



## Daredevil clerics help launch £1m cathedral appeal with abseil stunt

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### He'll be there to launch an appeal at a major island church. Will you?

# BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT



(above): HRH the Earl of Wessex with Canon Stephen Palmer at Sts Thomas' Church on a previous visit; (bottom left): an architect's drawing of how a new gallery might look

**A ROYAL patron will launch an appeal this month to restore a major Isle of Wight church.**

HRH Prince Edward, the Earl of Wessex, will host the service that launches the £2m campaign to renew Sts Thomas' Church in

Newport. He is patron of the charity set up to renew the fabric, heritage and ministry of the church at the heart of the island.

The ambitious renewal campaign aims to repair the church's crumbling exterior, transform its interior as a centre for worship, education, civic life and heritage, and extend its ministry by creating a new pastoral centre in the neighbouring Charter House.

It will be launched with a service of thanksgiving on

June 26, at which worshippers will be formally asked to commit themselves to the

fundraising efforts. The bishop will preach and the service will be followed by a reception with the Earl of Wessex.

The Earl said: "This campaign is about renewing people's appreciation of this historic building and renewing people's perception of this church as being at the heart of the island.

"Ultimately it is the vision for the future contribution the church and Charter House can make to the Isle of Wight which impresses me most.

"The funds raised through this campaign will lay the foundations for a place that will enrich the lives of all of us who are fortunate enough to live and work in – as well as visit – the island and its capital."

The Earl agreed to be patron of the appeal only after visiting the church and hearing about the plans. He is patron to only 37 charities nationwide – and this is the only church charity he has put his name to. Among the future fundraising events will be a royal reception in London, hosted by the Earl of Wessex.

It's the latest in a long line of royal connections for the church in St Thomas's Square. Princess Elizabeth, the second daughter of Charles I, is buried there; Prince Albert, consort to Queen Victoria,

laid the foundation stone for the new church in 1854; and Queen Victoria herself donated stained glass windows.

Around £1m of the £2m will go on urgent work to repair the decaying Caen stone masonry on the exterior of the grade I listed building, conserve its stained glass windows and arrest damp problems.

Another £700,000 will be spent inside the church, conserving the Princess Elizabeth memorial, creating an open space at the west end for exhibitions, a book-stall, meetings and catering, and removing Victorian choir stalls to create extra space at the centre of the church.

New galleries could be created on either side of the nave to create extra space for meetings or catering. The church's civic treasures will be displayed better. And the inside of the church will also be re-floored, re-lit and re-decorated.

And the final £300,000 will go on refurbishing the nearby Charter House to become a pastoral centre to help serve the entire island. Community organisations, youth and industrial chaplaincies could all be based there, and a refectory may be cre-

ated in the basement.

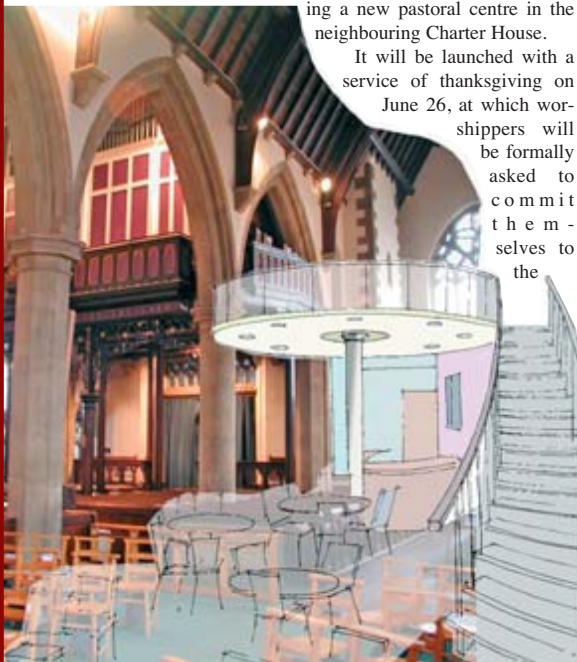
The ambitious project has already raised £350,000. Ultimately, it could involve fundraising for five years, and 10-15 years of work to transform the building.

It has the support of English Heritage, which has already given the church a £70,000 grant, the Isle of Wight Council, community and business leaders, the Lord Lieutenant and the island's MP.

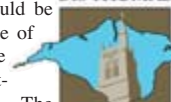
The vicar, Canon Stephen Palmer, said: "I make no apology for saying this is the premier island church, the landmark that embodies the story of the Crown and the Church in England. Its location at the heart of the island, and in the centre of the town, means that it is imperative that we regenerate the building and its mission. By doing so, we are creating resources for the whole island."

The launch service, on June 26, starts at 6pm, and will follow a lunchtime reception with business and industry leaders earlier that day.

Tickets for the service are available from the campaign office on 01983-559257. For more details about the campaign, see: [www.saintstomas.org](http://www.saintstomas.org)



STs THOMAS



The Church at the Heart of the Island