

Press Release

For Immediate Release

CHURCH ENERGIZED BY CLEAN, RENEWABLE ELECTRIC POWER

(October 17, 2005) – There’s no green glow as you drive past the Unitarian Universalist Church on North Avenue in Brookfield this fall, but perhaps there should be. As of October 9th they became the first Church in southeastern Wisconsin to begin purchasing 100% “green power” from the We Energies “Energy for Tomorrow” renewable energy program.

Why would a church take such action? “Because we value the earth,” says the Rev. Suzelle Lynch. “Unitarian Universalists hold high the principle that all of life is connected in one interdependent web, and we work to live this principle.” The decision to use electric power from renewable power sources was applauded by the congregation. “We know other churches share these earth ministry values,” says Lynch, “The religious community knows how beautiful and sacred our planet is, and that we can make a difference. We hope all religious congregations and organizations are considering this type of response to global warming, pollution and future fossil fuel supply limitations.”

At Unitarian Universalist Church West, the lights look the same. The heating and air conditioning still operate in the same way. The electric bill is estimated to be a little higher, approximately \$900 per year, but sometimes a real change isn’t clearly visible to our eyes. It becomes evident in behavior and in spirit.

In 2004 the church became accredited as a “Green Sanctuary” congregation because of a demonstrated commitment to earth care education and environmental action in worship, child and adult programming, and in the wider community. “Purchasing ‘green’ power is just another step toward making our Church a model of sustainable living and spiritual connectedness to the earth,” says Amy Taivalkoski, Chair of the church’s Green Sanctuary Committee. “We call it putting your money behind your principles. Our members feel good that when a light goes on here, or a refrigerator door is opened, that no fossil fuels will be used and no greenhouse gases released into the atmosphere.”

A four-year church lighting efficiency program preceded the decision to purchase electric power generated by renewable sources. The efficiency gain from that program is now estimated to amount to \$550 per year.

Michael Vickerman, Executive Director of a renewable energy advocacy organization, RENEW Wisconsin, compliments the church’s action. “A sustainable energy future begins with personal decisions that break with business as usual, which in turn can inspire others to do the same. In becoming an “Energy for Tomorrow” customer, this congregation is, through its own house of worship, staking a claim in a sustainable energy future, which we hope will set off a chain reaction with other congregations. RENEW applauds the church’s strong environmental ethic, and commends the congregation for taking action on it to bring about positive social change.”

Lynch invites people to come and experience the spirit of this energizing decision. “The church may look no different,” she says, “But you can feel the earth-honoring energy of this congregation in every room and see it in every face.”

Additional Background:

Unitarian Universalist Church West is located at 13001 West North Avenue in Brookfield. Unitarian Universalism is a liberal faith that encourages us to deepen our religious understanding and spiritual practices with all the powers of heart and mind. Unitarian Universalists also believe it is important to take our values into the world through social action and community service. The Church website is www.uucw.org.

Energy For Tomorrow, is a program offered by We Energies, the electric utility serving southeast Wisconsin, that allows customers to purchase electrical energy generated from renewable power sources. Customers can purchase a portion or all of their power under this program, for a small premium over the normal electric rate. Renewable energy power purchases serve to stimulate the renewable energy market development. The We Energies “Energy For Tomorrow” website is <http://we-energies.com/residential/acctoptions/eft.htm>

RENEW Wisconsin is an independent, nonprofit organization that acts as a catalyst to advance a sustainable energy future through public policy and private sector initiatives. Operating through a network of clean energy businesses, educators, utility managers, builders, farmers, state agency officials, environmental advocates, and concerned citizens, its mission is to promote clean energy strategies--conservation and energy efficiency, renewable energy, and low-emission distributed generation--for powering the state's economy in an environmentally sound manner. Visit RENEW at <http://www.renewwisconsin.org>.

The “Green Sanctuary” Program is a growing program in Unitarian Universalist congregations to encourage an ethic of sustainable living. The program goals are: (1) To develop awareness of societal environmental issues, (2) To generate commitment for personal lifestyle changes, (3) To motivate community action on environmental issues, (4) To build a connection between spiritual practice and environmental consciousness and (5) To build awareness of and rectify environmental injustices. For more information <http://uuministryforearth.org/gspoverview.html>

The Wind Power Community Education Group is a volunteer group providing presentations on Wind Power in Wisconsin. This group grew out of the “Green Sanctuary” program, but has expanded and is now operating as a subgroup of RENEW Wisconsin. Over 40 presentations have been made to service organizations, Church groups, libraries and environmental organizations in southeast Wisconsin since 2004.