

'Green' Monastery Thriving In Middleton

Open House Set For Sunday, November 15

Posted: 5:00 am CST November 15,2009

MIDDLETON, Wis. -- A new place of worship has opened in Middleton that is at once a place of peace and a place that's at peace with the Earth.

Holy Wisdom Monastery is the latest in "green" churches. It boasts bamboo flooring, geothermal heat, and dozens of solar panels on its roof, officials said.

Not only is Holy Wisdom Monastery one of the most environmentally-friendly churches around, Sister Mary David Walgenbach said, "We think it will be the greenest building in the U.S."

Walgenbach, one of the three Benedictine Women of Madison, believes that there is a good chance that Holy Wisdom Monastery has the potential to receive a "platinum" rating by the U.S. Green Building Council, which provides standards from environmentally sustainable construction.

The platinum LEED -- Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design -- certification was just one of the construction goals for the new monastery and just part of the church's mission, which Walgenbach summarized as, "To care for the earth, and we do that by having prairie around instead of farmland. It's why we wanted to build a green building, to care for the earth and to show that there can be some ways to save energy."

One example of how the church is accomplishing its green mission is by the use of natural light as often as possible. To maximize natural light, designers controlled glare through the use of special glass.

Mark Hanson of Hoffman Architects, the Appleton-based architectural firm that designed Holy Wisdom, said, "Walk around the building. There's not a blind in the building, so we're bringing both light in, and we want to keep the view. The view is very important."

Other steps were taken to be reduce waste in the building of Holy Wisdom. The organ was removed from the Benedictine Sisters' previous monastery and refurbished before being installed. Nearly ten tons of building material were recycled and re-used in the construction of Holy Wisdom.

The final cost of Holy Wisdom? \$8.2 million.

Well worth it, said Walgenbach, to provide a home for anyone who needs a little guidance and a little spiritual fulfillment in their lives.

"You can walk the land," said Walgenbach, "which a lot of people love to do because it helps them to get in touch with themselves. Or, you can come pray with us, eat a meal with us."

The monastery will host an open house on Sunday, Nov. 15, between noon and 2 p.m. Holy Wisdom's address is 4200 County Highway M in Middleton.

For more information, go to the [Benedictine Sisters of Madison Web site](#) or [Hoffman's Web site](#).

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