

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

### **Sharing our stories of success: Installing rooftop solar panels!**

First Church's Steve and Lorraine Carlson have installed 34 solar panels atop their home's roof since 2014 – sending nearly enough electricity into the grid each year to offset their personal use.

“And there's still room on the roof,” says Lorraine. “Solar really has worked out for us. We are proud that we did it, and it's nice not to have the monthly power bills.”

The Carlsons worked with SBS Solar, a local company, to purchase and install their first 24 panels in 2014. “Our main concern was the environmental benefit of switching to solar,” says Steve.

All the power generated atop the Carlsons' roof feeds into NorthWestern Energy's grid. Any excess power produced above the family's usage stays on the grid and is used in other homes. Any shortfall is charged to the Carlsons each April. Two years, they ended up with an excess of electricity; the other years, their panels covered all but about a half-month's usage.

A few weeks ago, SBS Solar installed another 10 panels atop the Carlson home. Seven of those are needed to charge the family's Tesla, assuming they drive the electric car 7,000 miles a year. The extra three panels will cover the usage in Steve's at-home shop and a possible new electric water heater.

The Carlsons' investment (it takes about \$20,000 to get started in rooftop solar) comes at a propitious moment. Last week, President Biden announced a plan to generate 45% of the

nation's electricity from solar panels by 2050. That's a monumental increase from the current 4% generated, and is a critical piece in achieving the greenhouse gas reductions needed to stem global warming.

It's also good news for the pocketbooks of families looking to follow the Carlsons' lead. New Yorker columnist Bill McKibben explains: "The cost of solar has regularly fallen about 30 percent with each doubling of capacity – so increasing its scale from less than 4 percent, which it is at present, to 45 percent should make what is already the cheapest energy on Earth far cheaper still."

Here are several resources to help you learn more about solar energy and residential solar panels:

SBS Solar's website: <https://sbslink.com/>

Bill McKibben's New Yorker column:

<https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/joe-bidens-solar-plan-and-the-prescience-of-jimmy-carter>

The New York Times article explaining Biden's solar plan:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/09/08/business/energy-environment/biden-solar-energy-climate-change.html> .

**Call or email Sherry Devlin at 546-1016 or [sherrydevlin@gmail.com](mailto:sherrydevlin@gmail.com) to share stories of what you're doing – or what a friend or neighbor is doing – to help stop global warming. We'll share your success story in next week's edition of Green Notes.**