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New Church Roof Preserves Aesthetics, Helps Solve Asbestos Problem

Stratford, Wisconsin – (July 10, 2006) – One of the most striking sights in Menomonie is Saint Joseph's Catholic Church and its dramatically curving roofline.

Lately, though, the church's roof has been drawing more attention than usual. It's being replaced with a state-of-the-art PVC (polyvinyl chloride) membrane that will maintain the dramatic roof line while extending the life of the roof for many years.

The new roof will also help eliminate the threat of leaks that could cause asbestos on the inside surface to become wet and fall, resulting in harmful exposure and making any attempt at patching virtually impossible.

According to Gary Gust, a member of the church's building committee and president of Building with Architects, a design/build architectural firm located in Menomonie, the church's leadership felt the time had come to replace the roof. The committee held many discussions and also consulted with Kulp's of Stratford, the contractor for the project from Stratford, Wis., prior to approving construction of a new roof.

"Kulp's assured us that the asbestos problem would be taken care of and would be handled properly. Also, this new roof will preserve the aesthetics of the existing roofline while lasting for many, many years," Gust says. "The other factor that influenced us was that this new roof could be built so it would be much easier to work on if repairs would ever be needed in the future."

Robert Kulp, co-owner of Kulp's of Stratford, says the St. Joseph's roof was a unique project for a couple of reasons. "Its unusual roofline created some very steep inclines for our workers, which is why very few firms will tackle a project like this. This is a specialty area for us, though, so we were very happy to do the job," he adds.

The other critical challenge was the asbestos threat posed by the existing 20-year old roof, which was becoming increasingly brittle. "The church's leadership decided to replace the roof because they wanted to avoid any situations that could lead to asbestos exposure," Kulp says.

The services of an architectural firm were retained to assist with the asbestos control part of the project. The firm designed a plywood deck that was added to the top of the concrete/asbestos deck so that any future roofs can be installed directly into the plywood layer, avoiding an asbestos disturbance.

The firm also redesigned the building's facing to hold in both the existing insulation as well as the insulation that was added to help better meet modern standards.

In addition, the firm has conducted air monitoring throughout the project to ensure that no asbestos is being released.

“Once this project is completed, Saint Joseph’s parishioners will be able to continue to enjoy and safely use this wonderful facility for a long time to come,” says Kulp.

The Saint Joseph’s roof line is known as a hyperbolic paraboloid, which is a commonly used building pattern with tensile structures, such as roofs.

Other structures in the United States that feature a similar roofline include the Pavilion, a multi-purpose arena at Villanova University in Villanova, Pa., and Alford Arena at the University of Maine in Orono, Maine.

Kulp’s of Stratford is a roofing and insulation contractor that provides construction and support services to churches, businesses and residential customers throughout central Wisconsin.

Saint Joseph’s Catholic Church was founded in 1963, has more than 1,100 members and is part of the Diocese of La Crosse.

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