

The Basilica Receives Energy Efficiency Award

Stewardship of our historic campus

THE Basilica of Saint Mary was designed to be many things, including an awe-inspiring piece of architecture rising high above the western edge of downtown Minneapolis and, of course, a spiritual home for a congregation with no borders. It wasn't designed to win any awards for energy efficiency.

But times have changed, and The Basilica is keeping up. In fact, The Basilica recently received a 2017 Building Energy Performance Award from the City of Minneapolis for outstanding energy reduction. The noted improvements — specifically a new boiler system, the addition of central air conditioning in the rectory and school,

and a significant conversion to LED lighting — resulted in a 21 percent reduction in energy use for The Basilica campus.

"It was a real honor," says Peter Crain, chair of The Basilica's Facilities Assessment Committee and a member of The Basilica Landmark's Board of Directors. "I think it's wonderful that the city is recognizing buildings — especially historic buildings — for the progress that is being made in energy efficiency."

Crain notes that it can be difficult to make energy-efficiency changes to older buildings, in part because they were horribly inefficient to begin with — a product of their era and the technology of the times.

Take The Basilica's 1913 boilers, for instance. A century ago, long before being converted to gas, they were coal-fed behemoths, and they operated at an efficiency rate of about 30 percent. The Basilica has converted to a new system of three boilers that are each about the size of a refrigerator, with energy efficiency over 90 percent.

As part of renovations to the rectory and school buildings, central air conditioning has replaced about 35 window units, furthering energy efficiencies. And across The Basilica campus, there has been a dedicated effort to convert halogen, fluorescent, and incandescent light bulbs to LED lighting, which lasts longer, takes less energy, and emits less heat. Other areas of the church will be converted to LED lighting as interior restoration projects move forward.

As Crain points out, the builders of the majestic Basilica used state-of-the-art design and materials at the time, like a steel substructure. "We're doing the same



(L to R) Dennis Dillon, Ecological Stewardship committee, Dave Laurent, Director of Buildings and Grounds, and Peter Crain, The Basilica Landmark Board of Directors and Facilities Assessment committee.

thing now. We're using the latest technology available to us, and hopefully producing the best outcomes for the money donated to [The Basilica Landmark]," he says. "We want to be good stewards of that money."

And if good stewardship can translate to the environment as well as the balance sheet, all the better. ✚

Rick Moore is a parishioner, usher, and volunteer for the Hennepin Connections mentoring program.

BY RICK MOORE