

National Cathedral needs 'tens of millions' in quake repairs

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WASHINGTON (RNS) The Washington National Cathedral will need "tens of millions of dollars" over "numerous years" to repair extensive damage to the nation's second-largest church following an Aug. 23 earthquake, church officials said Tuesday (Oct. 4).

The landmark church requires \$25 million "just to get to June 2012, for the first phase of work and to resume worship and programming. We know it will ultimately be much more," says Richard Weinberg, a spokesman for the cathedral.

The Episcopal cathedral, which advertises itself as "a spiritual home for all," has been the setting for presidential funerals and other major national events. An estimated 35,000 worshippers and visitors arrive there every month.

Its stone-upon-stone, hand-crafted Gothic architecture took 83 years, from 1907 to 1990, to complete.

In the earthquake, the central tower sustained damage on three of its four corner spires, and three capstones fell off. There are cracks on some of the upper floors and in some of the flying buttresses, a distinguishing feature of Gothic architecture, in the oldest portion of the building.

Work crews have attempted to stabilize the damage, but have been delayed by windy, rainy weather and a crane that toppled over on Sept. 7, damaging two other buildings in the complex.

The cathedral is waiting for the same team of experts that has been rappelling down the quake-damaged Washington Monument to finish there and move a few miles to the hilltop cathedral.

The cathedral is scheduled to reopen on Nov. 12 for the consecration of the Rev. Mariann Edgar Budde, the new Episcopal bishop of Washington.