

Catholic Church in Louisville KY Decides to Go Solar for Stewardship

By the end of March, St. Williams Catholic Church in West Louisville will be the first church in Kentucky to have solar panels installed on its rooftop. This Catholic Church is embedded in history and tradition. Founded in 1901, the parish is located at 13th and Oak in a 107 year old building. Beginning in the 1960's, St. Williams (stwilliamchurch.org) made social issues its main mission and has been actively involved with the community. In the past, they have played an instrumental role in starting several local ministries, including the popular non-profit trade store, Just Creation.

Lately, parishioners have focused time and energy on environmental stewardship. The church has improved the energy efficiency of its old building by sealing air leaks, installing programmable thermostats and replacing regular light bulbs with compact fluorescent ones. Now, the parish will be taking it one giant step further by adding solar panels to its rooftop. The dedicated members donated half of the cost for the solar system. St. Williams contributed the remaining half.

KY Interfaith Power and Light (KIPL), nonprofit agency, will help install and maintain the panels. This group was formed in 2007 to help faith-based communities in Kentucky work on environmental conservation. KIPL (www.kentuckyipl.org) wants to “mobilize a religious response to global warming through conservation, efficiency and alternative energy”.

SunWind Power Systems (sunwindpowerinc.com) is supplying the panels and donating time to help direct and assist parishioners who will be performing the task while Thompson Electric will be wiring the system. This solar system is to be a 15 panel, 3kW array and will be grid-tied with Louisville Gas and Electric (LG&E). Due to a net-metering agreement established with LG&E, the excess energy generated will be credited to St. William's utility account.

The parishioners at St. Williams are thinking long-term in regards to going solar. The solar system should pay for itself in less than 20 years and it has a life expectancy of 25-40 years. It is anticipated to generate 30% of the church's electrical requirements, lower the electric bill by an average of 10%, and more importantly, reduce emission of 8000 lbs of coal annually. SunWind Power is proud to be a part of this project and commend the St. Williams for their leadership in environmental awareness and action.