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To: Mark Monroe
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Rector's Pen

October 20, 2015

Our energy is heaven-sent

This week's column is a repeat of an announcement I made in church on Sunday October 18th at both services.

Over the course of its history, St John's has been at the forefront of a number of initiatives that bettered the world we live in. Decades ago we began giving aid to the homeless, helped build housing for low income families, and at the beginning of the AIDS crisis gave shelter to those living with the disease. Modeling what it means to care for community and world is part of St John's DNA.

Currently there is another opportunity for modeling before us and it's what I want to introduce to you today. We at St John's have before us a tremendous opportunity to practice what we preach when it comes to caring for the earth as God's creation, and reducing carbon emissions and global warming. I am speaking of solar power for our campus.

Several parishioners have been asking about the possibility of installing solar panels at St John's and so our Social Action ministry undertook a study. What they found is very exciting. From the beginning of their months-long work, three goals have guided their investigation:

1. That our church should be a visible, vocal, and faith filled steward of our Earth
2. That any renewable energy projects we undertake provide financial savings to the church.
3. That the beauty and historic integrity of our campus be preserved.

After meeting and speaking with solar power contractors as well as a Lutheran church in Louisville that is enjoying the benefit of solar panels, here's what the committee learned:

- + St John's can dramatically reduce our monthly electrical bills. We currently pay an average of \$1250 every month for electricity. That's \$15,000 a year. Solar panels will save us 40%, so we can expect to save \$6,000 annually.
- + We can enjoy this savings without compromising our historic structure. The design being proposed places nothing on the roof of the sanctuary, nothing on the roof of the chapel, and nothing on the roof of the building that links chapel to offices; in other words, nothing on the roof of the library. High-efficiency panels would be mounted on the roofs east of the library only.
- + By forming a limited liability company comprised of interested parishioners, the solar panels could be installed at zero initial cost to the parish. Better yet, those who invest in the LLC would enjoy a 7-12% per year return, based on the example of the Lutheran church in Louisville.
- + Xcel Energy will give the solar panel owner an \$1,800 energy credit every year. For the first six years the owner of the panels will be the LLC. After that, the LLC will sell the panels to the church at a reduced price. The \$1,800 annual credit then comes to the church and that annual credit will continue throughout the life of the project, for an estimated \$25,000 total.
- + The LLC will sell the installation to the church in year seven, but the cost to the parish in year seven will be more than made up for by the savings in lower electric bills over the life of the project.
- + Parish treasurer Michael Weatherwax has agreed to serve as the managing member of the LLC. A *managing member of an LLC* is an individual who holds an ownership interest in the company, participates in its day-to day management, and has authority to contract on behalf of the company. As a widely respected CPA, Michael is an ideal person to serve in this role.
- + This proposed installation has been reviewed and blessed by the St John's architecture committee, the vestry, and the historic property agencies at both local and state levels. The last entity that needs to review this is the diocesan Standing Committee. Standing Committee member Bob Morse is acting as the liaison for that.
- + Why haven't you heard about this before now? Because in order to make the cost/benefit a "go" we needed the annual energy credit from Xcel; it didn't make sense to call for investors before we knew we'd be awarded that annual energy credit. (It has recently been awarded to us.)
- + So, now that Xcel has granted us the annual energy credit for this project, will it go forward? Yes, if there are sufficient investors found for the LLC. We need ten, ideally—nine more in addition to the managing member. (After this project was announced in church on Sunday, over 40 people expressed interest.)
- + We expect construction to begin early in 2016 and the panels to be operational in the spring.
- + How do you become part of the LLC? How do you get more information? Who do you contact? If you are interested, I suggest you do the following:

-- Contact Mark Monroe [mark.monroe@comcast.net] as soon as possible and he'll email you the LLC information sheet. The deadline for signing up to invest in the LLC is November 13th at 12:00 noon.

-- Attend one of two information meetings for potential investors we will hold in the next few weeks (watch the wEagle as well as our website for dates and location).

-- Understand and accept that, if there are *more than* nine qualified investors, we'll need to choose the nine by lottery. In other words, please know that signing up does not necessarily guarantee you a spot.

Christ is the light of the world and in him all things are made new. Or as the psalmist said to God, "with you is the fountain of life. In your light so we see light." A solar panel installation would bring new meaning to this theology of God in Christ as life-giving light, and it has my blessing because it is the right thing for us earth stewards to do.

Led by the Holy Spirit, St John's mission is to inspire people to grow into the heart and mind of Christ by engaging together in worshiping, serving, and spiritual formation.

Have a blessed week! ~Pastor Susan +

FOOTNOTE

We are grateful to Christ the Servant Lutheran Church in Louisville, CO for sharing with us their template for a solar panel LLC. We are further grateful to the members of St John's Social Action Committee whose work and leadership brought this project from idea to reality: Kathy Shields, Chair; Mark Monroe; Kathy Ashworth; Richard Ackerman; Anne and Sandy Butterfield; Anna Schoettle; Bob Morse; Ted Howard; Gene Wahl.

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