

**Places of Faith: Greening Sacred Spaces
Case Study 2
Holy Cross Parish Church
Ottawa, Ontario**

By Nicole Sammut



Holy Cross Parish Church, 685 Walkley Road Photo Nicole Sammut

Brief History

Holy Cross Parish is a Roman Catholic Church located on Walkley Road in Ottawa South. The parish was founded in 1966 to accommodate new subdivisions in the area. The modern-style church with its unique roof design and floor plan was completed three years later. At Holy Cross Parish it is not just the building that is unique; the congregation has made a conscious effort and commitment to “going green.” With the help of Faith & the Common Good, Holy Cross Parish is finding eco-friendly alternatives to conserve energy and reduce waste that will help sustain the building and the environment.

Faith & the Common Good is a Canadian interfaith network organization committed to helping different faith communities connect their beliefs with eco-sustainable goals. Through their Greening Sacred Spaces Program (GSS), Faith & the

Common Good helps congregations establish a greening initiative based on the needs of their building. The organization’s Green Audit—a fee-based service—offers solutions for achieving a more environmentally friendly building. The program provides workshops, conferences, resources and funds for its energy audits in order to promote energy efficiency and sustainability.



Parish volunteers at “Parish Clean-Up Day” Photo Nicole Sammut



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Meeting the Green Challenge

The integration of greening activities within Holy Cross Parish Church began in 2006 with the Mission Peace and Development Committee. John Dorner, the current Green Facilitator in Ottawa and a member of the committee, attended a GSS meeting where he was introduced to the greening program. The GSS initiative focuses on the trouble zones typically found in churches that include poor insulation, inefficient furnaces, leaky windows and costly lighting systems.

At Holy Cross Parish, Dorner was able to find the funds and support needed to complete a green audit. Resulting recommendations included installing an energy efficient lighting system in the church basement, using variable frequency fans to circulate the air to other spaces of the building, implementing a new central system for heating and ventilation, and purchasing LED Christmas lights for the church’s exterior. In addition to these changes, Holy Cross Parish has a number of retrofits planned for the

near future that will be implemented according to cost and priority. The next project will see improvements to the lighting systems elsewhere in the church at an estimated cost of between \$50,000 and \$60,000. Other action items include adding insulation to the office, upgrading and installing storm windows on single windowpanes, insulating the hot water tank and exposed hot water pipes, sealing holes around radiator pipes and replacing old refrigerators with new Energy Star ones.

With the green audit accomplished and retrofits planned for the near future, environmental stewardship and greening solutions are being integrated within the life of the church. Greening initiatives have also reached beyond the church building to include outreach activities. Currently, Holy Cross participates in the Think Recyclable Program organized by the Grannies to Grannies campaign. It involves a number of local churches that help raise funds for African grandmothers by collecting recycled cell phones and laser ink cartridges. In addition, Project Porchlight invited the youth of the parish to participate in the distribution of compact fluorescent light bulbs to the congregation to promote energy conservation. Also, the hospitality committee now uses non-disposable dishware and fair trade coffee for their events to minimize waste, and to support fair and ecologically sound labour practices.

The Future

By integrating their faith with actively caring for their church environment, Holy Cross Parish has successfully adopted greening initiatives that will make the building more energy efficient while reducing the associated maintenance costs. As well, environmental stewardship has extended into the community through the distribution of Greening Sacred Spaces Energy Action Planners, and through weekly social justice and environmental news in the church bulletin.

To find out more information on Greening Sacred Spaces, please email: info@faith-commongood.net or visit Faith & the Common Good at www.greeningsacredspaces.net.