coffins and gaping holes. Members of the congregation brought milk, sugar and cocoa. As soon as it opened, men poured in. An appeal by Don brought in more food and clothing as the numbers grew.

1939 – 1949

During the Second World War, Don's ministry shifted to support those affected by the onset of hostilities.

The Night Shelter became an Air Raid Shelter. After the War, the Crypt reinvented itself to meet the changing needs from those seeking work to men seeking rehabilitation and shelter.

Don died in February 1948, aged only 48. But his spirit and vision are an unfailing inspiration even today.



1949 – 1959

‘Faith Lodge, Leeds, is a half-way house – half-way for the down-and-out between the park bench and a proper home, between prison and a respectable life, between degradation and self-respect.’

Faith Lodge was opened to accommodate men who needed time to rehabilitate before settling back into society in July 1954. The work also extended to providing support through a daytime drop-in centre for women and families. In the first nine months about 50% of the residents were resettled into society. Faith Lodge was run as an extended family house where those who lived extended Christian charity towards one another.

1959 – 1969

The Crypt became a registered charity in February 1967. The Trust Deed stated its objects as:

“The promotion of evangelism among needy and destitute persons.”

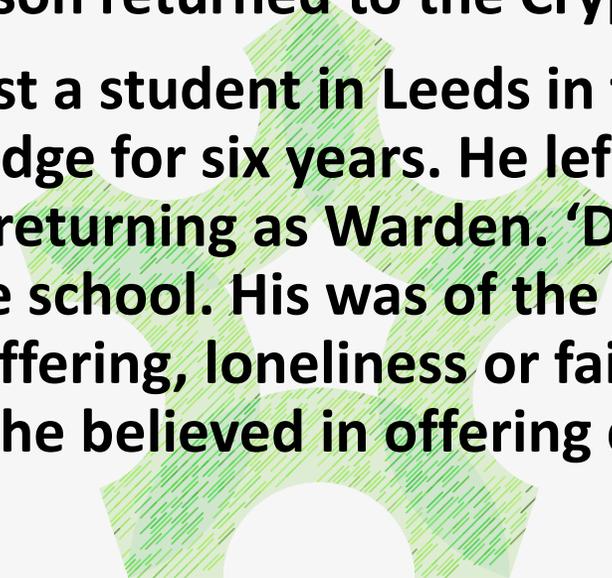
“The relief of poverty, hardship, sickness and distress among needy and destitute persons.”

It was at this point that the Board of Trustees was founded with two ex-officio trustees (the Archdeacon of Leeds and the Vicar of St George’s Church) and seven appointed by name.

1969 – 1979

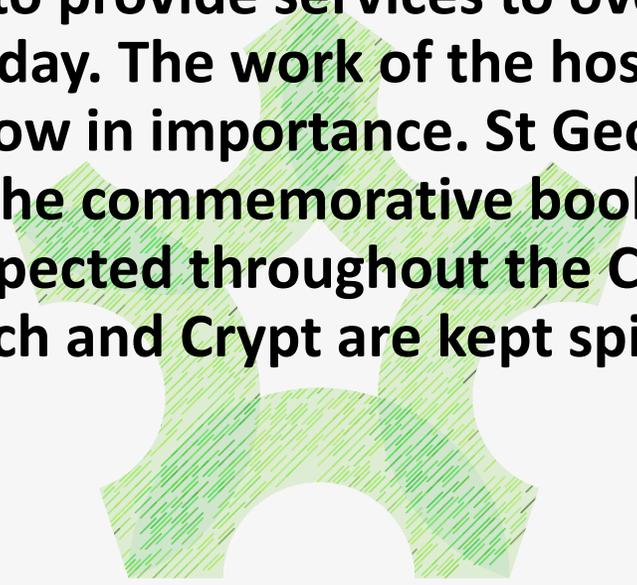
In 1975, Reverend Don Paterson returned to the Crypt as its Warden.

Don became a Christian whilst a student in Leeds in the 1950's. From 1962 he had served as Warden of Faith Lodge for six years. He left the Crypt for parish life as an ordained minister before returning as Warden. 'Don's brand of Christianity was not of the contemplative school. His was of the 'roll-up-your-sleeves' variety. Where there was poverty, suffering, loneliness or failure he saw a person, not an abstract social problem, and he believed in offering dignity and hope in practical ways.'



1979 – 1989

St George's Crypt continued to provide services to over 130 homeless and disadvantaged people every day. The work of the hostels (Faith Lodge and Regent Terrace) also continued to grow in importance. St George's Church celebrated its 150th anniversary in 1988. The commemorative booklet for that occasions says: "The work of the Crypt is respected throughout the Church of England and beyond. It is crucial the Church and Crypt are kept spiritually and practically together".



1989 – 1999

In 1990 the Charity restructured the management and day to day running of the work.

In 1995 the Trustees launched a major capital appeal 'More than a roof'. This was in response to an increasing urgency to significantly update the Crypt's facilities. In May 1998 building work started and was completed in July 1999 with a re dedication service on 14 September 1999 led by the Archbishop of York. The redevelopment work had cost over £1.4m.



1999 – 2009

Seven decades on, and in response to new and changing demands, the work of the Charity has expanded considerably.

The vision towards 2005 was launched in 2000 and the Charity aimed to provide professional standards of care within a framework of Christian faith and witness to the service users, all of whom are treated with dignity and respect, regardless of their age, sex, sexual orientation, ethnic origin or religious belief.

A milestone during the early 2000's was a visit from Her Royal Highness, The Princess Royal. She took time during her visit to talk to clients, staff and volunteers.

The Crypt continues to demonstrate a capacity for change and innovation. Key strategic partnerships have been brokered with Leeds City Council to provide continuing services for rough sleepers and residents with alcohol dependency issues. The Government has invested a grant of £1m as a significant contribution towards a further redevelopment of the Crypt aimed at increasing accessibility, individual bedrooms for rough sleepers, new skills training and arts programmes, and an updated café space.

The Crypt has developed robust partnerships with a wide range of corporate businesses.

Priorities obviously change – the focus now is much more on younger people with multiple needs including addiction and poor mental health – but the core principles remain the same.

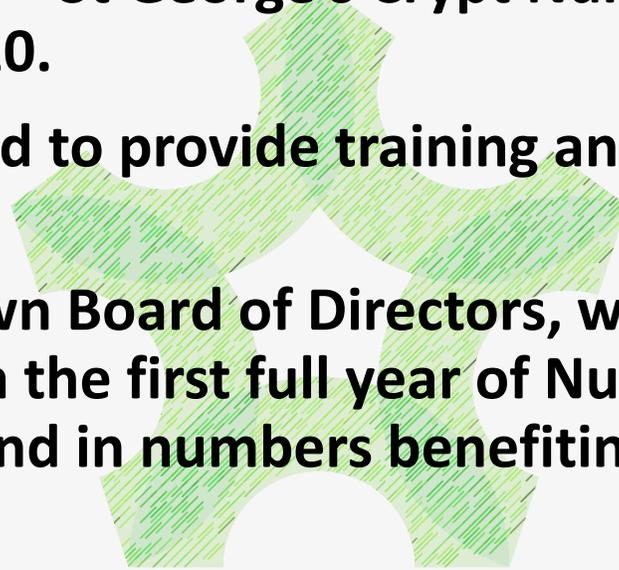
A new Trust Deed was agreed and the Board of Trustees was reorganised with ex-officio Trustees reduced to two; and three Committees formed to focus on Finance and Governance; Staffing; and External Relations. New Trustees appointed bring specialist skills to the charity.

2010 – 2011

The Crypt's social enterprise – St George's Crypt Nurture Community Interest Company – was set up in 2010.

The Company was established to provide training and engagement opportunities in catering and horticulture.

Nurture is governed by its own Board of Directors, which includes a Crypt representative. The results in the first full year of Nurture were encouraging, both in terms of revenue raised, and in numbers benefiting from on the job training.



2011 – Present

The Trustees resolved to negotiate the purchase of a second retail outlet – a former Co-op property in Town Street, Armley, Leeds.

In reviewing this development, the Trustees took the decision to set the Crypt up as a charitable company limited by guarantee. The Crypt was incorporated in September 2011, and the purchase of the shop was completed in December 2011. This was a very significant step for the Trustees and created a favourable legal structure for retail and enterprise.

The Board of Trustees also determined to abolish the sub Committee structure, and set up a Standing Committee to act between meetings where necessary.

Due to the austere economic outlook in the UK, the Trustees resolved to carefully scrutinize the portfolio of The Crypt's work. A new mission statement was agreed.