

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

Solar Panels: Structural Engineer Examines Education Annex Roof for Stability

First UMC's effort to install a 66-panel solar array atop our Education Annex took a significant step forward this week.

Structural engineer Bradley Layton spent part of Thursday morning on the roof, studying its stability and suitability for the installation. He was accompanied by Green Team co-chair Jim Gillison and Steve Carlson, who led our building's recent renovation.

Layton will submit his findings later this month, as we finish work on the application for a NorthWestern Energy E+ renewable energy grant. His investigation and analysis will be incorporated into the application, and will help shape the array's final design.

While Layton conducts his analysis and our Green Team prepares the E+ grant application, we also must complete the pledge campaign for our congregation's portion of the solar project costs. We are incredibly grateful for the strong support shown by First UMC's congregation, and are confident additional donors will step up in the days to come. Our heartfelt thanks go to all of you who have supported this project!

Here's where our solar panel pledge campaign stood as of Thursday, March 31:

First Church's portion of the solar project's cost is \$18,353. So far, our congregation members have pledged \$17,475. **That means**

we just need to raise another \$878, and we'll be at the finish line!

How is our portion of the project calculated? NorthWestern Energy wants to see a 30 percent commitment from the churches, nonprofit groups and businesses that apply for its renewable energy grants. They want us to have some skin in the game, if you will.

Our contractor, Ralph Walters of SBS Solar in Missoula, calculated the full cost of First Church's solar array – including design, engineering, all materials and installation – as \$66,175. Of that amount, Walters would donate \$1,500 of his time. If our NorthWestern Energy grant application is successful, the company would provide 70 percent of the cost, or \$46,322. That leaves First Church with \$18,353 – the amount for which we are seeking pledges. See Walters' full proposal and cost breakdown at [this link on our church's website](#).

So let's get these solar panels up on the roof! Make your pledge to the project by contacting Green Team co-chair Jim Gillison at (406) 546-1359 or by emailing james.gillison@msn.com.