


Truss signing planned for new St. Michael Church in Pawcatuck

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Stonington — The new St. Michael the Archangel Church in Pawcatuck is taking shape as the steel beams that will form the steeple tower have been erected and plans call for lifting the first wooden timbers into place early next month.

But first, from noon to 4 p.m. on March 26 and April 2, both Sundays, parishioners from the Liberty Street church, as well as those from its sister churches of St. Mary in the borough and St. Thomas More in North Stonington, will be able to sign the wooden trusses that will form the soaring ceiling.

“It’s a way to involve people in the process. They’ll get to touch the timbers before they go into place,” said the Rev. Dennis Perkins, pastor of St. Michael. “It makes the building project more real for them and it’s a good opportunity to get people excited about the building process.”

Then, on Monday, April 3, the Most Rev. Michael Cote, bishop of Norwich, will bless the timbers at 8:30 a.m. before crews lift the first one into place.

The exposed timbers will form the new roof that will make the church higher on the inside and, along with the elimination of some support columns in the previous church, will create a more open floor plan. For those parishioners who wonder if they will be able to look up in the new church and see their names, the answer is no, as the writing will face the ceiling.

The church closed in April of 2012 because of structural problems, which came as a surprise to the parish. Since then, St. Michael has held its services at St. Mary Church in the borough.

Work to disassemble the walls and roof began last summer and through the fall crews worked to prepare the basement and original stone foundation of the church for a new steel-beamed structure. Plans calls for restoring architectural features and windows present in the church a century ago but hidden over the past century. The electric and cooling systems and handicapped access also will be upgraded as part of the \$6.5 million project.

Perkins said the church has raised enough money to complete Phase 1 of the project, which involves the replacement of the walls and roof and enclosing the church. The church still needs to raise money for Phase 2, which will involve interior renovations, including an elevator. While Perkins said he hopes the project will be complete in two years, he said that will depend on funding and financing.

“But this will show people the project is moving forward,” he said about the raising of the trusses.

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