

# One Church helping Decatur mission renovate and repair

written by Malea Hargett |



Bishop Anthony B. Taylor celebrates the confirmation Mass July 29 at Blessed Stanley Rother Church in Decatur as pastor Father Arokiasamy &ldquo;Samy&rdquo; Madhichettyirudayaraj

and altar server Jasmin Gomez look on. Travis McAfee.



Second-grader Leani Hernandez and first-grader Adoldo Eliazar sit on the front steps of Blessed Stanley Rother Church in Decatur July 29. Travis McAfee.

[Previous](#)

[Next](#)

#### **YOU MAY ALSO BE INTERESTED IN:**

- Construction begins in Magnolia thanks to One Church
- One Church raises \$133,000 for St. Andrew in Danville
- One Church to help Little Rock church construct parish hall
- One Church partners with Hamburg church to pay off debt
- Little Rock parish swaps Honduras mission for One Church
- In first year, One Church excites results for St. Luke Church

The first church in the world named after Blessed Stanley Rother is ready to expand and needs help from Catholics across the Diocese of Little Rock.

The mission in Decatur was established Sept. 24, 2017, one day after the beatification of the Oklahoma martyr who served in Guatemala.

The 2,200-square-foot cinder block building was formerly a Baptist church and includes an 80-seat sanctuary, a small parish hall that is used for religious education classes and bathrooms. With about 95 parishioners from Mexico, El Salvador and Guatemala attending the Saturday night Mass, it is common to see people standing in the back or sitting in extra chairs in the back.

From September to August, the Diocese of Little Rock will be asking parishioners to support the Decatur community through One Church, a diocesan initiative that provides a one-time financial boost to a small or rural mission that needs assistance to complete a renovation or construction project. Parishes are encouraged to hold a special collection or fundraiser for One Church.

Father Arokiasamy "Samy" Madhichettyirudayaraj, pastor of St. Joseph Church in Tontitown, has been leading the community of 45 families since July 2022.

"As a church, we walk in the footsteps of Blessed Stanley Rother, who walked in the footsteps of Jesus the Good Shepherd," he said. "We are poor in the eyes of the society but rich in the sight of God through love and commitment. We foresee a lot of possibilities for growth. The faith of this community is very strong. In the past two years, the number of church attendees has doubled. The area is growing, and there are lots of new families coming to settle.

"Blessed Stanley Rother Church was founded to feed the members with the spiritual nourishment, those who feed the people in Arkansas with their hard work in the chicken plants."

The mission has a modest goal of renovating the inside of the church to make it more comfortable for parishioners. At the top of the \$101,000 plan is a new roof to replace the leaky roof.

"The building is really old," Father Madhichettyirudayaraj said. "In the ceiling we will have openings here and there where it is leaking onto the pews. People kind of patched it last winter when it was really chilly."

The mission also wants new flooring, plumbing, ceiling, insulation, windows, lighting and doors. A new heating and air conditioning system will be installed to replace the inadequate system currently being used. A storage building will be added to the property as well.

Father Madhichettyirudayaraj said parishioners have volunteered to do many of the tasks, such as painting the inside and outside of the building.

Father Madhichettyirudayaraj said the parish would accept old pews or Stations of the Cross from another parish if they renovate in the next year.

The pastor said it is important to improve the parish hall where religious education is offered before Saturday night Mass for children in kindergarten to 12th grade. In the past year, the pastor has celebrated six baptisms, seven confirmations and eight first Holy Communion.

"Forty percent of the church community consists of youth and children," he said.

Ideally, the mission would find a way to expand the building to allow for more seating and a larger parish hall, but they haven't been able to save much money yet except for a few fundraisers.

"The community is growing, and they need more space," the pastor said. "The area is growing in Northwest Arkansas. Gradually, it's moving toward Decatur... The second thing is the building is not in good condition. It is very badly in need of renovation. Thirdly, the people are immigrants and are just settling down. They aren't really able to support the church and take

care of all the needs and the renovations.”

For more information or to donate, visit [dolr.org/one-church](https://dolr.org/one-church).