

Windmill project helps rural Hanska congregation be Good Stewards

By Brian Ojanpa - The Mankato Free Press, March 11, 2011

It's a pastoral country church setting right out of a period Norman Rockwell painting — minus the towering wind turbine that is thoroughly 2011.

At Nora Unitarian Universalist Church in rural Hanska a crane on Thursday lifted into place the 120-foot windmill that is capable of being the church's sole electrical source and a revenue producer as well.



Nora Unitarian Universalist Church member Gil Hanson got an up close and personal look at a wind turbine Thursday before a crane hoisted it into place. The windmill will be used to power the rural Hanska church.

Any excess power produced will be sold to the church's current power provider Alliant Energy, whose payment to the congregation would be commensurate with what the company would charge for that amount of electricity.

Darrell Hinsman, a member of Nora's social justice committee, said the church will remain on the electrical grid because at times the wind won't blow.

"But over time we'll be able to produce more than we use, and we hope it will pay for itself eventually."

The church of fewer than 100 members, which bills itself as a liberal religious community, was founded in 1881 just southeast of Hanska.

Hinsman said the windmill project is in keeping with one of the church's key tenets.

"We want to be good stewards of our environment. We're trying to become more green-oriented and leave less of a carbon footprint. We think it's the right thing to do."

The relatively small 20-kilowatt turbine was made in Prior Lake and sits 400 feet from the church, which is on a high point in the landscape that is conducive to adequate windpower.

The \$100,000 project was buoyed by a \$20,000 federal grant and anticipated energy-rebate money, without which the project wouldn't have been cost effective for the church, Hinsman said.

The turbine underwent testing Thursday with power production expected to commence in a couple of weeks.