

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

### **Green Team Updates Trustees on Solar Panel Project**

First UMC's Green Team met Wednesday with church trustees to briefly review our solar panel project and the enthusiastic response it has received from the congregation.

To date, 25 members of our church have pledged \$10,500 -- putting us just over halfway to our goal. "That's a tremendous response for a congregation of our size," Green Team Co-chair Jim Gillison told trustees.

Of course, the remaining \$9,500 needed to meet our \$20,000 goal will be tougher to raise. But we are leaving no stone unturned. We are continuing to solicit pledges from members of our congregation, as well as from the many social service and nonprofit groups that regularly utilize our building.

We've also applied for a \$1,500 grant from the Methodist Church's Mountain Sky Conference, which recently launched an energy conservation grant program. And we're investigating several other small grant possibilities.

At Wednesday's meeting, trustees and Pastor John Daniels voiced their general support for the project. Their formal approval will come once a final design, engineering report and cost is ready. That document took a big step forward this week, when Ralph Walters of Missoula's SBS Solar was able to access the roof to take measurements needed to design the system. He'll also work with an engineer to ensure the roof has the structural stability to hold a solar array. Walters expects to have his formal

proposal ready by the end of next week, after which the Green Team and trustees will schedule another meeting.

At an initial meeting in December, Walters estimated our roof has space for 80 solar panels. An installation of that size would provide 90 percent of our building's annual electrical needs – based on pre-pandemic usage.

Funding for the installation would primarily come from a NorthWestern Energy renewable energy grant of \$70,000. Our application is due May 1. Should First Church not succeed in this year's first round of grant awards, we would apply again on November 1. It sometimes takes two rounds to receive the NorthWestern grants.

As part of that process, we must come up with about \$20,000 to show our commitment to the project. That's the fundraising effort you've heard so much about in recent weeks, and which we hope to complete before our application is submitted to NorthWestern.

Pastor John suggested that once we have the full proposal in hand, we should bring the project to the congregation during a Sunday worship service – not only for the congregation's approval, but for a celebration.

Going solar would be a significant step in answering the commitment we made as a congregation when we adopted a Climate Covenant. "As people of faith, we have an obligation to care for God's creation," the Covenant says. "How we live in this world has meaning and consequences for all beings."

**To make your pledge to our solar panel project, 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.**