

Carbon Reduction Campaign: Success Story – Lawrence Avenue United Methodist Church Combining Environmental Stewardship and Financial Stewardship: A Perfect Marriage!

Lawrence Avenue United Methodist Church in Charlotte Michigan has reduced over 9,064 lbs of carbon through the Carbon Reduction Campaign. A congregation of 400, they have replaced 25 Incandescent light bulbs with Compact Florescent bulbs, and installed 5 LED exit signs which will save the congregation approximately \$360.00 per year. In addition, Lawrence Avenue UMC has installed 70 energy-efficient Replacement windows, added weather-stripping to all exterior and interior doors, insulated steam pipes, and installed a timer on the restroom lights.

Lawrence Avenue UMC was inspired to reduce their carbon footprint after two very passionate groups within the congregation came together to share ideas and resources. One group had a strong desire to be better stewards of God's creation and wanted to save the environment for future generations. Another group was passionate about being wise stewards of the church's financial resources. According to Rev. Karen Wheat, the groups' union was "a perfect marriage." She explains, "The cost-cutters were open to learning more about going green and the environmentalists learned more about the financial workings of the church. It brought together two groups that really had never worked in tandem before."



This partnership led to the congregation's first project, replacing all non-stain glass windows with energy efficient windows. Members from each group worked together to present the environmental and financial stewardship benefits of the project. "The results have been fabulous," Rev. Wheat reports. "Our utility bill went down \$1000 for the month of February (first full month the windows and some of the other things have been in place) in comparison to that same month last year. Also, the old, drafty building is just plain warmer with the additional steps taken to utilize the resources more efficiently."

Rev. Wheat's advice to congregations interested in reducing their own carbon footprint is to "Get the money people and the environment people together and let them see how this can be a win/win situation for both of them. And then let them talk it up. A year ago no one talked "green" very much at church. Now it is a priority for just about everyone. Even the children are involved and remembering to turn off lights and keep doors closed." Caring for God's Creation is now part of the congregation's everyday practice.

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