

Small Steps: Big Savings

Covenant Community Church's Journey to becoming a Green Church

Covenant Community Church, a congregation in Louisville, KY shares space with James Lee's Memorial Presbyterian Church. This alone is a green act because the impacts on God's Creation from sharing one building are far less, than constructing two separate church facilities. However, some members of Covenant Community Church wanted to go even farther. They formed an intentional church community called cosmos, with the shared vision of making Care for Creation a congregational priority.

They started small, focusing on their efforts on educating other members of the congregation on the care of God's Creation and starting a community garden. After an unusually cold winter, that cost the congregation nearly \$3,000 in heating costs, they decided it was high time to have an energy audit.

After getting the audit, they need to raise money in order to implement the recommended changes. They applied for and received grants from the federal government and the Presbyterian Church USA. They also encouraged members of the congregation to donate money to pay for more efficient light bulbs. Cosmos member Mark Dutrow said, "We threw a party for members who donated \$40.00 – the cost of replacing T 12 fluorescent light fixtures with T 8 fixtures." \$40.00 may seem like a lot for a light bulb, but according to Mark, "The T 12s use approximately 37 watts and the T 8's use only 29 watts. Once you multiply that out over an entire three story facility it adds up. A rough estimate of the savings is about \$22 per hour for all the lights or \$0.56 per fixture per hour." At that rate of savings, **each light bulb pays for itself in just three days!**

Covenant Community Church also weatherized their building. They put plastic over the window's in the winter, and leave them open in the summer to cut back on heating and cooling costs. They also insulated their pipes and taught members how to light the gas heater, so that it was only used when needed.

They used savings to fund renovations to the bathrooms, making the church building even more green. They painted the bathrooms with low voc paint, and installed occupancy sensors and energy efficient light fixtures. Their next step will be to install a digital thermostat to prevent the building from being heated or cooled when no one is there.