



# Green Faith

## *Congregations Making a Difference through Energy Efficiency*

### **Dayspring United Methodist Church**

On October 29, 2015, Dayspring United Methodist Church received an award from its utility, Salt River Project (SRP), for significantly reducing the total amount of electrical energy used in the previous 12 months. This was part of an annual SRP "Champions of Energy Efficiency Awards and Luncheon" during which business and nonprofit organizations are recognized for their efforts to implement new technologies, institute behavior changes, and forge paths for energy efficiency.

Dayspring had invested in its interior and exterior lighting systems by converting to the latest technology. Working with SRP, following its advice and guidelines to achieve the goal of energy savings, the church saw a reduction in energy costs and received money-saving rebates. Dayspring reduced its electricity usage by 77,114 kilowatt-hours (kWh) that resulted in a savings of \$5,868.63 in energy costs.

The church was grouped in the nonprofit category along with St. Theresa Parish and Sunshine Acres Children's Home, both of which also received awards. A total of 19 awards were given to various companies and organizations in the Phoenix area. This is a significant achievement for Dayspring and was due to the efforts of a large group of members of the church leadership.



*Credit: Dayspring United Methodist Church*

### **Flagstaff Federated Community Church**

In January 2016, Flagstaff Federated Community Church celebrated 100 years of gathering as a federation of denominations, sharing a space and working together. Owing to its history of inclusiveness, the church focuses on social and environmental issues. In the 1990s, a group of people from the church formed a ministry called "Christians for the Earth" – many members of the congregation wanted to be more proactive when it came to earth-care.

In the 2000s, the church began working on updating much of the lighting around the century-old building. Congregants and community groups that use the building were educated about energy-efficiency measures. The church installed programmable thermostats and a motion detector light in the bathrooms. As it came time to replace furnaces (the church has 13 of them), Federated opted for more energy-efficient models. Extra insulation was added in attic spaces throughout the building, as well.

Despite the large decrease in energy usage, the church's electric bills continued to climb because of rising electric rates. Federated recognized that the next big step was to install solar panels and to further reduce the church's carbon footprint. Today, 132 panels grace the church roof and offset more than 90% of its electric usage. The church utilized a loan to finance the panels, raising



*Credit: Flagstaff Federated Community Church*

the down payment from its congregation and community groups, and ended up with a monthly payment that was the equivalent of the church's average monthly electric bill – therefore, “going solar” was already within the church's budget!

After the installation, the church's electric bills dropped to \$45 per month as credits from electricity over-production kicked in. Over the next 40 years, the church expects to save at least \$350,000 and keep more than two million pounds of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere. A plaque is located in the gathering hall honoring the project donors, and the solar array's performance can be tracked via a link on the church website at <http://www.flagstafffederatedchurch.org>.

A quote by Albert Schweitzer inspired the church's earth-care efforts: “No ray of sunshine is ever lost, but the green which awakens into existence needs time to sprout, and it is not always granted for the sower to see the harvest. All work that is worth anything is done in faith.”

## Franciscan Renewal Center

For the past two decades, the Franciscan Renewal Center has taken seriously St. Francis of Assisi's call to be brothers and sisters with all of creation by taking on a variety of projects throughout its 24-acre campus. Since 2012, the work has accelerated due to the Care for Creation ministry team's mission to lessen humanity's impact on the planet. Since that time, the center has accomplished significant energy-efficiency measures.

After researching power consumption of meeting room refrigerators, nine were replaced with *Energy Star*® rated models, resulting in a 78% decrease in energy usage. More than 50 lodging rooms received upgraded weather stripping, and all door sweeps are being replaced. All interior and exterior lights were changed to light emitting diodes (LEDs). After implementing energy efficiency solutions, the center also researched expanding use of renewable energy and was instrumental in the installation of solar panels on its new 32-room Assisi Lodge.

But the green efforts didn't stop there. The center also replaced Styrofoam coffee cups in its dining room with cups made from recyclable materials. It also reached out to the community to extend its green efforts, giving away free reusable bags and compact fluorescent lightbulbs (CFLs) to encourage community members to become more environmentally conscious.

Because of all of these efforts, the center received Arizona Interfaith Power and Light's SAGE Award (Spirited Activists Greening the Earth) for its steadfast support of the mission to mobilize people of faith in Arizona to reduce the causes of climate change.

As of August 2016, more efforts are in the works. A new church is being built to LEED standards, and the center is seeking other places on its campus to use solar energy. In the Spirit of St. Francis of Assisi and through its Care for Creation team, the center continues to look for new ways to reduce its carbon footprint and to live in greater harmony with the environment.



*Credit: Franciscan Renewal Center*

**Learn more about energy efficiency in Arizona!**

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