

First United Methodist's Green Team Says: Thank You to Our Remarkable Congregation!

We greet May with great joy and thankfulness for our First UMC congregation and our collective determination to make positive change.

Last November, this church's members unanimously approved a [Climate Covenant](#) to guide our actions.

"We resolve to accept our moral obligation to be responsible stewards of God's creation and advocates for social justice," the Covenant promises. "We will transform our despair, anger and sadness about climate change and human suffering into action that helps to heal our world and all of humanity."

From that moment, First Church's progress toward our climate goals has been remarkable.

In January, we embarked on an effort to raise contributions and grant money to place solar panels atop our building's roof – as many as could fit, to offset as much of our electric usage as possible.

In mid-April, we celebrated the success of a pledge drive to raise \$18,353 from First Church's congregation as our contribution to the solar project. A week later, word came that the Methodist Church's Mountain Sky Conference awarded our church a \$1,000 grant for the installation.

The month ended with our Green Team submitting a grant application to NorthWestern Energy's E+ renewable energy program for \$46,322. We'll hear back on that request in August; if we don't make the first round of grants, we will reapply on Nov. 1.

Together, these contributions will allow SBS Solar to install 66 panels atop the Education Annex, enough to provide 80 percent of First Church's clean energy from the sun.

That percentage will increase with every energy conservation initiative we undertake. Work has already started: On April 20, Winton Kemmis led a crew of volunteers that replaced all 180 lightbulbs in the sanctuary with new-generation LEDs – the most energy efficient bulbs on the market. These bulbs provide the equivalent of 100 watts of illumination, but only burn 13.5 watts of electricity.

How significant is the savings? Kemmis did the math: 180 100-watt incandescent bulbs burn 18,000 watts of electricity every hour. But 180 13.5-watt LED bulbs burn 2,430 watts of electricity per hour. That's a savings of 15,570 watts every hour.

That's not all: At our April meeting, Green Team members began discussing future projects: more energy conservation initiatives, greater attention to reducing/reusing/recycling, efforts to encourage more attention to climate change by city and county officials. And we promised to continue our monthly updates/education during Sunday worship.

We're also seeking your ideas. What "green" projects should we tackle next? Would you like to join the Green Team? Email Green Team co-chair James Gillison via james.gillison@msn.com. Let's expand our work – and impact – in the months to come!