

Green Notes: Weekly Updates, News and Reviews from First United Methodist's Green Team

Solar Panels Will Bring Education, Outreach

If First Church is awarded a NorthWestern Energy grant to install solar panels atop our building, the Green Team plans a lively, multi-generational education and outreach program – with lots of help from our congregation. As part of our application for the \$46,322 grant, we were asked to provide a detailed plan showing how we would educate and inspire action by our members, our building's other users and the Missoula community.

You can find the [full plan here](#). These are the high points:

Installation Day: We will invite Missoula media to watch (and film!) as the panels are lifted onto First Church's roof. That's our chance to talk about this congregation's [151-year presence downtown](#), the benefits of going solar, how solar power and [net metering](#) work, the assistance we received from NorthWestern Energy, SBS Solar and our congregation, and how we hope to inspire other installations downtown and across Missoula.

Celebration Sunday: Once the solar panels are fully operational, First Church will host a Sunday celebration. We'll give thanks during worship, then take the festivities outside for a community celebration. The event will feature project leaders describing the [yearlong process](#) that brought solar to First Church. We'll have loads of written information about our project – and how Missoula homeowners and businesses can follow suit. Poster-size graphics will be spaced around the lawn, and we'll debut a computer monitor that displays our power generation stats. (See below.)

Real-time tracking of power generation: In the Narthex of First Church, we will install a computer monitor showing in real time how much energy our solar array is producing. A rotating series of educational poster boards will engage our thousands of building users with explanations of solar power, net metering, [reductions in CO2 emissions](#), artwork from our congregation's children, etc. Displays alongside the monitor will tell how the live feed works and thank all who made our solar project a success.

Sunday School/Youth Group curriculum: Carole Addis is developing a Sunday School curriculum that will teach our First Church children and teens about solar power and our own array. Students at all grade levels will design displays about our project and solar power. Some classes might make posters. Some might make videos. Then we hope they'll come up with their own "green" projects!

Solar Fair: Eventually, we'd like to host a Solar Fair – with participation by renewable energy groups and companies – and use that model to spread the word about renewable energy at gatherings throughout downtown Missoula. Think the Farmers Market, service group meetings, the lobby of the Florence, a film festival venue.

We're going to be busy, First Church, and we'll need your help! To join the Green Team, contact co-chairman Jim Gillison at james.gillison@msn.com.