

Resurrection Lutheran gets into hot water

In November 2006, Faith in Place, a Chicago-based nonprofit, helped Resurrection Lutheran (3309 N. Seminary Ave., Chicago, IL 60657) become the first church in Chicago to install a solar hot water system. In another first, Bishop Paul R. Landahl of the Metropolitan Chicago Synod blessed the panels during the church's Nov. 19, 2006, service.

The solar thermal system pre-heats water with the sun instead of natural gas. It ties into the existing water heater to provide hot water year-round to the preschool and after-school programs at the Lakeview neighborhood church.

"We're excited that Resurrection Lutheran is the first church in Chicago to go solar—and we hope it will be the first of many," said Sara Spoonheim of Faith in Place and a member of Resurrection. "Global warming harms the poorest people of the earth first and foremost. If we love our neighbors, we need to conserve energy and switch to clean energy whenever we can."

Faith in Place helped the church secure more than half the \$11,300 project costs through a State of Illinois rebate and a grant from the Illinois Clean Energy Community Foundation.

"We expect to save 70 percent of our annual water-heating expense and to pay off our investment of \$5,100 in four to six years," said Brian Hiortdahl, pastor of Resurrection. "More importantly, we will do our part to reduce global warming, conserve energy and take care of God's good creation."

Since 1999 Faith in Place has helped more than 200 Illinois congregations become good stewards of the earth. As part of the national



Jay Weaver and Sara Spoonheim from Resurrection Lutheran Church, Chicago, show a solar panel with Bishop Paul R. Landahl.

Interfaith Power & Light campaign, it educates congregations—including Roman Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Baha'i, Zoroastrian, and Unitarian—to conserve energy, switch to clean energy and support wise energy policy. This fall they sponsored pre-release screenings of *An Inconvenient Truth*, a documentary about global warming, at 144 congregations across Illinois. They also signed up 14 congregations to purchase wind energy and helped others explore geothermal heating systems.

The church's contractor, Solar Service Inc., has installed thousands of systems in Illinois in the past 30 years. The systems make sense for congregations that host soup kitchens, homeless shelters or after-school programs. They also make sense for homes and can provide heat by tying into existing forced air furnaces or

radiant floors, say the project leaders.

"In Psalm 113 it says, 'From the rising of the sun to its setting, the name of the Lord is to be praised,'" Hiortdahl said. "Having these panels on the roof will be a good reminder."

To learn more about Faith in Place's events or to find out about their work on sustainable farming (featured in *The Lutheran* November 2006, "Bread Rising: Environmentalists mixes faith with organic flour"), visit www.faithinplace.org

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