



PAX CHRISTI CATHOLIC COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP IN COMMUNITY SOLAR

Goal: Provide community access to clean energy.

Results: Pax Christi's rooftop solar garden will cover 20% of the church's electricity use and provide community solar garden subscriptions to over 25 community members.

Hosting a Community Solar Garden

At Pax Christi Catholic Community, solar energy is now a community effort. Ken Reineccius, the congregation's Director of Operations, has long explored solar energy options for the church building because the facility was built with a solar-ready roof. However, until recently, solar has not been financially feasible for the congregation. Solar panel prices may have dropped dramatically through the decades, but solar tax incentives have never been available for tax-exempt organizations. After community solar legislation passed in Minnesota in 2013, a solar project for the facility became possible. This legislation improved the feasibility for a rooftop array at the church facility by changing how solar can be financed and installed. With installation starting in spring 2018, Pax Christi will host Eden Prairie's first community solar garden, which will be subscribed to by both the church itself, as well as community members.

Providing Solar for All

According to Ken Reineccius, support for solar "has been nearly unanimous in our congregation," and one of the most valued aspects of the project was its community element. The church sought to develop an array whose benefits could be shared among the church, its congregants, and other community members. The church wanted the array to benefit everyone, even those who were otherwise unable to invest in solar — either for financial reasons, because they don't own their home, or because they don't have a solar-suitable roof. To manage the project's subscriptions, Pax Christi chose consultant Minnesota Interfaith Power and Light, a group who partners with faith communities on climate change issues. By November 2017, the array was almost fully subscribed — anchored by dedicated Pax Christi parishioners.

Pax Christi will subscribe to 40% of the output of the solar array to cover building operations.

The other 60% of the array will be subscribed to by around 25 community members, with Pax Christi congregants and income-qualified Eden Prairie residents receiving first priority.

Community Empowerment

Twin Cities-based Cooperative Energy Futures will develop and maintain the solar garden. The company focuses on serving communities — by geography, culture, or faith — who wish to develop community solar gardens. Its primary goal is “to empower communities as members of a shared clean energy enterprise, and design projects that help them achieve their goals and visions.” Cooperative Energy Futures supports communities as a project developer and long-term facilities manager for projects that are owned and controlled by the subscribers.

“For us, what’s important is being a good example to the rest of the community, about what can be done to protect the environment.”

*-Ken Reineccius
Director of Operations*

Financial and Environmental Benefits

The church itself will subscribe to 40% of the array’s output, covering up to 20% of the facility’s energy usage. This initial investment is expected to result in an 8% return on investment over the 25 years of the garden’s contract.

For the Pax Christi Catholic Community, these financial savings are important, but they’re not the only motivation behind taking action. “Another great benefit for us is that we are living out Catholic social teachings in caring for the environment, in reducing our carbon footprint, and in promoting clean energy and renewable resources,” emphasizes Ken. “For us, what’s important is being a good example to the rest of the community, about what can be done to protect the environment.”

Learn more about solar energy options available by visiting
xcelenergy.com/Solar

