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## Edgewood Solar Celebration Set for March 19, 2017 <sup>[1]</sup>

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**By:**

Jim Detjen



*Above: worker installs solar panels.*

Edgewood United Church in East Lansing will celebrate becoming the first church in Mid-Michigan to "go solar" with a dedication ceremony following the worship service at 11:30 a.m. on Sunday, March 19.

The church installed 70 solar panels on the roof of its social hall last November. The system was inspected in February and then connected to the Lansing Board of Water and Light's (LBWL) electrical system on Feb. 10.

"I am incredibly moved by the generosity and support that Edgewood gave to this initiative. It takes deep faith to invest in a project that serves the future of our planet and our children," said

Liz Miller, Edgewood's pastor. "Our hope is that other congregations in the community will follow our leadership and work to implement more renewable energy sources like solar panels."

The 20-kilowatt system was designed and installed by Peninsula Solar, a Michigan engineering company. Edgewood is the first house of worship in the greater Lansing area and one of the first in Michigan to install a solar electricity system.

Edgewood, which has a long tradition of being an advocate for social justice, decided to install the solar panels as a way to reduce its reliance on fossil fuels and lower its environmental footprint. The church is located at 469 N. Hagadorn Road.

The solar panels are expected to prevent about 15 tons of carbon dioxide pollution from going into the air each year. This is the equivalent of planting 40 acres of trees or taking 86 cars off the road. The system is expected to reduce the size of the church's electric bills by about 35 percent.



The environmental task force began studying the feasibility of this project in the fall of 2013. After extensive study, the church's governance council approved the installation in December 2015. The congregation unanimously voted to move forward in February 2016 and last May a \$70,000 fundraising campaign was begun.

More than 90 families in the congregation contributed to the campaign. In August a contract was signed with Peninsula Solar. The firm worked closely with Edgewood's roofer to make sure that the solar panels will not cause the roof to leak.

A major goal in installing the panels is to reduce the church's impact on the environment. Since the panels will generate about 35 percent of the church's electricity, that means that this energy will no longer come from LBWL, which makes much of its electricity from burning coal.

Burning coal contributes to the buildup of carbon dioxide in the atmosphere, which causes global

warming and climate change. The people most affected by climate change are minorities, the poor, the elderly and vulnerable people living in developing nations.

Since 1900 the temperature of the Earth's atmosphere has increased 1.5 degrees and 2016 was the warmest year in the historical record. Sea levels have risen eight inches during the past century and this rise is accelerating. Rainfall patterns are changing worldwide, the oceans are becoming more acidic and the loss of endangered plants and animals are increasing.

*Jim Detjen is the Knight Professor of Environmental Journalism Emeritus at Michigan State University. He is a member of Edgewood United Church and the vice president of Michigan Interfaith Power and Light, a nonprofit organization that promotes renewable energy, energy efficiency and a healthy environment.*

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