

## **Green Notes: Weekly tips for reducing your carbon footprint from First United Methodist's Green Team**

### **Let's show downtown Missoula how to harness the sun!**

Some of the earliest photographs of Missoula show our church building, its elegant steeple presiding over the fledgling neighborhood just east of downtown. Outlined against the flanks of Mount Jumbo, the sanctuary built by Jeannette Rankin's father provided testimony to the Methodists' presence and power in the frontier town.

Now First UMC has an opportunity to once again inspire action with the installation of 80 solar panels atop our roof. Proposed by our Green Team, this array would provide a visible symbol to downtown Missoula that renewable energy is the key to our planet's future well-being.

By placing our solar array in the very heart of Missoula, we would hope to inspire similar efforts by downtown businesses, as well as city and county governments, churches and homeowners. We could provide a guide for subsequent projects. Every one of those 80 heat-collecting panels would shout out our congregation's commitment to climate action and a livable world.

In December, SBS Solar's Ralph Walters told members of the Green Team and Board of Trustees that the installation could provide 90 percent of our building's electrical needs. We would immediately see a significant impact on our monthly power bills; most solar systems pay for themselves in 10-12 years, Walters said.

SBS Solar will provide us with a detailed proposal in February, showing the total project cost, payoff date, monthly savings, engineering report and project design. We'll share that information with you in our weekly Green Notes column.

Up to \$70,000 of First UMC's estimated \$90,000 project cost could come from a NorthWestern Energy grant. SBS Solar will help us submit that grant application by May 1. In the meantime, we need to raise \$20,000 in pledges to account for the remaining costs.

You'll hear more about that pledge drive in church on Sunday, when Green Team leaders Jim Gillison and Carole Addis present our solar project to the congregation. They'll be available after church to answer questions and accept pledges (no actual money, at this point). Our goal is to receive enough pledges to purchase 80 solar panels at \$250 a piece.

Let's reassert our iconic presence in Missoula by leading the critical movement away from fossil fuels and into a 100 percent electric future. It's the right thing to do. For our grandchildren and their children's children. For future generations of Missoula Methodists. For the very survival of our planet.

**To make your pledge, contact Green Team co-chair Jim Gillison at (406) 546-1359 or by email at [james.gillison@msn.com](mailto:james.gillison@msn.com), or talk to any other member of the Green Team, Pastor John or Genevieve in the church office.**