

Green Notes: First UMC's Solar Installation Begins Monday

Are you ready to make history, Missoula Methodists?

SBS Solar will begin installing First UMC's 66 rooftop solar panels on Monday, Aug. 15 – a month ahead of schedule. That means we could begin generating our own electricity in September!

The schedule change occurred this week after another downtown solar project was delayed and we were offered the chance to take the opening. We said "yes!"

Early Monday morning, SBS Solar will move its equipment into the parking places directly behind First Church's Education Annex and begin lifting our array's components onto the roof. Much of that work will occur before 10 a.m., said General Manager Ralph Walters. To avoid the hot afternoon hours, the crew will work each day from 6 a.m. to about 2 p.m.

If you come to the church this week, you may need to use the city's free two-hour parking spots in front of the building, or use the paid parking on Washington Street. The back entrance to our building will remain safe and accessible throughout the installation.

After the first two days, SBS Solar probably won't need more than a couple of the church's alley parking spots. Its crew will park on the street throughout the week. The alley will not be blocked.

Once the solar panels are installed, three other steps must be completed before the system begins generating electricity. SBS Solar's electrical subcontractor must connect the panels to our building's electric system. Then the city's electrical inspector must sign off on the work. And, finally, NorthWestern Energy must install a new meter that allows electricity to flow both into and out from our building. (When we generate more electricity than we use, our solar power will flow out onto the grid and into other buildings.)

Thank you to all the First Church members who made the \$18,353 in pledges necessary for our congregation to apply for the NorthWestern Energy grant that made this amazing project possible. At the end of July,

we learned that NorthWestern will contribute \$46,323 to the project, the full amount requested. We are so grateful for NorthWestern Energy's support.

We are also grateful to all the First Church members who have sent in the contributions they pledged for this project. We need the remaining pledges no later than Aug. 22, so we can pay SBS Solar our portion of the cost.

Questions? Email the co-chair of First Church's Green Team, Jim Gillison, at james.gillison@msn.com.