

Historic church damaged as metal raid lets in rain

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By Gavin Aitchison



The Rev Jane Natrass and director of music, Keith Wright, with the damaged organ at St Olave's Church, in Marygate

WORSHIPPERS at an historic York church have launched a huge restoration appeal, after thieves caused damage to their building.

The thieves stole lead from the roof of St Olave's Church in Marygate twice last year, and rain soon after the second attack damaged the antique organ and stained the walls of the

chancel.

The repair work will cost about £50,000 but although some of that will be covered by insurance, the congregation at the 11th-century church has still been left with a shortfall.

A fundraising committee has now been set up to help plug the gap, and the appeal will be launched on Saturday with a candle-lit choral concert in the church.

Paul Tyack, a committee member, said the organ was known as one of the best in York but the damage had been "catastrophic".

Mr Tyack said: "Because the church is so close to the city centre and the walls, it has been a target for people.

"It does have appropriate alarms and deterrents, but some people are absolutely determined.

"It's a church with a really lively congregation and it's unfair that something so basic and wrong should happen to a lovely, lively church that's nearly 1,000 years old."

Mr Tyack said a range of events would be held this year to try to raise the necessary funds, and the church hoped the fundraising work could also help the congregation meet new people in the community.

He said: "It's such a sad thing that this should happen, but there's a sense of determination to make something positive come from it."

Keith Wright, the church organist, said the organ was made by JW Walker in 1907 and was one of the best in York, second only to that in the Minster. It was restored in 2004 but most of the wooden interior would now need to be replaced.

The damage happened after the second theft, in October.

Saturday's concert is at 7.30pm in the church and will feature the Choir and Academy of St Olave's, including a selection of seasonal music.

Tickets, which include refreshments and mulled wine, are £5 and available on the door or from Visit York, Museum Street. Under-12s are free.

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