



(above left): The bishop and dean arrive for the service; (centre): the bishop's chaplain, the Rev Alex Hughes, prepares for his abseil; (right): Alex and the cathedral precentor, Canon Nick Ash, coming down the lower part of the cathedral's west wall

Daredevil stunts to launch appeal

DAREDEVIL clergy performed Mission Impossible-style stunts to launch our cathedral's £1m appeal.

The bishop and dean sped across Portsmouth Harbour by boat carrying the first donation. Then the bishop's chaplain and cathedral precentor abseiled down the side of the cathedral with the second donations. The eye-catching stunts marked the public launch of an appeal to help transform the cathedral.

Bishop Kenneth and the Very Rev David Brindley travelled across Portsmouth Harbour in the Queen's Harbour Master's launch. They carried the first donations to the cathedral's 'Continuing the Voyage' appeal, as well as seawater to be used during the special service. They were met at the shoreline by the cathedral choir and dignitaries, who then processed through Old Portsmouth to the cathedral.

There crowds of worshippers and onlookers cheered as the bishop's chaplain, the Rev Alex Hughes, and the cathedral precentor, Canon Nick Ash, abseiled 100 feet down the west wall of the cathedral, with the help of the Royal Marines. Their stunt raised more than £1,400 in sponsorship.

The appeal launch service then started with a ceremony in which the seawater from Portsmouth

Harbour was scattered over the grass to the north of the cathedral to symbolise the cathedral's coastal location. The bishop then blessed the spot, where a new refectory will be built as part of the re-development.

More than 600 worshippers took part in the service. The chairman of the appeal committee, Nigel Atkinson, explained that half the money for the £2m project to re-develop the cathedral and Cathedral House had already been raised privately.

He said the cash would be spent on preserving the 12th century east end of the cathedral from damp; creating a new education centre in Cathedral House for community groups; updating the facilities in Cathedral House for community groups; creating a music centre for cathedral choirs to rehearse; and improving the facilities for visitors in the cathedral, with a new refectory, cathedral shop and a treasury.

"We're proud of the heritage of the building itself, and the facilities that we can offer to visitors and to the Portsmouth community," he said. "The project team have only asked for what is essential, and we hope members of our congregation, the diocese and the wider community can help us raise the remaining £1m through donations and organising fund-raising events."

And the bishop, in his sermon,

said: "We want this appeal to succeed because we want this place to be a gathering point – a place of access and a place of mission in a world that is crying out for those who can articulate our deepest spiritual yearnings."

The fact that £1m has already been raised means work can start this autumn on repairing the damp in the oldest part of the cathedral and re-developing Cathedral House. Other work will be carried out over the next five years.

An appeal events group will co-ordinate fundraising activities within the cathedral congregation, the local community and across the diocese. It is already planning a summer fete on Cathedral Green

on June 3, which will involve a barbecue lunch, music, entertainment, a craft fair, cream teas and traditional fete activities such as a coconut shy and the chance to throw a wet sponge at a clergyman. It happens between 12noon and 4.30pm.

The cathedral's five clergy were hoping to cycle around the diocese to visit all 171 churches over the May Bank Holiday weekend. Other forthcoming events include a parochial pub crawl quiz and a black tie dinner in the nave.

Anyone wanting to donate money or to organise a fundraising event for the appeal should contact the appeal office on 023-9234 7401.

Bishop helps to block dying bill

BISHOP Kenneth has helped to block a bill that would have allowed doctors to help terminally-ill people to die.

He told the House of Lords of his own anguish in dealing with a potentially terminal illness as he opposed the assisted dying bill last month.

The bishop, who was diagnosed with leukaemia last September, only returned to work full-time just before Easter after six months of sick leave.

One of his arguments was that the bill didn't include safeguards to prevent vulnerable people choosing to end their own lives while in a state of transient depression. The Lords voted to delay the bill by six months - ending its chances of becoming law in this Parliament.

Bishop Kenneth told the Lords: "Having had to face up to my own mortality when I was diagnosed with leukaemia, I can identify with the mental trauma that comes with life-threatening illness - a trauma which can in some circumstances slip over into depression. The current version of this bill has weakened the safeguard against assisted dying for people who are depressed.

"Those of us who have approached that extremity of human experience can testify that a terminal prognosis very often leads to a period of transient depression. Having been somewhere along that road myself, I could not trust myself to use the kind of freedoms envisaged in the bill."

See world premiere of play on video



Julianne (Marie Thomas-Galvin, left) and Rebecca (Kizzy Harris) realise they've been betrayed by the same man

IT was a play crammed full of inspirational stories about forgiveness and reconciliation.

Portsmouth's Christian theatre group Top Cat Theatre Company staged an adaptation of Philip Yancey's best-selling book *What's So Amazing About Grace?* in March.

Now a two-hour video or DVD of the play is available for you to use in sermons, school assemblies, youth groups or Bible studies to illustrate grace and forgiveness in action.

It costs £12. For a copy, send a cheque made payable to 'Top Cat Theatre Company' to: 32 Lowcay Road, Southsea, PO5 2QA.