

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

Let the sun shine! Congratulations to Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Bonner!

We have been inspired and moved to action by the congregation of Our Savior's Lutheran Church in Bonner, which just dedicated a 30-panel, 12 kW solar system atop its roof. We hope it is just the first of many such projects by Montana churches – possibly even our own.

The installation was financed with help from NorthWestern Energy's E+ Renewable Energy Grant Program, which helps nonprofit and civic groups install renewable energy projects. Missoula's SBS Solar installed the panels in early October; Our Savior dedicated the project on Reformation Sunday, Oct. 31.

Here's what Pastor Eric Huseth had to say: "It is fitting that we are able to officially turn on the switch to this solar system as part of the larger Reformation celebration. The early church reformers were responding to the challenges of their day by advocating for reforms of education, theology and science to build a more equitable society. We are adopting solar energy as a way of continuing that tradition, responding to the climate crisis of our day and doing our part to ensure a healthy and safe future for the next generation."

Huseth said it took many years for Our Savior to find a funding plan that worked. Nonprofits and civic groups are not eligible for renewable energy tax credits, so must be more creative in financing and designing their clean energy systems. Now, Our Savior hopes to use its experience to help other congregations install solar on their buildings or grounds. Huseth said solar installations are becoming more affordable as projects increase

nationwide and new financing opportunities appear. Our Savior's panels will pay for themselves in seven years; their lifespan is more than 30 years.

Inspired by the news from Bonner, First Church's Green Team has launched an investigation – headed by Carole Addis – of NorthWestern Energy's renewable energy grant program and of the potential for a solar project on our own property. We have much to learn, but are excited to see where the research leads us. Our thanks go to Our Savior's Lutheran for the inspiration and leadership. Stay tuned for updates as your Green Team embarks on our research!

Action Alert: As we write this week's Green Notes, the COP26 climate summit is in the nitty-gritty stage of negotiations. Our job is to demand immediate action on all the agreements reached in Glasgow, as there is no time for hesitancy. That action can and must start right here at home, with our newly elected local officials. Let them know you want Missoula to be a leader in fighting climate change by emailing or calling City Hall today!