

**Fact Sheet on San Miguel Church Socorro New Mexico
and our relationship with Conrad N. Hilton and family**

November 26, 2013

1. San Miguel Church was founded as a Mission soon after Juan Oñate and his companions traveled through this area in 1598. As they came upon this region, they ran short of resources and received assistance from the Native people, The Piro Indians. Oñate and his party named the area for the assistance or “succor” (assistance in Spanish) they received and Socorro has been the name of this area ever since.
2. On the site of the current church, it is believed that sometime between 1615 and 1626 an adobe (mud brick) chapel was erected to serve the Piro Indians of that time.
3. The original adobe church, now under the patronage of San Miguel (St. Michael) was first called Our Lady of Perpetual Help. It was renamed to San Miguel after the Pueblo Revolt of 1680. The reason for the name change has to do with the legend that when the revolt was happening, the people of the community found refuge in the church and prayed for a miracle. The church and her inhabitants were not harmed as it was said the invaders saw a great man with wings standing in front of the main doors of the church. It is believed that great man was the Archangel San Miguel himself.
4. The original school on the property was built in 1879 and staffed by the Sisters of Loretto from Kentucky and named Mt. Carmel.
5. By the late 1940s the original school was razed and funds were solicited for the new school.
6. Through the next decades the school thrived and the Hilton Family was regular contributors to the community.
7. Unfortunately, the school ultimate closed in 1998.
8. Since that point, the 1951 school building has been solely used for religious education of the San Miguel children, one-day each week on Sunday for approximately one hour each day.
9. On June 29, 2010 the La Sagrada Familia Church in Lemitar New Mexico (seven miles North of Socorro) had a major failure in the northwest corner due to erosion of the adobes over many years. Subsequently, that church was razed and construction of a new one in the same style with modern day materials began.
10. With the failure of the church building in Lemitar in June of 2010, it was determined that the other adobe churches in the parish of San Miguel & Missions (the ten churches of Central Socorro County) ought to be reviewed.
11. On August 14, 2010 the first exploratory work was done to uncover what might need to be addressed at San Miguel. Significant damage was found.
12. Soon thereafter, architects and engineers were secured to review the whole of the structure.
13. On Friday, November 5, 2010 Rev. Andrew J. Pavlak, pastor received word from the Archdiocese of Santa Fe that the structure was no longer safe and services had to be moved immediately to another site.

14. It was determined that while the walls of the church were certainly suffering from erosion over many years there was an even larger problem in the pitched roof. The pitched roof, added to the structure in the early 20th Century, after testing in 2010 was found to be OVER 200-300% overstressed. Thus, it was necessary to close the church.
15. On Sunday, November 7, 2010 after the 10 am Mass was completed the members of the community took all of the contents of the church and set up the “Temporary Church,” now known as “The Capilla de Todos los Angeles,” and The Old San Miguel Mission was officially closed for restoration.
16. Over the next three years, the painstaking restoration process progressed.
17. First, there was the shoring up the roof to prevent it from collapsing.
18. Next, was opening up the walls, allowing the wet, damaged adobes to be dried and in many cases replaced. Many of the adobes came from the La Sagrada Familia Church in Lemitar that at that time was being, “laid to rest.”
19. The roof structure was subsequently repaired. Each beam in the roof had to be strengthened with “sister” beams in a slow and careful process to not shift too much weight at any time onto the walls.
20. The wiring was completely removed from the structure. It was found that there was so much moisture in the north wall of the church that the galvanized conduit between two of the outlets in the wall had completely disintegrated leaving hot wires in the wet adobes. Further evidence of wiring problems was found in the attic. Charred insulation and beams were found as the wiring was pulled.
21. The floors had to be removed and replaced due to setting of the structure and the subfloors.
22. The stained glass windows, installed in the 20th Century, were inspected and it was determined that they needed repair. The Adrian Cavellini Studio of San Antonio Texas was hired to clean and repair the windows and install new aluminum frames for protective glass with venting to allow the windows to be protected over the next years.
23. It has been over these years as we have made these movements in this restoration process that the community has come forward and completely covered the costs thus far.
24. In the spring of 2013, a Capital Campaign was begun to request funds from outside of the community. Many people began sending in donations from all over the country and these funds allowed continued work and finish appointments to be secured.
25. On November 19, 2013, The Conrad N. Hilton Foundation of Los Angeles California granted San Miguel Church a \$1.1Million gift over the next two years. This gift is fully designated for the completion of the restoration of the church, remodeling of the former cafeteria of the 1951 school and one classroom for an outreach program for at risk youth of Socorro.
26. It is hoped that a time for a rededication of the church and a grand opening of the museum, gift shop and classroom will be set for sometime in the not-too-distant future.

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