

Donor is helping make reopening of Pawcatuck church a reality



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Workers install clapboard siding on the bell tower and paint trim of St. Michael the Archangel Roman Catholic Church in Pawcatuck Monday, October 23, 2017 just before Phase 1 was completed. (Sean D. Elliot/The Day)

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Stonington — An anonymous donor has pledged to match all donations up to \$500,000 to help complete the reconstruction of St. Michael the Archangel Church in Pawcatuck.

The church's pastor, the Rev. Dennis M. Perkins, said that the possible additional \$1 million in funding would allow the church to complete phase two and reopen late this fall.

The church closed in April 2012 after an inspection revealed structural problems that made it unsafe. The church completed phase one, which cost \$4.3 million and rebuilt the roof, walls and a portion of the basement while restoring and replacing the stained-glass windows, in November 2017. It also restored much of the 166-year-old church's original design elements, which had been altered over the years.

That left phase two, which calls for \$2.7 million of finish work such as the installation of an elevator and a center steeple, painting, new lighting fixtures, and installation of pews and new floors.

Perkins said that the only thing the \$500,000 donor requested was to remain anonymous, so he declined to offer any details about the person. But the donor has offered to match all donations between Dec. 18, 2018, and the end of February, potentially generating \$1 million for the church.

"I'm pretty hopeful we'll be able to do it. People get excited when they see that when they give something, it's doubled," Perkins said.

He said the \$1 million would put a "big dent" in the remaining \$2.7 million.

Perkins said it would also allow the church to obtain a \$1.7 million mortgage for the rest of the work. He said that could begin shortly and take about six months to complete.

"The people have been remarkable through all of this with their generosity and to get us where we are now," he said.

Perkins praised his parishioners for continuing to support the project with donations even though nothing happened on the Liberty Street site the first four years as the focus was on coming up with a design and fundraising.

"With each phase it gets closer and closer and becomes more and more real," he said about reopening the church after a seven-year closure.

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