

Churches

✓ Church's rebuilding fund tops \$1 million

By KEITH MURAOKA
Sentinel staff writer

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WATSONVILLE — The steeple is still gone, bricks are still missing and plywood still covers damage. And with fund-raising at the \$1-million mark to repair earthquake-damaged St. Patrick's Catholic Church here, there is still hope.

The Rev. Mike Miller said Thursday he is confident the church — built in 1903 and a landmark at the gateway to town on Main Street — will be repaired.

Miller hopes just-completed rebuilding plans will go to the city in February, with repairs starting in the spring. Completion, however, is two years away.

'Watsonville's a tough little town ... we're going to do it.'

— *Larry Cardon*

While repairs are estimated at \$2.5 million, surpassing the million-dollar mark is a milestone, Miller said, calling it "a nice Christmas present."

Miller hosted a champagne toast to celebrate the fund-raising mark after the 5 p.m. service Thursday.

According to Larry Cardon, secretary of the Watsonville Landmark Restoration Fund which is overseeing repair efforts, the fund passed the million-dollar mark Wednesday when a \$17,000 donation was made by a group of Portuguese parishioners.

Cardon shares Miller's optimism, saying support has come from all areas.

Rebuilding plans call for reinforcing the structure to make it earthquake-resistant, Miller said. From Main Street, the exterior of the church will look much the same, since the 150-foot steeple will be repaired. However, the sides of the church are proposed to be extended 9½ feet in each direction. This will allow for an extra 100 to 150 seats inside, he said.

"Watsonville's a tough little town," he added. "I feel we should call it 'the little town that could'."