

Green Notes: Weekly updates from First United Methodist's Green Team

First UMC's Solar Pledge Drive Reaches \$18,353 Goal!

Our hearts are overflowing as we report that First Church's congregation has pledged the full \$18,353 needed to apply for a NorthWestern Energy grant to place solar panels atop our Education Annex!

Over the past four months, the outpouring of support from First UMC members left us humbled – and energized – to push forward with a plan to supply most of our building's electricity from the sun.

Every single week, we've been encouraged by your words and deeds. "Yes," you said, "this is an important project." "Yes, keep going!" "Yes, we need to do our part to help Missoula achieve 100 percent clean electricity."

Since Jan. 1, we received 49 pledges from our congregation and others eager to see 66 solar panels atop our iconic downtown church – a testament to our continued presence and leadership in the community.

Once in place, the solar array will generate about 34,000 kWh per year, or an estimated 80 percent of our building's annual electric consumption. Continued conservation efforts and new energy efficiency initiatives can increase that already high percentage.

With the \$18,353 in pledges, we can now apply for an E+ renewable energy grant from NorthWestern Energy. We'll ask the power company for \$46,322, or 70 percent of the system's cost.

Our contractor, SBS Solar of Missoula, will donate another \$1,500.

Total cost for design, engineering, materials, installation and connection to the grid is \$66,175.

First UMC's Green Team is hard at work on the NorthWestern grant application, which is due no later than May 31. We'll hear back from the company sometime in August, and if we succeed on our first try, we could see solar panels lifted onto the roof later that month or early in September.

If we don't succeed on our first try (the company receives many more requests than it can fulfill each grant cycle), we will reapply on Nov. 1. We also will continue to look for other grant opportunities, as we intend for First Church to own the installation free and clear from Day 1.

On this day, though, we want to celebrate our generous and future-focused First Church members. Your support is the heart and soul of this project and everything we do in our community. Your action is making First Church's Climate Covenant a reality: "We are called to action that reflects our abiding love for God, for one another and for the natural world." Amen. And hallelujah!