

Lady Sainsbury's 'Judas' jibe at diocese over church sale

By Toby Cohen

THE COMMUNITY that worshipped at St Mark's in Mayfair has now been evicted by the Diocese of London, which Lady Sainsbury has compared to Judas Iscariot.

On November 13, Westminster City Council Planning and City Development Committee will meet to decide if the Grade I-listed church can be sold to beauty magnate George Hamner to convert into a spa (not, as we reported last week, a health centre). On Tuesday, a group of campaigners called the Save St Mark's Action Group (SSMAG), gathered at the church to defy the plans to close the place of worship.

Lady Sainsbury (pictured), president of SSMAG, spoke from the steps of the 180-year-old Greek Revival building: "We deplore the way the diocese is treating this as simply real estate, sold for 30 pieces of silver."

Actor Ray Brown and Lord Taylor of Warwick spoke up for SSMAG at the rally. Lord Taylor described the struggle as one of "community against commerce". He said: "Our faith in commerce has evaporated, but we do have faith in community."

That faith will need to be shared by the council committee who will decide if the sale will represent a loss of a community facility. John Parmiter, a planning and development adviser to the campaigners, said that the council was obliged to protect such facilities and urged people to visit www.savestmarks.com.

Mr Parmiter said: "The people who have worshipped here, the people who have been helped by the services of the congregations here, they're not going to allow this building to stay closed. It's been closed before, it may be closed tomorrow, but that doesn't mean it's right, and they'll be back."

Lady Sainsbury has written to the Bishop of London, Dr



Photo Credit: Geoff Crawford

Richard Chartres, three times, but has received no response. The Diocese reiterated its belief that it was too late to overturn its sale of the church, which was made three years ago. In a statement it said: "The Diocese of London is honouring this contract and awaits the decision of Westminster Council regarding the planning application that has been submitted by Mr Hamner."

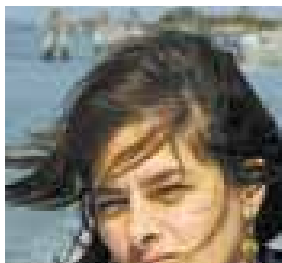
SSMAG co-ordinator Kirk Mitchell, said: "The Church of England should be ashamed. We've already spent £8,000 moving out of the church. That money could have been spent on our community projects like the knife crime education groups for young people."

Emin's 'inspiration' Bishop Duncan's warning

By Matt Cresswell

ARTIST Tracy Emin described Christ Church, Spitalfields, last week as "her" church.

The East London-based artist told a group of 70 clergy, churchwardens and heritage con-



THE DEPOSED Bishop of Pittsburgh, the Rt Rev Robert Duncan, has issued a warning to the Church of England that it is heading towards the fate of the Episcopal Church, and announced the end of a Canterbury-centred Communion.

At a conference at All Souls in London, Bishop Duncan told the

isons between the dominance at Lambeth of the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Rowan Williams, and the control of the Episcopal Church by Presiding Bishop Katherine Jefferts Schori, but at the same time spoke of the demise of the Archbishop's role.

Bishop Duncan said: "He [Dr Williams] is attempting to lead in