

Green Notes: Weekly updates from First United Methodist's Green Team

First UMC Builds on Legacy of Civic Action, Service

This Easter Sunday, we are ever so grateful for the many generations of Methodists who have worshipped on this downtown street corner since 1871. We are inspired by their love of the valley we call home and their faith in its future.

From the start, this congregation attracted forward-thinking leaders: Emma Dickinson wasn't just our church's first Sunday School teacher; she was Missoula's first schoolteacher. John Rankin built our first frame church building on Block #4; his daughter Jeannette was the first woman elected to the U.S. Congress.

"The doors of the church were opened to those of every social level, every economic strata and each geographical section," the founding families reported. "The edifice has always been in demand for a meeting place, and not alone to Methodists. The church has welcomed all who felt the need for its ministry."

The civic and social service contributions of our congregation stand out in every succeeding decade and leave us awestruck – and committed to building upon that legacy. And so, in a unanimous vote last November, our church's members approved a [Climate Covenant](#) to guide our individual and collective 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."

With that Covenant in hand, we embarked upon an effort this January 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. That number proved to be 66 panels, enough to provide 80 percent of our electricity with clean energy from the sun.

Last Sunday, we celebrated the success of a pledge drive to raise \$18,353 from First Church's congregation and friends as our contribution to the solar panel project. The remarkable response was a testament to our shared commitment to climate action. Later this month, we will apply for a \$46,322 renewable energy grant from NorthWestern Energy to provide the remaining funds.

So, as Green Team co-chair Jim Gillison said during last Sunday's announcement, "Cross your fingers." Pastor John Daniels added, "And clasp your hands together."

And don't think for a second that the Green Team is finished with our work! At our April meeting, we began discussing future projects: energy conservation initiatives, greater attention to reducing/reusing/recycling, efforts to encourage more attention to climate change by our city and county officials.

And we're seeking your ideas. What "green" projects should we tackle next? What climate actions would you like to join? Email the Green Team with your thoughts at james.gillison@msn.com.