

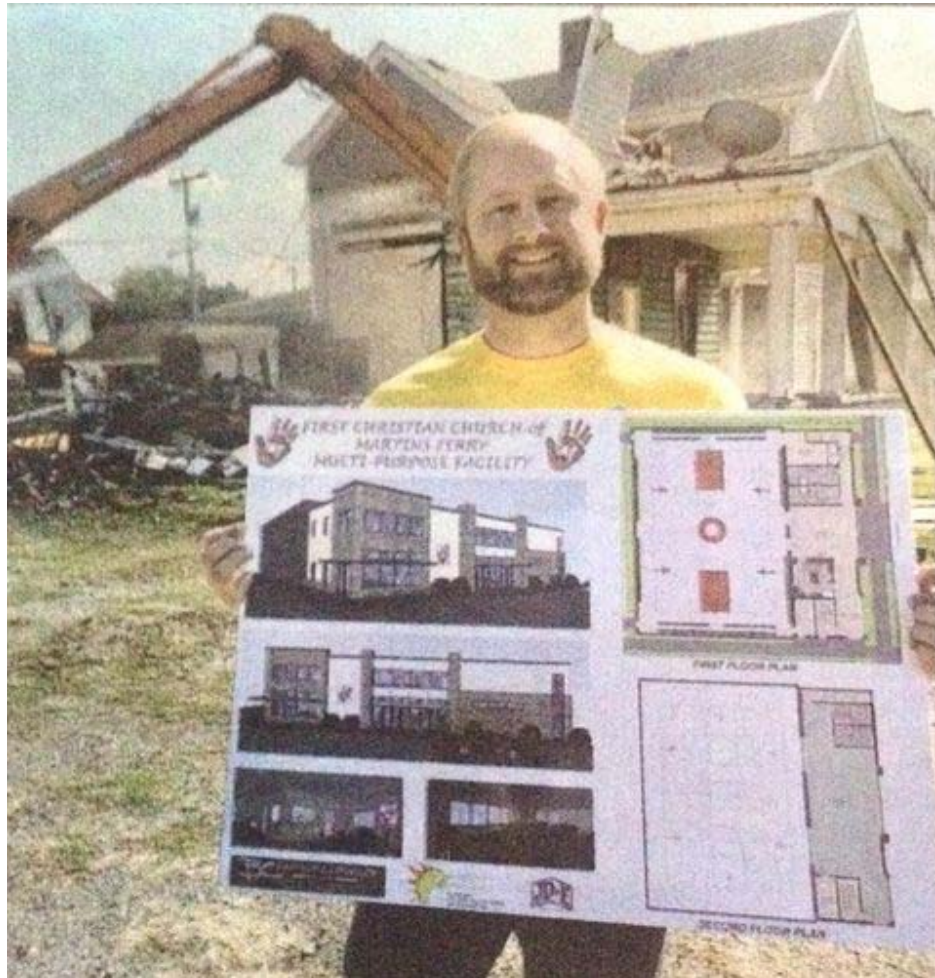
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Demolition to make way for new First Christian gym

by: Robert A. Defrank – Times Leader Staff Writer

MARTINS FERRY – Demolition on two houses in a two-lot area of Zane and Jefferson streets began this week, as the First Christian Church clears the area to make way for its new multi-purpose center that will feature in the city's landscape next year.



JUSTIN HILL, First Christian Church youth minister, poses with a rendering of the church's future multi-purpose center. Two lots are being cleared to make way for a multi-purpose center for the First Christian Church in Martins Ferry next year.

T-L Photo/ROBERT A. DEFRANK

Justin Hill, youth minister at the First Christian Church, said the move was necessitated by the need for extra space. He said the new facility will enable them to expand after school programs and adult programs.

“We’ve been doing our Upward Basketball League for about six years. Really we just ran out of room. This building itself has been used a whole lot for a lot of different things,” he said, noting the many activities that went on at the church facilities. “We saw that we needed more room to be able to fit our extended family and try to get some kids in that need to get off the streets and get some positive influence.”

Hill said the new building will be used for events such as dinners for the needy and social events, and after school programs.

“It’s just a way to help out and meet the community out there, and be able to just bring something positive into the community,” he said. “We hope to have everything ready and be able to break ground by next year.”

He noted First Christian Church has almost 200 youth in both school. Last year 230 youth participate in Upwards Sports.

“We’re going to have a lot of kids. A lot of families that this is going to help benefit,” he said. “We’ve had a whole lot of support. In the first year, we’ve raised a whole lot of funds.”

Hill noted the facility will be two stories and include a junior-high sized gymnasium for youth and adult basketball leagues, and a youth area upstairs. The space could host sports including volleyball and basketball. The multi-purpose center may be 100 feet by 74 feet.

“We want to be a part of a big family and invite people in to be a part of us and find a safe place to help grow your kids,” he said.