

Energy conservation: Good for the soul and the budget

How energy efficiency practices and programs are generating revenue for churches.

A church is intended to be a house of worship and place of comfort, but in many aspects, it must be run as a business. In order to provide services for parishioners, funds for ministry and pay operating expenses, the budget must be properly managed. Today, nearly every organization is facing the challenge of meeting operational, personnel and financial demands.

ally, the church is already seeing the impact on its budget and 47-acre campus. Energy consumption has been reduced more than 30 percent and more significantly, the church has the potential to generate nearly \$800,000 from energy savings over the next 15 years.

“After the initial review, it was predicted our church would save between 26 to 34 percent on our current electric bills,” says Senior Pastor Gregg Simmons, noting the 50,000-square-foot church will achieve these savings as a result of air conditioning and heating improvements, upgraded electric meters, and better temperature controls in multiple locations. “The best news is that it cost us nothing, since all of our fees are paid out of our energy savings,” he says.

Customized energy plan

Through a systematic analysis of energy usage, operational equipment and occupant behavior, churches can obtain a customized energy plan that addresses both short-term needs and long-term goals. Regardless of size or age of a facility, comprehensive or individual energy conservation measures can be implemented in most churches that will improve comfort and decrease energy usage:

- HVAC mechanical equipment
- Temperature controls
- Building automation systems
- Electrical service
- Lighting retrofit
- Repair and upgrade
- Energy efficiency training

Most significantly, projects are a positive cash flow from the start and there are no up front costs or lease-purchase/loan to repay.

In today’s tight economy, generating revenue to meet critical needs is top-of-mind for every organization. Doesn’t it make complete sense that reducing energy expenses can increase your church’s coffers? By implementing the same energy efficiency technology and techniques commonly used in commercial buildings and university campuses, churches can also benefit from these proven energy conservation measures, energy education training and most importantly, track the energy savings dollars.

This appealed to White’s Chapel United >>



Church of the Cross, top, and White’s Chapel United Methodist Church, above.

For many churches, a new revenue source exists right inside the building. By implementing a proactive energy efficiency plan, combined with energy education training, churches can yield surplus funds, obtain needed facility improvements and have a positive environmental impact.

Church of the Cross in Grapevine, TX, is a testament to this claim. Having signed a three-year energy savings contract in May 2009, estimated to save \$32,800 annu-

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Methodist Church in Southlake, TX, which encompasses 125,000 square feet and multiple buildings. The three-year agreement estimates the church will save \$82,180 annually through the implementation of a customized energy plan, select building improvements and ongoing energy education training for the staff. Projected savings over a 15-year period is about \$1,915,000.

Before embarking on an energy conservation program or securing a consultant, it is important to answer several path-defining questions:

1. What are your critical objectives?
2. Will this help or hurt those objectives?
3. Why do you want to save costs?
4. What are you willing to sacrifice? Never sacrifice your key objectives.

Become a better energy steward

Savvy church leaders and administrators are looking for new, non-traditional ways to “see green and be green.” With rising energy costs, aging facilities and outdated equipment, the opportunities to save energy and money are abundant. However, the ability to divert energy dollars from being paid to the utility and back into your budget is rare. It not only involves the technical knowledge of buildings, mechanical systems, electrical systems, controls and energy rates, but a deep understanding of people and how to develop and coach them effectively for change.

Energy conservation and energy savings go hand-in-hand. Reducing operational costs and lowering utility expenses are often overlooked and underestimated ways to recoup budget funds and spend on more important needs. CE

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