

Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Alton At Halfway Mark In Fundraiser To Preserve Structure, Now Branch Out To Community For Help

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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ALTON - Jim Hanlon has a lasting love with Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Alton. After all, it is the church his mother first took him to as a child. In essence, he was raised in the church.



Jim, the church priest Jeff Holtman, and the entire congregation have embarked on an aggressive crusade to preserve the long history of the church in the community. Pastor Holtman is also heavily involved and has his heart in the project.

The structure is in need of Old Cathedral repairs and some serious renovation. Slightly over half of the \$800,000 has been raised for the capital campaign, but Hanlon, who is assisting with the coordination of the fundraiser, says much more still needs to be raised.

Hanlon also stresses that St. Peter and Paul Catholic Cathedral and Parish have long been a centerpiece of the Christian Hill area, with some of Alton's most treasured historical homes.

The purpose of the capital campaign is to restore the structure of the church with needed repairs in stone and tuckpointing. Hanlon said the Gothic, limestone church was constructed by parishioners between 1855-1857 at a cost of \$435,000. Now, through time, the cost of deteriorating stones and mortar to save the church has risen substantially.

“They have to remove the tuckpointing, then dig the mortar back three or four inches and put in new cement mortar with modern chemicals and then tuck point again,” Hanlon said. “Once that is done, this church will last another 100 years. The stone is Midwest American Limestone.”



Hanlon said the biggest issue in the whole process is the rental of a scaffold, so the work in the air can be done and on the roof. He said the cost of a scaffold rental is enormous so workers can climb to where the work will occur.

“If we don’t do this, the outside of the building and inside will continue to deteriorate,” he said.

Father Holtman agreed with Hanlon, that the work is of the utmost importance to preserve the church.

“I am very proud of what we have done so far in the fund-raising,” he said. “We are hoping to have the other half of the money raised by June 2023. The parishioners have been very generous, but now we will have to also go outside the church to raise additional funds. We are hoping for corporations or foundations to assist us in the process. The building goes all the way back to 1857, and it was built as an anchor on Christian Hill. We want it to continue to be that anchor. Our congregation is wonderful and very outward-looking. They always come to Mass and pray. As a pastor, you can’t wish for anything more than that.”

Hanlon said as he and some of the others branch out into the Riverbend to seek donations, he is in hopes they will see the importance of the church to Alton's history, the special Christian Hill area. He believes because of its long history, the church building and campus should always be here for others to see and visit.

“The church means a lot to me and my family,” Hanlon said. “I feel it also means so much to Alton and our history. I am hoping others in the community will recognize that and assist us to get to our goal of \$800,000 for the different costs of the project.”

For more information on how to donate to the fundraising campaign, contact (618) 465-4221 or [click here for information on the capital campaign](#).