Here’s a simple thing you can do that I learned when I was building chair at Church of the Advent, Walnut Hills: Record and graph your monthly gas usage and costs over the past year (or better, two years). If you have more than one account or meter (many houses of worship do), do it for each of them. Look at how the gas consumption goes from high levels in the winter to near zero in the summer. Then look at your gas costs. Do the up and down patterns match? Chances are, they do not. If you are on even billing, make sure you’re using the monthly accrued costs and not the even billing amount. While they’ll go down in the summer, they probably won’t go down to zero. That’s because most utilities charge a hefty minimum fee for gas, whether you’re using any or not. Depending on the type of rate structure you are on, it could be as much as $300 a month, as it was at Advent! What can you do about it? You can ask the utility to shut off the meter at the start of summer and restart it in the fall. The $20 service fee for this is worth the 4 months savings of gas company minimum charges. Before asking the gas company to shut off your meter, check for other appliances that may run off that meter, such as the hot water heater, stove, etc. We were lucky at Advent. The hot water heater was on separate meter from the furnace, so we could turn off the meter to the furnace and save about $1000 a year! This is a great way to gain some credibility with your governing board, who are usually more interested in money than carbon footprint.
It's one thing to talk about protecting the earth and sustainability. It takes a plan to act on those values and bring them to reality. We have a plan and we have acted. With our funds, we have installed new energy efficient windows in the tower, education wing and office building. Also, new high-efficiency heat-pump (heating and cooling) systems have been installed in the office and education wings.

While not part of our campaign, as part of our Earth Care pledge, we installed solar panels on the roofs of our sanctuary and other parts of our facility. The result is a 63 kilowatt photovoltaic solar power system and an engineering wonder. The system yielded a surplus of power over several months last summer and is producing at least a third of our energy needs in the winter. In the year since implementation, MAPC has generated 61.1 megawatt hours of solar energy, saving 105,000 pounds of CO2. For perspective, that is the equivalent of planting 798 trees. This has cut our electrical demand from the grid by 63 percent, from 118,000 kilowatt hours to about 43,000 KWH.

Funds for the solar system, at $150,000, came from a special loan through the Presbyterian Church USA. It will be paid off soon with a bequest from the estate of Jan Gallagher, who left an incredible unrestricted legacy to us. Jan, who died in 2020, was a Presbyterian minister, long-time Mt. Auburn attendee and member of our choir. Session approved a portion of Jan's bequest to pay off the loan.
Many thanks to John Hancock and Eric Burgmann, who brought and continue to bring their planning, design, architecture, and engineering skills and patience to our historic building and these environmentally sound and sustainable projects.

Our Earth Care team will continue to work with our committees and develop action plans for our congregation to do better and live more responsibly. If you want to join this team or have ideas for projects, contact Pat Timm at pztimm@me.com. If you want to learn more about what it means to be an earth care congregation, go to https://presbyearthcare.org/resources/pcusaprograms/.
We are pleased to announce that St. Simon of Cyrene Episcopal Church, Lincoln Heights, has been awarded a grant for $19,096, half the cost of a 15 kW solar system. The grant was received from BQuest Foundation through the Solar Moonshot Program administered by Hammond Climate Solutions of San Diego, CA. Grants up to $25,000 are typically awarded, with grant amounts dependent on various factors, including the organization’s need for funding. Grant priority is given to solar projects that have additional funding sources and community support.

This funding, together with matching funds from St. Simon’s will permit the installation of the system on one of the roof areas of the church. The system is expected to produce 75% to 90% of the electricity used by the church, its office, and parish hall. It will reduce our annual utility costs and allow us to apply those savings to community aid projects.

We have contracted with Solar Power & Light of Miamisburg for the work and anticipate its installation sometime in May this year. We believe this will be one of the first such installations at a church in the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Ohio.