

Our Savior's Lutheran Church, Denver, Colorado  
Media Release  
December 2009

Denver congregation to install Solar Panels

*Financed by unique arrangement with third party financing program and contractor who hires ex-offenders as well as veterans trained in solar installation.*

**When: 2:00 PM Friday, December 18**

**What: Launch of solar power project installation**

**Where: Our Savior's Lutheran Church, 915 East 9th Avenue, Denver, CO 80218**

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**For more information:**

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Our Savior's Lutheran Church of Denver, Colorado, will become the first congregation in the city to run on solar electric power made possible through a unique financing arrangement developed by Bella Energy. Bella is one of the largest solar energy companies in Colorado and will provide the solar panels and the labor to install them.

The 21kW solar installation is scheduled to be completed by Christmas and will provide an estimated 60% of the congregation's electricity.

Once installed, the system will be owned and operated by a third party formed by Community Solar Partners (CSP), who will receive the Xcel Rebates, renewable Energy Credits and all of the available tax benefits.

The congregation will purchase the electricity generated from CSP at a guaranteed, locked in rate until the congregation exercises their option to purchase the system. At that time the congregation will own the system outright, receiving free energy for the life of the system.

It isn't just the projected savings on utility bills which is motivating the congregation. "*We see this as part of our calling to be stewards of the resources we have been given*", says Pastor Paul Carlson. "*Caring for creation is central to who we are and who we are called to be. It's the faithful response out of gratitude for the goodness and beauty of Creation.*"

At the same time, the congregation will get satisfaction from reducing its emissions of greenhouse gases contributing to the problem of climate change and knowing that they are helping people who need work but have a difficult time getting it, Carlson says.

Rev. Tina Yankee, Community Pastor for Our Savior's, is also Executive Director of Turnabout, Inc., a non-profit organization which helps former offenders to reintegrate into society by providing job training, placement and support. As part of the deal, Bella Energy has agreed to employ some of Turnabout's clients in the installation of the solar panels.

*“This is a win-win for everyone”, remarks Rev. Yankee. “The church not only gets its solar electricity, it gets to fulfill its mission to help those who have been in prison and other disadvantage populations; Bella Energy gets the revenue from the sale and installation of the solar panels; and the investors get a decent return on their investment while helping to protect the planet.”*

This is not the first effort on the congregation’s part to become more energy efficient. Several years ago, the congregation replaced its aging boiler with a new, high-efficiency system and programmable thermostats, and replaced all the lighting fixtures in the facility with more efficient fixtures and light bulbs. Based on the savings in their utility bills, the congregation figures those investments paid for themselves in about three years.

Our Savior’s, a congregation of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America, has long been known for its commitment to social causes. In 2006, it was featured in an ad campaign by the ELCA with the tag line *“God’s Work, Our Hands”*.

The Turnabout program which Rev. Yankee runs was housed at the congregation for 10 years, until it outgrew the facility and move a year ago. The congregation also hosts St. Luke’s Ministry, a training program for Certified Nursing Assistants; the CHARG Resource Center’s daily drop-in center for persons with severe and persistent mental illness, and is a host site for the Interfaith Hospitality Network, providing housing, meals, and hospitality for homeless families a week at a time, four times per year.

According to Pastor Carlson, the congregation hopes that this arrangement can become a model for other congregations interested in “greening” their operations. In addition to the environmental benefits, with over 2500 religious buildings in Colorado, the value of such investments providing economic stimulation and creating much needed jobs for the unemployed is huge, Rev. Yankee notes.

Rev. Nelson Bock, a member of the congregation, is also Director of Outreach and Advocacy for Colorado Interfaith Power and Light, an organization which works with faith communities to help them be better stewards of creation, and which helped facilitate the congregation’s connection with Bella Energy. *“Communities of faith can and should be playing a lead role in modeling better energy stewardship and fighting climate change”, says Bock. “It’s part of their spiritual foundation, and they are already organized to do it. It’s just a matter of providing them the tools they need, and that’s what this partnership is all about.”*