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Going Solar: A New Venture at FRC

If you attended the January 28, 2024 FRC Congregational Meeting, you heard the exciting news of a new fund being established at FRC thanks to a generous donation. Through Consistory's discernment and with the approval of the gift givers, the fund was named the "Open Doors Gift".

In discernment, Consistory narrowed down two potential paths for use of this gift and appointed task forces to explore each option. Consistory now has the joy to share that through prayer, discernment, and research, they have determined to use some of the "Open Doors Gift" to help FRC "Go Solar!"

FRC's Consistory firmly believes "Going Solar" will help FRC:

- 1) Be faithful and diligent stewards of God's creation.
- 2) Be faithful and diligent stewards of our church's finances and congregational giving.
- 3) Allow us to maximize our congregation's giving for use in mission rather than building needs.

We welcome the congregation to get involved. There are four ways that you can join us:

- First, and most importantly, pray for us as a church in this exciting new season!
- Second, join us for our summer sermon series on "God's Cathedral: Encountering the Spirit in Creation" from July 7th - August 18th.
- Third, join a small group study on "Keeping Creation" meeting on Sunday evenings from 7-8pm July 21 and 28, August 11, 18, and 25 and led by Pastor Dave.
- Fourth, join us financially in giving toward this project.

Do you want to join us financially in supporting this project? The project is fully funded by the "Open Doors Gift". But, as one Consistory member said in a recent meeting, *"I want to be a part of this! I'm so proud our church is taking this big step!"* Any amount raised will allow the "Open Doors Gift" to multiply for use in other areas in the future. Will you prayerfully discern if the Spirit is calling you to partner in this solar project? If you would like to give toward the "Going Solar" project at FRC, you can either give on our website or write a check with "Open Doors Gift" in the memo line.

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More details will come in the future about a “celebration date” when the solar panels are installed and dedicated. At that time, a plaque will be installed in honor of “Sally E. Siscoe” in whose memory the “Open Doors Gift” was given.

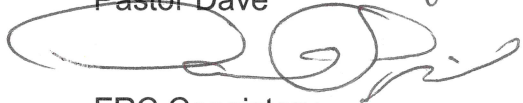
Join us in rejoicing in God’s goodness in this season in our church. From the beginning of the creation story, God gave humanity the mandate to care for and steward God’s glorious creation. ¹ Join us in this season of thanksgiving to God:

*“You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things, and by your will they were created and have their being.”
– Revelations 4:11, NIV*

With gratitude to God,
Pastor Stacey

Rev. Stacey Doensing Pearce

Pastor Dave



FRC Consistory

¹ Genesis 1: 26-28

Questions & Answers about FRC “Going Solar”

Where will the panels be located?

GeoScape Solar provided plans for the panels to be located primarily on the south side of Friendship Hall (facing the parking lot) and a very small array of panels to be on the East-facing part of Friendship Hall (facing Newark Pompton Turnpike).



Which buildings will the panels provide energy for?

The panels will cover 84% of energy usage in the Sanctuary, Ministry Center, Friendship Hall, and the Friendly Manse. According to the projections of GeoScape Solar, it would not be worth investment to set up solar energy to run to either Grace Manse or Grace Chapel.

When will the panels be installed?

The timing of when the panels will be installed and ready for operation is uncertain due to how long it takes to get the proper permits. But we hope the panels will be installed by the end of the summer or early fall.

What’s the breakdown of the cost of the panels?

The total cost for our solar array FRC through GeoScape Solar is \$179,000. With the 30% federal rebate, the cost would be brought down to \$125,300. Adding an additional \$12,000 for a needed electric improvement in Friendship Hall, that brings the bottom-line cost of solar panels at FRC to \$137,300. The really good news is the current balance of the “Open Doors Gift” covers the cost of this project and leaves some funds for projects in the future.

How will FRC invest the savings from “Going Solar”?

- The yearly \$10,000-\$12,000 saving in utilities will be redirected to the Capital Improvement Fund

- The SRECS Savings of \$8,000-\$9,000 a year (for a 15-year period) would be distributed as follows:
 - 10% to Mission
 - 25% to Emerging FRC Goals
 - 25% to Capital Improvement
 - 40% to a Solar Maintenance Fund (which would fund future panels after our array would need replacing in 50 years)

You might be wondering why so much of the solar savings is being allocated to “Capital Improvement”. Here’s more information: For years, Consistory has discussed pathways to adequately fund Capital Improvements for progressive upkeep on our large campus. The Property Team estimates \$45,000 is needed yearly for proactive maintenance, an amount not fully reflected in the church budget. With the savings projected in the plan to “Go Solar” Consistory determined part of the savings can go to plugging this gap.

You also might be wondering what is meant by “Emerging FRC Goals” in the lineup of where the savings will be spent. FRC Consistory is actively working on discerning church-wide goals for the next three years (re-visit May-June’s Go Forth to learn more and hear how you can add your voice to this discussion). Consistory hopes to finalize these goals soon and the savings from solar will help provide funding to some of these areas.

What are the guidelines for how the “Open Doors Gift” is used?

Consistory voted to designate the use of the “Open Doors Gift” as follows:

“The purpose of this gift is to be used for projects in First Reformed Church’s building, grounds, or ministry to further the church’s mission of being a place of & “Open Doors, Open Hearts, Open Hands.” Consistory designates this gift for the purpose of projects of a visionary nature that cannot be funded within the church’s operating budget. This gift should not be used for basic “Capital Improvements” but for specific building improvements or ministry opportunities that help with the mission of FRC being a place of “Open doors, Open Hearts, Open Hands.” All withdrawals from the gift should be approved by Consistory after significant discernment and prayer.”

How will the excess of the “Open Doors Gift” be used?

The Solar Panels are completely funded by the “Open Doors Gift”. Thanks be to God!! Consistory trusts and prays that the remaining funds in the “Open Doors Gift” will be used for other meaningful projects. For instance, part of the “Open Doors Gift” was used this past year for our church to give toward flood relief, purchasing shop vacs and sump pumps to loan out to the community.