St. Thomas More, New LEED Certified Building

Care for God's creation has long been a principle of Catholic social teaching. As is stated by the American Catholic bishops in their publication, Seven Themes of Catholic Social Teaching, "Our stewardship of the Earth is a form of participation in God's act of creating and sustaining the world. In our use of creation, we must be guided by a concern for generations to come. We show our respect for the Creator by our care for creation."

These beliefs came into play when the Bishop of Davenport asked St. Thomas More Parish to relocate from Iowa City to Coralville and build a new church to better serve the expanding population there. The committee surveyed the parish and held town hall meetings to discuss the plans - with the result that parishioners felt moved to act on their beliefs and build "green".

"We decided early on in the process that to take this teaching seriously meant that we needed to act as good stewards of the land and to build in an environmentally responsible manner," says John LePeau, Chair of the Relocation Project Steering Committee.

"We shared this priority with our architects, who then told us about the LEED certification process. The Steering Committee looked into LEED and decided that it would be an appropriate way to hold ourselves accountable to the goal of "building green."

LEED is a third party certification program and the nationally accepted benchmark for the design, construction and operation of high performance green buildings.

These are some of the LEED guidelines St. Thomas followed to achieve the LEED Certified level:

- The site development plan is designed to maximize open spaces and avoid the wetlands that are on the property.
- To avoid using city water for landscaping, they planted natural prairie grass as much as possible and collect rain in barrels.
- The building is designed to be at least 24% more efficient than current standards achieved through measures such as energy efficient windows, lighting and insulation.
- A ground source heat pump system provides the heating and cooling.
- At least 50% of the construction materials were recycled.
- Recycled and regional building materials were used where possible.
- Low-emitting construction materials were used to improve indoor air quality.
- Daylight is provided in at least 75% of the rooms.

The large windows, both on the exterior walls and the interior walls, reduce the amount of electricity needed to light the room.

The Sanctuary during the afternoon using exclusively natural light.

Stone and wood from the former building were re-fashioned and given a new life in the construction and art of the new building.

The Ambo, Altar, Presider Chair, the dedication candle holders and the stone on the candlesticks were fashioned from the stone from the former St. Thomas More building by JB Barnhouse, Stonemason.

The stone for the baptismal font is new but obtained from a stone quarry in nearby Anamosa.

For more information on St. Thomas More contact John LePeau at lepeau@mchsi.com