Unitarian-Universalists Seek to Expand Solar Installation

Dawn Hewitt

An anonymous benefactor has challenged the Green Sanctuary Committee of the First Unitarian Universalist Society of Marietta to raise $10,000 by April 22 (Earth Day), 2018, for the purpose of expanding the solar array on the roof of the FUUSM sanctuary. The reward: a dollar for dollar $10,000 match.

In October 2016, FUUSM installed solar panels sufficient to produce more electricity than the sanctuary building uses each year, but not enough to power the church’s Religious Exploration building next door, which is all electric. The proposed expanded solar capacity will allow the church to generate slightly more electricity from pollution-free, renewable solar power than it uses in both of its buildings. The additional panels and installation is expected to cost between $17,000 and $19,000. Excess funds raised from donations and the matching grant will be used to make the historic RE building more energy-efficient, thus reducing the amount of electricity needed to heat, cool, and light the building, plus power the appliances and computers in the church’s offices.

FUUSM’s existing solar installation is “on the grid,” and the expansion will be, too. That means that on bright, sunny days when solar collectors are generating more electricity that the church can use at that time, surplus electricity is going out into the community. On such days, the lights and air conditioners of residences and businesses in the Mid-Ohio Valley might be running on solar power generated in downtown Marietta.

One of FUSM’s central principles is respect for the universe and its resources, so the congregation is eager to minimize its use of fossil fuels because of their climate-changing emissions and impacts on the landscape.

Many residents of the Mid-Ohio Valley dream about reducing their carbon footprint by investing in solar power for their home, but the roofline of their house faces the wrong direction for adequate solar collection, or perhaps their yard has too many trees, which the homeowner does not wish to remove. Perhaps the cost of a residential solar installation is prohibitive. For those who rent or live in condos, residential solar power isn’t an option. Such individuals can show their support for solar power by contributing to the FUUSM Solar Match Fund.

Anyone who seeks to address climate change by reducing carbon emissions can do so by contributing to the expansion of FUUSM’s solar installation. Simply write a check to FUUSM and note “Solar Match Fund” in the memo line. Mail it to FUUSM‑Solar Match, 233 Third Street, Marietta, OH 45750. FUUSM’s Green Sanctuary Committee will be grateful for contributions in any amount.

Just Dinner Fundraiser

To help meet the $10,000 challenge, the Green Sanctuary Committee will host a special meal at 6 p.m. on Friday, September 15, in the FUUSM Fellowship Hall. At the “Just Dinner,” Green Sanctuary Committee members will prepare foods that can be thought of as “just”: socially and/or environmentally conscientious, such as locally grown, organic, fair trade, vegetarian, humanely raised and slaughtered, or other characteristics that the preparer considers conscionable eating. Admission to the meal is $15 in advance, or $20 at the door, and all funds raised will go to the Solar Match Fund. After dinner—which is guaranteed to be delicious and filling as well as righteous—all present will be invited to join a discussion on renewable energy. The public is wholeheartedly invited to attend the Just Dinner for Solar Power, as well as to contribute directly to the Solar Match Fund.

For more information, contact Dawn Hewitt, Hewitt@earth-maker.com or (812)320-3449.