

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

### **Let's go solar in 2022!**

Happy new year from your First UMC Green Team! We are excited about the possibilities for progress in the year ahead. Here's why:

On Dec. 20, Pastor John Daniels and members of First United Methodist's Board of Trustees and Green Team met with Ralph Walters of SBS Solar about a possible solar array atop our church's roof.

Walters said his preliminary analysis shows the installation of 80 solar panels on the education annex would offset about 90 percent of the church's electrical consumption. He showed the group a mockup created using a Google photo of the roof and his initial thoughts on how to place the panels.

Our roof poses extra challenges because it is flat and is exposed to the Hellgate Canyon winds, Walters said. He believes those issues can be resolved by building an exoskeleton that anchors the panels to the roof, making them resistant to both high winds and heavy snow loads. SBS Solar will have an engineer look at the roof as the project moves forward, to be certain it can support the panels.

Walters estimated the installation would cost \$90,000, of which about \$70,000 could come from a NorthWestern Energy grant and the remaining \$20,000 from our congregation and other sources. Most solar systems pay for themselves in 10-12 years, he said.

What next? In early February, Walters will climb onto our roof and make the measurements needed to prepare a final design. Then he'll present First Church with a formal proposal, showing the system design, cost and estimated payoff period. If the project continues to look possible, he'll help us prepare an application for the NW Energy grant by the May 1 deadline.

In the meantime, our Green Team will investigate other sources of grants and donations available for solar projects – and to educate ourselves and our congregation on solar energy. (Watch for next week's Green Notes column on net metering.)

As the new year begins, First Church has an opportunity to lead a green energy project in the heart of Missoula – one we hope will be duplicated by other local churches and downtown businesses. With solar energy, we have a chance to help stop the use of fossil fuels and their planet-warming emissions.

**We hope you'll join us as we explore a solar future in 2022!**