

Landmark church being resurrected

By JAMIE MARKS
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WATSONVILLE — The landmark St. Patrick's Catholic Church in downtown will be resurrected.

The Monterey Diocese has been reviewing seven proposals from architects and structural engineers and is expected to make a selection by next week, said Father Mike Miller, St. Patrick's pastor.

"They think they've got one already, but they'll review the proposal and make a selection next week. Once we get the firm, we'll know better how much it will cost," Miller said.

The tentative plans call for keeping it essentially the same but adding a few details inside and out to give the sanctuary more room, said Miller.

The church's fate had been in doubt after the heavy damage it sustained in the Oct. 17 earthquake. St. Patrick's is considered a pillar of hope to many Catholics and non-Catholics in the community.

The steeple and its four spires were removed six weeks ago because of fears they would topple. They were already weakened by termites when the earthquake hit.

The preliminary estimates place the cost of renovation and repair at between \$2 million and \$4 million.

A major fund-raising drive will get under way after the first of the year, but already the church has collected substantial sums.

Among the contributors have

been Father Declan Murphy, the former priest at St. Patrick's, whose new church raised \$25,000, and rock impresario Bill Graham, who has pledged an undetermined amount of money.

The tentative plans include increasing the seating capacity of the church from 500 to 750 seats, and moving one exterior wall to accommodate the extra seating.

Miller said the interior will be brought up do date so that is more in line with the modern-day liturgy.

"The old seating was set up at a time when there was less participation. We're hoping to alter that," said Steve Macedo, a church spokesman.

The plans could include moving the altar, he said.

Since the Oct. 17 earthquake, services have been held across the street at Notre Dame school's gymnasium. Nearly 4,000 parishoners have been attending weekend services there.

Christmas Mass will be celebrated at Notre Dame, he said.

The church was designed by noted architect William Weeks and built from 1901-03 in the American Gothic style of design.

The earthquake loosened bricks and collapsed some interior walls. Several statues were damaged but the 13 stations of the cross, depicting the last hours of Jesus Christ, were unharmed.

Efforts will be made to preserve most of the interior, Macedo said.