October 12, 2016

**Solar Panels to be Installed at First Unitarian-Universalist Society of Marietta**

**Press Release**

Solar panels will be installed at the First Unitarian-Universalist Society of Marietta (FUUSM) during the week of October 17. This installation establishes FUUSM as the first religious organization in Washington County to have solar panels as a major source of electrical power in its main worship building, located at the corner of Third and Putnam streets in Marietta. The 1.2-kilowatt solar panels will be placed on part of the new roof, which was installed in May of this year. The solar panel installation will be done by Pickering Associates of Parkersburg , W.V. The cost of acquisition and installation of the solar panels will be covered by a private company, Golden Rule Associates, LLC, owned by FUUSM member, Dave Ballantyne. The reason for this arrangement is that only individuals or organizations subject to federal income tax liability can claim the 30 percent federal income tax credit available for solar-panel acquisition and installation, not nonprofit or religious organizations.

The solar panels will generate approximately 66 percent of the annual electrical usage of the church building. Initially, FUUSM will save about 10 percent on its electricity bill annually because of the solar panels. Members and friends of FUUSM may purchase additional solar panels for placement on the roof of the church building, and they may also buy portions of Golden Rule Associates’ ownership of the original solar panels. Golden Rule Associates will donate the solar panels to FUUSM after such time as the original investment has been repaid, or 25 years, according to a formal agreement between Golden Rule Associates and FUUSM. Then, when FUUSM fully owns the panels, the electric-bill savings will be the full 66 percent

George Banziger, president of the FUUSM Board of Trustees, noted that the installation of solar panels is a momentous event for FUUSM and helps to fulfill its commitment as an official "Green Sanctuary" congregation, a designation it received in 2014 from the Unitarian Universalist Association, its national denominational organization, after a rigorous application process.

"We are very grateful to Golden Rule Associates for its support of our solar panel project. This will allow us to live out one of the principles of our FUUSM affirmation: To 'cherish the universe and its resources, and recognize the unity of all life,’” Banziger said.

"I am pleased to support FUUSM's commitment to its Green Sanctuary status with this initiative, which I hope will be exemplary to others for increasing use of renewable energy and decreasing use of fossil fuels. The solar panel project represents our serious spiritual engagement in environmental sustainability," Ballantyne said.

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