

Press release

April 2008

## **Church's royal links re-established**

His Royal Highness The Duke of Gloucester will join worshippers at a Wolverhampton church this week as part of its 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebrations.

The service will take place at 11.30 am on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April. Admission is by ticket only, and the church is already full.

The stunning Georgian church of St John in the Square in Wolverhampton City Centre was built in 1758 when the town's then Royal Free Chapel, St Peter's, was proving too small for the growing population.

In the 25 decades since, St John's has always had a special care for those most in need.

Rector of Central Wolverhampton, the Rev'd David Frith said: 'I am so pleased we have this opportunity to celebrate the service that St John's has offered in God's name for a quarter of a millennium. It has witnessed the ups and downs of the town over the centuries but remains wonderfully faithful in worship and in serving the community.'

Pictures of the church in 1900 show bread being given to the poor after morning service. And in the 1930s the Sunday School teacher would bring clothes for toddlers who were brought to church by their older brothers and sisters.

Today the church is beginning to work closely with local organisations supporting those not in employment or training.

'We are working on plans to open up the church for everyone but not least for those on training courses in the area so we can help them towards finding

work, and provide some unconditional care on the way', said Mr Frith. 'Our pioneer ministry team of Methodists and Anglicans are hugely committed to making a real difference to the lives of young adults in the City Centre.'

St John's is also famed for its musical links. The historic organ is rumoured to have been played by 'Messiah' composer, George Frederick Handel, and is still in regular use today. Thousands flock to the church each year for its many concerts.

As part of the celebrations this Friday, The Duke of Gloucester will plant a 'Molineux' rose bush to inaugurate the restoration of St John's churchyard. Plans are being drawn up between the church and the City Council, supported by Multi, the developers of the City's £300m New Summer Row project.

'We want the grounds to be open for all', said Rector David Frith. 'It's the only substantial green space in the City Centre, and we'd love to see it properly restored and full of local workers and visitors finding a little bit of Divine peace in an ever busier world.'

## **ENDS**

For further information (or to arrange for photographs, video or audio of the service) The Rev David Frith on 01902 428491 or 07932 776704.

[www.wulfruna.org.uk](http://www.wulfruna.org.uk)

For further information on the pioneer ministry see

<http://www.wonderers.co.uk/Live%20Life%20Better.html>, or call the Rev'd Richard Moy on 07894 230304.

For more on the history of St John's see the local history and heritage society's website,

<http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk/listed/StJohns/johns00.htm>

