

OUR FAITH CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS! MATTHEW 17:20

# St. John the Evangelist Parish prepares to ‘move mountains’

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SENIOR REPORTER

WAYNESVILLE — Members of St. John the Evangelist Church are converting their old church into much-needed ministry and meeting space for the growing parish located in the heart of the Smoky Mountains.

Built in 1941, the old church has been unused since December after falling into disrepair a decade ago. A new church was dedicated by Bishop Peter Jugis in 2007.

As part of a new “Our Faith Can Move Mountains” initiative, inspired by Matthew 17:20, parishioners are undertaking a “Repair, Restore and Renovate” campaign to raise the \$120,000 needed to repair the old church’s leaky roof and brick exterior, as well as refurbish the inside to serve as a parish hall for the congregation of 300-plus registered families.

Co-chairs Mark Zaffrann and Jose Reyes are spearheading a four-member committee of parishioners who are construction and real estate professionals. They expect the renovation work begin in earnest April 22. Plans include converting the first floor of the old church to serve as meeting space for the parish’s growing adult faith formation program. The second floor will provide a home for the parish’s revitalized youth ministry and faith formation efforts.

Father Richard Sutter, parochial administrator, is excited about the growing number of people who are attending Mass, faith formation classes and Eucharistic Adoration at the parish.

“We’re bursting at the seams for faith formation,” he says, and approximately 120

people – youth and adults – are coming to Adoration each Wednesday night.

The parish also now has three choirs, so a dedicated choir room for the contemporary choir, organ choir and Spanish choir is an essential part of the renovation project.

“We have one choir director and three choir coordinators. We’re in the process of combining a choir for Holy Thursday and the Easter Vigil,” Father Sutter adds, illustrating how vibrant the parish is and how great the need is for rehearsal space.

So far, \$90,000 has been raised towards the \$120,000 total. Fundraising for the project includes: donations from parishioners; Lenten fish fry proceeds from the local Knights of Columbus council; a \$5,200 donation from the parish’s Hispanic community; and a \$5,000 fee given to Father Sutter for a recent speaking engagement.

“I am also offering a parish mission at St. Therese Church in Mooresville March 18-20, and Father Mark Lawlor (pastor) has offered to take up a goodwill offering for our building project,” Father Sutter shares, expressing his gratitude for the cooperation among parishes. All of the funds raised from the offering will go directly to the renovation effort.

Weather permitting, the renovations will be completed by Aug. 7.

The renovation project will be followed by another project to support the parish’s growing youth ministry: construction of a sports field and eventually a gymnasium on a half-acre lot next to the church that the parish recently purchased.

“This recreation space will be the first in our Smoky Mountain Vicariate and it will open the door to a greater outreach in youth ministry both within our parish



Roof repair and renovation work on the historic St. John the Evangelist Church in Waynesville is set to begin April 22 and, weather permitting, will be completed by Aug. 7.

PHOTOS PROVIDED BY  
FATHER RICHARD SUTTER



and throughout Haywood County,” Father Sutter notes.

## Help Waynesville parishioners ‘move mountains’

Donations are welcome for the “Repair, Restore and Renovate” campaign at St. John the Evangelist Parish. Anyone who would like to donate to this historic restoration and Family Life Center renovation project should email [stjohnwaynesville@gmail.com](mailto:stjohnwaynesville@gmail.com). Indicate in the subject line: “St. John - we want to help you move mountains!” Questions? Call the parish office at 828-456-6707.



PHOTOS PROVIDED

## Saints John Paul II, Mother Teresa honored

WAYNESVILLE – A painting inspired by the New Evangelization was unveiled and blessed March 3 at St. John the Evangelist Church. The approximately 3 foot by 4 foot acrylic painting – titled “They Will Know We Are Christians By Our Love (John 13:35)” – depicts St. John Paul II and Mother Teresa of Calcutta together accompanied by children – everyone filled with the joy of the Lord. The Waynesville parish commissioned the work from Raleigh-based artist Loree Lam on St. Teresa’s feast day last Sept. 5. Lam is pictured with Father Richard Sutter, pastor, and Jessica Martin, the parish’s new youth evangelization director.

Lam noted, “My journey as an artist began in 2002 as I answered a call in my heart to pick up a pencil and draw God’s children. I had no idea that my life was about to change forever. I began to draw one face after another, and I watched as God used it in a healing way. Over the years, I began finding ways to share my passion and teach others to draw. I often prayed that God would show me His face and I believe He does this every day through His people. So it is my hope that in viewing my work, you will see the face of God through the faces I have selected to paint and that my work will glorify God.”

The painting has been placed above the Children’s Learning Center at the church, and it is visible by the priest when celebrating Mass. “I’ve always had a devotion to Saints John Paul II and Teresa of Calcutta. They were saints who manifested the 12 fruits of the Holy Spirit above all with their radiate joy and Gospel charity. They loved and served the youth throughout their lifetimes. They are model saints for our times,” noted Father Sutter. “This painting in our Smoky Mountain Catholic church will serve as a reminder to all of the St. John the Evangelist Gospel passages John 13:35 and John 15:11-12 that are our focus as followers of Jesus Christ in these mountains of North Carolina (Psalm 121:1-2).”

## Tabernacle refurbished in honor of beloved parishioner

CANTON – The original tabernacle and crucifix from the historic St. John the Evangelist Church in Waynesville have a new home at Immaculate Conception Mission.

The refurbished tabernacle now rests upon a new altar of repose dedicated in memory of the late Phil Webb, who passed away 10 months ago.

Webb, a convert to the Catholic faith, attended Mass with his wife for two decades before coming into the Church in 2014. He was a Knight of Columbus and served the Church and the two parishes in Haywood County tirelessly. “For 20-plus years he came to church with me before coming into the Church,” said Gail Webb, his wife of 25 years. “The four years he was a Catholic he jumped in head first. He loved being Catholic.”

Now there is a plaque to the right of the altar at Immaculate Conception Mission in his honor. That is the side of the church where Gail sits, so the thoughtful placement means a lot to her.

“I had no idea they were doing an altar of repose in Phil’s honor,” Gail said. “To have an altar of repose, that is such an incredible honor



for me. The tabernacle is breathtaking.”

Parishioners responsible for the tabernacle restoration were Gary Lepak, Tom Langan, Larry Middleton and Tony Maida. The altar of repose was built by Gary Lepak and Tom Langan.

Father Richard Sutter, parochial administrator, celebrated Mass at Immaculate Conception Mission after the installation of the altar of repose was completed. In his homily he expressed that Webb “carried Christ in his heart and how appropriate it is that this altar of repose is dedicated to his memory.”

—SueAnn Howell, senior reporter

## Parish launches new website

St. John the Evangelist Church and Immaculate Conception Mission launched a new, interactive website March 6. The new site, [www.stjohnrcc.com](http://www.stjohnrcc.com), features updated graphics and capabilities and will be built up to better enhance communication for Smoky Mountain parishioners and beyond, said Father Sutter.

“This new website will permit us to stay in touch throughout the year with our seasonal parishioners also. An audio archive will record weekend homilies and special conferences at our parish. In the near future we hope to provide livestreamed 11 a.m. Sunday Mass for our homebound parishioners,” he noted.

