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WINDOW OPENING

Stained glass tribute to fundraising couple

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A MEMORIAL has been created to honour a leading York Minster fundraiser and his wife.

A stained glass window is set to be unveiled on Saturday at St Mary's Church, Haxby, as a tribute to the late Professor Philip Michael Stell and his wife, Shirley, who both worshipped there. The couple both died last year.

Commissioned by their family, the window was designed and made by Helen Whittaker, an associate of the British Society of Master Glass Painters, of Dunnington, York.

Her recent commissions include the reordering of the Retro-Quire of Beverley Minster in October 2004.

The Reverend Martyn Green, team rector of Haxby and Wigginton, will lead a service at the church at 2pm on Saturday, when the window will be dedicated to the couple.

The design fuses traditional colours with modern imagery. It features four raised hands, to reflect healing, nurture and prayer, which are surrounded by fruit-laden trees and flowers, and bears the words: "Do not fear - only believe".

Churchwarden Beverley Crapper said: "This is a beautiful and imaginative window by one of the country's leading glass designers, and it will bring a lot of pleasure to those who worship at St Mary's. It's a fine memorial to two wonderful people, and the dedication service will be a time to join the Stell family in thanking God for

their lives, as well as for this lovely window."

Professor Stell, a retired surgeon, had specialised in head and neck surgery, in which he was renowned for his reconstructive skills.

He was also a pioneer in computer technology, making technical advances in medical databases and statistical analysis.

He was involved in the translation of 11 foreign language textbooks into English and was an Associate of the Institute of Linguists.

Prof Stell retired on health grounds in 1992, and moved to York to begin a second career, taking an MA in History. By 1996, he had become an honorary research assistant at the Centre for Mediaeval History at the University of York.

Prof Stell, pictured above being presented with an MBE for his services to history by Lord Craythorne, Lord Lieutenant of North Yorkshire, last year, established unique databases for mediaeval wills and documents involving texts 300 years before parish records began.

He also raised thousands of pounds for York Minster library and campaigned vigorously to keep the facility open after it was threatened with closure.

Prof Stell, who lost his battle with leukaemia, aged 69, and his wife, Shirley, died within a month of each other.

They are survived by their children, Joanna, Robert, Ian, David and Andrew, who are represented by five red tulips at the bottom of the window.



HONOURED: The stained glass window tribute to Professor Philip Stell and his wife, Shirley, at St Mary's Church, Haxby