

✓ St. Patrick's windows will shed new light

Cleaning team needs more than year for job

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WATSONVILLE — It may not have been the way St. Patrick's parishioners would have liked to see their church restored, but the 1989 earthquake required the termite-eaten steeple be replaced, and the 90-year-old stained-glass windows get a good cleaning and repair while a new building goes up.

"These windows are overdue for restoring. The earthquake didn't do it," said Pat Haeger, a stained-glass window designer and restorer.

The lead surrounding each pane of glass deteriorates over time due to weather and other factors, he explained.

The lead on the St. Patrick's Church windows has become so delicate that Haeger said taking the windows apart will be sensitive work.

And dismantling the windows, some as tall as 20 feet, is what Haeger and her son Marc Haeger has planned for all 35 of the church's stained-glass works.

Each piece of glass will be taken from the lead casing for soaking, scrubbing, and sometimes restaining. The glass will then be replaced in the wood window frames and remounted with lead, Haeger said.

Separating each piece of glass takes at least one day, Haeger said. Cleaning the 35 windows will take the Haeger team about as long as it takes for the construction crew to put the new church up — a little more than a year, she said.

"The hard part is taking them apart without breaking them," Haeger said.

But saving the windows is well worth it, said project supervisor Jerry McIntyre, of Watsonville's G.W. Davis Inc.

"New churches don't have leaded windows because they're too expensive," McIntyre said. "If they do, they have only one or two. Windows this size are very expensive — maybe \$60,000-\$70,000."

The new church will look identical to the one that has been at the Main Street and Freedom Boulevard intersection since 1902. But the second time around, the building will be made solid with a steel structure. A brick veneer will cover the outside, McIntyre said.

Cost-saving efforts come down to the last brick.

Rather than quickly rip down the earthquake-damaged church, the estimated 300,000 bricks will be collected and sold for a 25-cent profit on each, McIntyre said.

"I've worked on churches, but nothing like this. This is not a normal project at all," McIntyre said. The church parking lot is filled with the old steeple's ornate copper siding, decorative terra cotta trim and window frames filled with stained glass. The pieces will be refitted onto the newly built church, he said.

St. Patrick's Rev. Mike Miller said the church must still raise \$1.8 million to pay for everything.

The first phase of construction, Miller said, was completed at a cost of \$728,000. It included planning, architect fees, and testing.

The second phase is under way now, and includes the demolition of the old structure, the cleaning of the stained glass windows and the construction of the building shell and plaza. The price tag for that work comes to \$2.4 million, Miller said, which exceeds the \$2 million that has been collected so far.

The third phase, costing \$670,000, will add the finishing touches: the steeple, church furnishings, an organ and audio system.

The church may go without a steeple for a while if money isn't raised.

"We won't do phase three if we're not able to," said Miller. "We're relying on faith to get it finished. The diocese is giving fund-raising advice and moral support, but they're not in a position to give us money."