

The church is going solar? Is the rumor true? Well, maybe and yes. It is correct that the church is considering installing solar panels on both the roof of the church and of the Barbara Phelps Building. We have had numerous conversations internally and with outside vendors about the possibility. But no, nothing has been decided yet. There are two big steps we need to take before getting there.

First, later this week, on October 18<sup>th</sup>, we will be going before the Tolland Historic District Commission. The Commission is “responsible for protecting and preserving the character and integrity of the Historic District” in which our church sits. In their guidelines there is a section on green energy and energy efficiency which states that “No application for a certificate of appropriateness for an exterior architectural features, such as a solar energy system . . . shall be denied unless the commission finds that the feature cannot be installed without substantially impairing the historic character and appearance of the district.” We believe that the design we have follows these guidelines and hope that the Commission agrees.

If we get the Commission’s approval, we will then bring the idea before the church, as a whole, for conversation and ultimately a vote on whether we should move forward. In that conversation there will be a lot said about the cost of the system and the monetary savings over the next 20 years—which is in the hundreds of thousands of dollars, mind you—but what I don’t want to get lost in that conversation is that choosing to go solar isn’t only about saving money, it’s also a way to practice our faith.

On the side of the church nearest to the Board of Education building there is a banner that says “Be the Church,” and one of the ways listed underneath is to “Protect the Environment.” Way back in Genesis—a book written thousands of years ago—God calls us to care for the earth. Now mind you it says nothing about solar panels, obviously, but had they been around, I’m sure they would have been mentioned—because doing this would make a big difference.

For did you know that this past September was the warmest the world has ever seen? And that temperature trend only continues to rise. Installing solar panels can help to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (which are mostly carbon dioxide, CO<sub>2</sub>), and that reduction will directly help to mitigate climate change. Our proposed system—which will generate 68,290 kilowatt hours of electricity each year (16,480 on the Phelps Building and 51,810 on the church)—can make a huge difference.

For a system our size is equivalent to removing the emissions from 125,830 miles driven by cars each year and it’s equivalent to planting 1,261 trees to absorb the CO<sub>2</sub> in the air. In other words, it is no small step in the direction of stemming climate change.

There will be much more coming on this soon, but for now, I would invite you to think about this and pray about this. Churches can no longer NOT afford to go solar, was how an article from our Conference put it recently, and for so many reasons, I wholeheartedly agree.