



THE PARISH PAPER

April 2018

Church Energy Use: Can We Harness Hope?

Carbon dioxide emissions have been implicated as a key factor in rising global temperatures. Because all church buildings use energy, much of it derived from carbonbased sources such as oil and coal, congregations play a role in energy consumption. Although congregations represent a small piece of the big picture, they can still offer hope for the community or the wider church.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) estimates that if every house of worship nationwide (about 300,000) cut back energy use by 10%:

- * \$200 million could be saved and used for other projects for the community good
- * 5.4 billion kilowatt hours of electricity could be used elsewhere without generating additional pollution
- * 200 million tons of greenhouse gases would not be emitted-the equivalent of keeping 400,000 cars off the road or planting half a million trees.¹

The Basics: What Is Energy?

Inside Energy, a collaborative journalism initiative, describes the current situation in a video titled "Energy Explained."² Energy use was flat until the past century when it skyrocketed. The average person in the U.S.

today uses 100 times the energy that his or her great grandmother did a hundred years ago. Today, worldwide, our biggest single source of energy is petroleum.

The vast majority of energy use goes to generating electricity.

We generate electricity by burning coal and natural gas, splitting atoms, damming rivers, and harnessing the wind and sun.

While the demand for energy in the U.S. has started to level off, energy use varies greatly across countries. The average American uses three times the energy of a typical Chinese citizen. For certain, our energy use patterns will be quite different in coming generations.

For example, more cars could run on electricity than on gasoline. Whatever happens, today's energy choices will affect how we make energy in the future.



‘THE NEW SOUND SYSTEM IS
AN ENERGY-EFFICIENT UPGRADE..
IT ONLY KICKS ON WHEN YOU SAY SOMETHING PROFOUND.’

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The Parish Paper:
Ideas and Insights for Active Congregations, is a monthly resource for local church clergy and lay leaders to use to help their local churches engage in dynamic and fruitful ministry. We encourage you to share The Parish Paper with appropriate boards, committees, teams, or interested members within your congregation.

The Vermont Conference has subscribed to this resource on behalf of all Vermont UCC churches. Each monthly issue of The Parish Paper provides ideas, insights, research-findings, and practical methods that strengthen the effectiveness of congregations in accomplishing God's purposes through their various ministries. Not every suggestion included in The Parish Paper will be right for every church.

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