



# Holy Wisdom Monastery

Benedictine  
Women



of Madison  
*Uniting Through Christ*

# Introduction

The Benedictine sisters moved from Iowa to the Madison Diocese in 1953 and opened a Catholic girls' high school. They closed the school and in 1966 opened Saint Benedict Center, a retreat and conference facility that welcomed Christians and seekers of all world religions. In 1998, the monastic community extended its membership to women of any Christian tradition while remaining in federation with other Benedictine sisters. They currently offer daily prayer, Sunday worship, spiritual guidance, private and group retreats and an oblate community. The mission of the community is:

**Weaving prayer, hospitality, justice  
and care of the earth into a  
shared way of life as an ecumenical  
Benedictine community.**

In 1996, the sisters began a ten year project of restoring 95 acres of farmland to prairie with the help of numerous volunteers, and from 1997-1999, a glacial lake was dredged and restored to its original size. With this level of commitment to care of the earth, the sisters concluded that Benedict House needed to be replaced with a smaller, more energy-efficient building that supported their values. To this end, they insisted that it be designed and built to earn the highest rating possible from the U.S. Green Building Council – Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED®) Platinum.

# Design Intention

The focus of Holy Wisdom Monastery is the activity within and the natural landscape. The building itself has a monastic simplicity to avoid being a distraction to quiet contemplation. The curving forms are feminine and relate to the natural contours of the land, while the rectilinear forms respect the existing buildings. Large, carefully placed windows capture and frame views of the trees, prairie, and lakes and provide abundant daylight.



# Benedict House

The 60,000 square foot Benedict House was deconstructed responsibly. The organ was removed, refurbished and installed in the new Assembly



Room (Chapel). Nine tons of building material were donated to Habitat ReStore, 12.5 tons went to the landfill and the remaining 8,628.6 tons were recycled, including the concrete which was crushed



as a base for the parking and drives and sculpted into berms. The lowest level was saved and remodeled to create the Maintenance Building. The

walk-in cooler was reduced in size and reinstalled in the Plant and Produce Room. In all, 99.75% of Benedict House was diverted from the landfill!



# Gathering Area & Assembly Room (Chapel)

The baptismal font at the entrance to the Assembly Room (Chapel) is illuminated by a dramatic skylight. Large windows and north-facing, clerestory windows in the Assembly Room (Chapel) ensure that all areas receive ample natural light during the daytime. At night, highly efficient, fluorescent light fixtures tucked into the coves and soffits reflect



light off the upper walls and ceiling.

The engineered strand bamboo floor is twice as hard as oak.

The four triangles cut into the southeast wall echo the sisters' logo. They are illuminated by skylights during the day and fluorescent lighting at night.



# Dining (Indoor & Outdoor)

The high-performance glass of the Andersen® windows ensures that heat losses/gains are minimal. Glare is controlled by additional tinting of east, west, and south-facing windows. On balmy days heating/cooling is shut off and the system goes into ventilation-



only mode. The occupants are encouraged to open the windows to enjoy the breeze. All clerestory windows are also operable to release heated air and maintain good air flow.



A solar tube fills the Servery with abundant natural light.

The decks off the Community Dining Room and Kitchen are made from a composite of reclaimed wood fibers and recycled plastic.

# Mechanical

Energy use estimates indicate that the building will be 60% more energy efficient than a LEED® baseline design. The mechanical room in the Maintenance Building houses the circulating and heat pumps for the geothermal system which consists of 39 wells, each 300' deep, located beneath the parking area. The ventilation system incorporates an outdoor air delivery monitoring system.

Natural gas heaters provide instant hot water for the faucets and dishwashing. Water usage is reduced, due mostly to the selection of low-flow fixtures.



- ◆ 85.28% of regularly occupied spaces are day lit with a minimum of 25 foot candles in intensity.
- ◆ 10.17% of the total materials costs were made up of rapidly renewable materials, mostly bamboo and agrifiber board in the casework.\*
- ◆ 59.73% of all new wood in the building is Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certified.
- ◆ 21.09% of the total materials costs were made up of recycled materials.\*
- ◆ 28.02% of the total material costs were made up of local/regional materials.\*
- ◆ 12.53% of the total material costs were made up of reused materials.\*

\*excluding mechanical and electrical equipment

# Oratory & Library

The ceilings of the Oratory and Meditation Chapel are bamboo, a rapidly renewable resource. The Library,



sisters' community spaces, offices, and conference rooms use direct/ indirect fluorescent light fixtures that reflect light off the ceiling,

reducing both glare and the number of fixtures needed for comfortable lighting.

The ceiling tile has a high recycled content and good sound absorbency. The low volatile organic compound (VOC) carpet is 100% recyclable and has recycled content.

Indoor air quality is ensured by using paints, stains, adhesives and sealants containing no or low VOCs.



# A Sustainable Site

Solar light fixtures are a distinctive feature of the parking area.

A white membrane roof, highly reflective pavers, and vegetated (“green”) roofs help to keep the surroundings cool. The rain nourishes the drought-resistant plants in the two vegetated roofs and is collected in rain barrels for watering landscaping.



Pervious concrete in low spots in the parking areas capture runoff. Rainwater not soaked up by the restored prairie makes its way to one of the two rain gardens. The boulders used for retaining walls came from the trench excavation for the geothermal system.



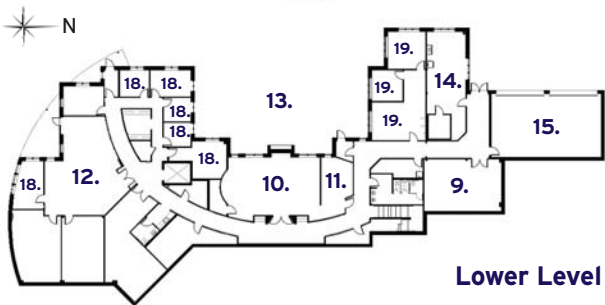
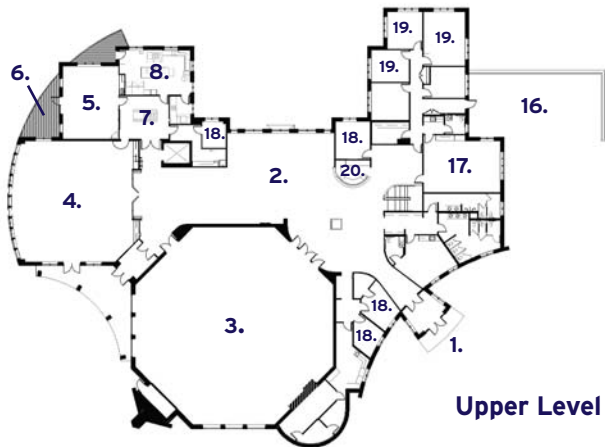
# Exterior Features

The three bells were removed from the old monastery (now the Retreat & Guest House). They were refurbished and installed in the new bell tower and call people to prayer.

Photovoltaic panels on the southwest slope of the Assembly Room roof provide 13% of total energy cost. The system is expandable and the goal is to eventually provide 100% of the monastery's energy needs from on-site, renewable sources.



- ◆ 99.5% of construction and demolition waste throughout the project was diverted from the landfill.
- ◆ 99.5% of regularly occupied spaces have a view to the outside.
- ◆ There was a 43.7% reduction in indoor water usage due to low flow fixtures in the building.
- ◆ Storm water runoff from the site has been reduced to 13% below pre-development levels.
- ◆ Five acres of the site area have been restored/maintained using native or adapted plants.



- |                                  |                                      |
|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>1.</b> Entrance               | <b>11.</b> Meditation Chapel         |
| <b>2.</b> Gathering Area         | <b>12.</b> Library                   |
| <b>3.</b> Assembly Room (Chapel) | <b>13.</b> Memorial Garden           |
| <b>4.</b> Guest Dining Room      | <b>14.</b> Plant & Produce Room      |
| <b>5.</b> Community Dining Room  | <b>15.</b> Garage                    |
| <b>6.</b> Outdoor Deck Dining    | <b>16.</b> Roof Garden               |
| <b>7.</b> Served                 | <b>17.</b> Board Room                |
| <b>8.</b> Kitchen                | <b>18.</b> Staff Offices             |
| <b>9.</b> Mechanical Room        | <b>19.</b> Sisters' Community Spaces |
| <b>10.</b> Oratory               | <b>20.</b> Reception                 |



## Holy Wisdom Monastery

4200 County Highway M | Middleton, WI 53562  
Mailing: P.O. Box 5070 | Madison, WI 53705-0070  
608.836.1631 | [www.benedictinewomen.org](http://www.benedictinewomen.org)



### Mixed Sources

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**Hoffman**<sup>®</sup>

planners ■ architects ■ construction managers

Proudly supporting Benedictine Women of Madison  
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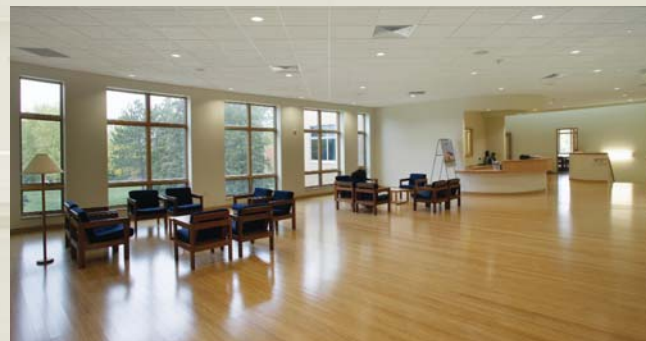
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Maintenance Building

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