



# A WAKENING

News from the Green Awakening Network

Fall - 2013

The Green Awakening Network – A network of individuals and faith communities committed to an effective response to the challenge of climate change

## Keswick United Church First to Use SELF fund to Install Solar Panels

On June 23<sup>rd</sup>, the switch was flipped at Keswick United Church, bringing 40 solar panels online. The mood was celebratory. Keswick is excited to be the first United Church congregation to use the Toronto United Church Council's Sustainable Energy Loan Fund (SELF) to install solar panels on their building. The fund, a partnership between Council and Toronto Conference, provides low-interest funding for energy efficiency and renewable energy projects.

Back in September 2011, Keswick's minister, the Rev. Marg Smith, first brought to her church council a proposal to assess the church's potential for supporting a solar installation. Already motivated by a strong desire to live responsibly and

care for God's creation, interest in a solar system at Keswick continued to grow as people heard stories of successful projects in other congregations. The timing of the proposal was opportune, since Keswick's Christian Education wing had been recently reroofed. The SELF program had also come available, allowing solar and other energy efficiency projects to be installed with 100% financing, at a 0% interest rate for the first 5 years, and 1% in subsequent years. In view of the potential, Keswick's board approved \$150 towards an assessment of the potential for a solar installation on their building.

When the solar assessment by Windfall Ecology Centre—the eventual supplier of the system—confirmed that the roof would be an excellent location for an installation, Keswick began the various application processes required. This included the province of Ontario's MicroFIT program and a loan application to Toronto United Church Council's SELF program.

There was considerable support from the congregation through the process. Particular recognition must be given to Stan Armstrong, a dedicated member who oversaw many of the details of the project, and kept it moving successfully forward.

As with any major project, Keswick's congregation

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*As Stan Armstrong and Rev. Marg Smith of Keswick United Church ceremonially flip the switch, the church becomes the first in town to go solar.*

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had to overcome some challenges during the 2 year process. “Expect delays,” Rev. Smith, advises congregations undertaking similar work. “First, the roof needed increased supports put in to bear the weight of the panels, and then we had to wait 3 to 4 months for the microFIT contract because the government was adjusting its Feed-In Tariff.”

However there are friends to help. “TUCC were very supportive throughout the whole project,” said Rev. Smith. “When there was difficulty with the trustee’s title at the land registry office, I spoke to TUCC staff person, Ron Ewart, and he was able to provide a helpful example from another congregation suggesting how to resolve the problem.”

A meter by the front door displays what this installation is all about. Only 6 days after the 40 panels were connected, 312 kWh of green energy had been produced. In the first month the system met the 1,221 kWh monthly target. Better still, this means a regular supply of renewable energy is being supplied to the local grid with no greenhouse gas emissions.

There are other successes to report. The panels have already sparked conversation amongst members of the community. Interest has been generated in the installation and the church has used this opportunity to explain its passion for creation care.

“I am excited that Keswick could act as a trailblazer,” says Rev. Smith, “I hope the solar panels become a beacon to the community, inspiring others to action.”

***Thank you to Rev. Marg Smith for her contribution to this article.***

*Keswick United Church is located in Georgina Ontario, and is part of the Living Waters Presbytery of The United Church of Canada. Their solar array was installed under the OPA 2.0 microFIT program. On August 26th, 2013, the 3.0 program was introduced, with new tariffs. Visit the OPA website (see right for full details).*

## Check Out these Online Resources

- [Sustainable Energy Loan Fund](#) brochure
- Learn more about the [OPA microFIT](#) program
- Visit the [GAN resource site's](#) solar page and [GSS solar initiative](#) for more solar stories
- If you are just learning about green building design and energy systems, we recommend that you and your green team/building managers browse the [Faith in the Common Good](#) website

## Solar Panel Projects Proliferate

Solar panels are being installed on multiple churches this year. In addition to the project at Keswick, Green Awakening Network (GAN) would like to recognize the new solar panel installations at:

- Palgrave United Church, Caledon
- St. John’s United Church, Elmsvale
- Humber Valley United Church, Toronto

Solar projects are proposed at:

- Trinity United Church, Acton
- St. Matthew’s United Church, Richmond Hill

These join other GAN related United Church solar projects at:

- Beach United Church, Toronto
- Dublin Street United Church, Guelph
- First United Church, Owen Sound
- Islington United Church, Etobicoke
- St. John’s United Church, Alliston

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# Want Less, Hope More:

## A Reflection on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm

“The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.”

When was the last time you did not want? Most of us find ourselves wanting everyday, and not out of genuine need but a desire to have. We feel an emptiness in our lives and fill it with stuff. We have been conditioned to do this by daily advertising, which claims we can be happy, successful and fulfilled if we just buy more. The problem is, we listen.

And we want.

And we want.

And the kids want.

Soon we begin to confuse want with need. We begin to believe that we deserve what we want, that we are entitled to it.

And we overlook what we waste.

And we overlook how our lifestyles contribute to the injustice, to the wars, to the raping of the earth.

Because we want.

Why do we live our lives this way?

Why do we want, when we live in one of the richest countries in the world and, let's be honest, our needs are being met? Because we are afraid, as we are told to be. It is not easy for us to resist all of the voices that seek to heighten our sense of dissatisfaction with the gifts we have from God: life itself, community with all creation, the capacity to feed and shelter and cherish each being in community. We are bombarded with messages that none of that is enough. We should be afraid, we are told, of all of the real or imagined things that might happen to us, to our families, to our world. And getting more stuff will help.

I will fear no evil.

What do you fear?

And what could you buy or consume that would alleviate your fear?

Not a lot.

Much of what we need to feel less fearful, can't be found in packages but can be found in relationship, with our God, with each other, with our planet.

The opposite of fear is hope.

And our whole faith story is one of hope.

There is a different message being played over and above this daily bombardment. Over top of those messages saying things are bleak, the economy failing, we are not good enough, we are under attack ... over all that is the message of our faith. New life will come. No situation is beyond hope. We are beloved. You are forgiven. We are not alone.

These are important messages to remember everyday, as our environmental problems are caused by our perceptions of want and fear. We

consume too much, stripping our planet of resources in unsafe ways,. because we think it will make us happier, richer, better. And we become a self fulfilling prophecy. Because if we don't stop, if we don't reconnect to a better, healthier, saner way of being, we will have many very good reasons to be afraid. And we won't want, we'll

need. We have a choice.

As bleak as it all can seem, there is hope. In Psalm 23 we are shown an alternative way of being, in relationship with God, with each other and with our planet. We are shown an alternative way of being in which we don't want, because we don't need to want; we are content in who we are, content that we are loved and not alone, content in this gift of life that we have been given. We are shown an alternative way of being in which we don't fear because we know we aren't alone; in which we live with respect in creation so creation remains steady and healthy. An alternative in which the abundance that is the earth's can be shared equitably and fairly; our cup can overflow.

It sounds good doesn't it? No want, no fear.

Contentment. Fairness. Freedom.

*(Continued on page 4)*

## ***New Resource for Congregations and Green Teams -***

### ***Living Ecological Justice: A Biblical Response to the Environmental Crisis***



The Green Awakening Network has co-sponsored the publishing of a new book, which has just been released. An ecumenical worship and action guide on creation care, *Living Ecological Justice* is written by a rich diversity of authors on a great variety of topics. It contains chapters on Creation Care, Ecology with Spirituality, and Worship & Action. Each chapter uses a biblical passage as the launch point for reflection and discussion of our relationship with Earth. Educational and worship resources also feature in the book.

If you are interested in copies for individuals or study groups with your congregation, please contact GAN.

Copies are available through GAN for the price of \$10/book + postage. Delivery from early October.

Contact Ali Hayes or Ron Ewart at Toronto United Church Council.

Phone : 905-771-5124 or 1-800-235-8822

***How do we move from the idea of human dominion of the earth to one of creation justice?***

***What does it mean, from an Indigenous and biblical perspective, for God to have a covenant with all of creation?***

***How do we become closer to Christ through a deepening relationship with creation?***

***How can ecological justice become part of our worship services?***

***What will it take for Canadian churches to step up their advocacy efforts in the face of climate change?***

## **A Reflection on the 23<sup>rd</sup> Psalm continued...**

*(Continued from page 3)*

And how do we do it? By making a conscious decision about whose messages we will let dominate our lives. The messages of a God who loves us, who calls us beloved? Or the messages of media and advertising that want us to spend money and want us to feel empty? The messages that we let dominate us are those that we in turn will share with the world. I, for one, want to bring more hope than fear.

The 23<sup>rd</sup> psalm is a call to reconnect with our God who seeks to protect us and guide us. This is a prayer that envisions a new way forward, a better way, in relationship with God and all creation which comes from putting our faith, and not our greed, at the center.

***Rev. Jessica McCrae is a minister Humbercrest United Church, a member of the Green Awakening Network.***

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# Grace Place Community Resource Centre Renovates for Improved Energy Efficiency

Grace United Church, Brampton, is an old building which needed an energy efficiency retrofit in 2010. Its sanctuary was erected in 1867, with additions built in the 1920s and 1960s. “The building was a known energy hog,” in the words of Treasurer Dan Clark. Yet when funds are limited, concerns such as this are difficult to act upon. In December of 2011, Grace United Church undertook a Green Audit to evaluate the situation more quantitatively. The resulting report, in combination with a loan from Toronto United Church Council’s Sustainable Energy Loan Fund (SELF), has facilitated many subsequent renovations and retrofits.

During 2011, Grace Place Community Resource Centre (GPCRC) with financial support from the Region of Peel, began to operate the non-worship space of Grace United Church, as a non-profit organization. GPCRC was founded in 2009 as a hub for community and social services; it now leases the building to 14 community and other non-profit organizations. In the centre’s new incarnation, the main user Regeneration, received funding from several donors to renovate the main floor to better serve the homeless and marginalized in downtown Brampton. To attract more users to the second and third floor, the congregation has funded renovations to make those spaces more functional.

To be more functional for partner organizations and users, the building needed an improved heating system, a more efficient hot water heater, and better insulation. Regeneration required the ability to provide water for hot showers and laundry, as well as comfortable indoor conditions. In addition to insulating the first floor, insulation is currently being put into the walls and ceiling of the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor, and energy efficient lighting is being installed throughout the building. An on-demand gas water heater will be installed which will dramatically decrease energy usage for Regeneration’s breakfast program. The new water heater has an estimated payback period of less than 5 years. During this transformation of the building, many of the Green Audit recommendations were put in place. (See page 7 for more details about Green Audits). For instance, Regeneration considered the audits

recommendation when placing its hot water heaters, in order to minimize the distance which the heater water would travel to the showers and laundry, therefore reducing heat loss through pipes.

The Green Audit report had also suggested several improvements to the building’s old boiler and heat distribution system. Heating problems were so extreme that one tenant ran their air conditioner in the winter to make the room they rented bearable. “I had not expected the congregation to deal with issue for several years because of the expense,” said Mr. Clark. “When the boiler broke in 2012, forcing the issue, having a Green Audit proved very useful. The audit has been a valuable independent assessment, allowing the congregation to evaluate suggestions by contractors.” When undertaking major renovations, tools such as a Green Audit help congregations decide on which option is most practical, in terms of the location of installations and cost savings. Radiators have been cleaned, more sensitive controls installed, and fuel savings are expected. These repairs to the heating system have been made possible by a loan from G.R.A.C.E. Inc. to Grace United Church.

Not every recommendation has been adopted by GPCRC. “Those remaining provide targets and benchmarks for future renovations. The audit has also sparked the formation of a Green Committee at Grace United Church, which is currently collaborating with Evergreen and Credit Valley Conservation to consider ecological landscaping for pollinators through Greening Corporate Grounds,” says treasurer Clark.

***Thank you to Dan Clark, treasurer of Grace United Church, for his contributions to this article.***

*Grace Place Community Resource Centre and Grace Place United Church are located in Brampton, and part of the South West Presbytery.*



## GAN/ GSS Forum 2013: Making the Leap

On March 23, 2013 the Green Awakening Network and Greening Sacred Spaces welcomed 80 attendees to their 5th annual forum at First Unitarian Church, Toronto.

Inspired by the book *The Leap, how to survive and thrive in a radical economy* by Chris Turner, the forum recognised that many faith community members are aware of environmental problems, but need help and information about hopeful alternatives to the status quo.

The morning plenary, featured keynote speaker José Etchverry, professor of environmental studies with York University. Etchverry spoke about the impact renewable energy sources are having around the world, highlighting the success of European programs. He also spoke about the high and hidden costs included each time nuclear power plants are built in Ontario, emphasizing the concern that approving another large project would divert any future significant funding for sustainable energy for years to come.

Afternoon keynote speaker, Stephen Scharper, spoke of the current geologic age as the Anthropocene era because of the dramatic changes to the earth's systems being caused by humans, and invited changes to our behaviour caused by the process of 'falling in love with the earth'.

During lunch, participants shared stories, and were introduced to the Our Horizon gas pump labeling campaign.

Between the plenary sessions, there were workshops. Following lunch, participants broke up into workshops on Eco-Spirituality, Greening Faith Buildings and Building Sustainable Energy in Ontario.

**Plenary talks are available online:**

[José Etchverry](#)

[Stephen Scharper](#)

**More campaign information:**

[Our Horizon](#)

## Creative Financing for Solar Panels

A creative approach to financing has allowed the small congregation of Holy Cross Lutheran Church in Newmarket to install solar panels on its roof, earning income for the congregation as well as providing renewable energy stewardship. The approach is simple; members have shifted the timing of their donation to the church.

One couple examined their giving pattern, and recognized that they were committed to give \$7,000 annually to Holy Cross Lutheran Church. They decided they could make their gift in a lump sum of \$84,000 (the cost of solar panel installation at the time), with the understanding that they would resume donations in 12 years. In their case, the gift was particularly effective because funds withdrawn from stocks are tax free when transferred to a church. Moreover, the full donation was income tax deductible.

The donation (used to pay for the solar installation under microFIT 1.0) will increase income for Holy Cross in the first 12 years by \$3,000/year. After the

initial 12 years, the congregation will gain an additional \$10,000 annually. The bonus: solar energy produces most income in the summer, when congregational givings are typically at their lowest.

The good news for the environment: Over its 25 year lifespan, the installation should produce approximately 300,000kWh of electricity, enough for 32 homes for a year, enough for 32 homes for a year, and reducing the equivalent amount of greenhouse gas emissions as taking 44 cars of the road for the same length of time. The congregation at Holy Cross Lutheran is happy to share its story with curious neighbours and visitors. As Andrew Slonetsky says, "with this creative financing and the microFIT program it is painless to be responsible."

***Thank you to Andrew Slonetsky of Holy Cross Lutheran Church, Newmarket for his contribution to this article.***

*A full description of Holy Cross Lutheran's project is available on the [GAN Resources site](#).*

# Benefits of a Green Audit

Are you or other members of your congregation concerned that the building is not energy efficient? Are you interested in improving how sustainable it is, but do not know where to begin? Many congregations face this challenge when managing their beloved but aging churches. A Green Audit, as offered by Faith and the Common Good's Greening Sacred Spaces program, may be the perfect tool.

A Green Audit helps to focus a congregation's general concern about its building into a set of achievable objectives which can be approached step by step. The audit covers many elements: lighting, heating, insulation, water efficiency, waste diversion, air quality and landscaping, amongst others. The wide scope of the audit helps create a comprehensive picture of possible improvements which will also benefit the environment.

During a Green Audit, a trained, professional Green Auditor will perform a walk-through of your church with a group from your congregation, and in the process helping build a potential 'green team'.

Findings are presented in a written report sent to the congregation within 2 weeks. The goal, in both the walk-through and report is to help the congregation see its building with new eyes.

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## St. Matthew's United Follows the Sun

In the September/October newsletter of St. Matthew's United Church (Richmond Hill), Church treasurer Brian Stanger reported that the congregation will be installing solar panels. Members of St. Matthew's attended a GAN online seminar on the Ontario microFIT program in February of 2013. A special subcommittee was then formed, and has submitted a building permit to the Town of Richmond Hill. Subject to approval, the congregation will install a photovoltaic system this fall.



The **GAN resource site** contains many resources, tips, workshop and worship ideas. Visit this excellent, evolving online resource via our main website (right) or at:  
<http://ganresources.wordpress.com>

## Some Churches which have Completed a Green Audit:



### Toronto Conference

Runnymede United Church, Toronto

Grace United Church, Brampton

Bracebridge United Church

Riverside Emery United Church, Toronto

Coldwater United Church

Forest Grove United Church, Toronto

Keswick United Church

Ebenezer United Church, Markham

Thornhill United Church

Tottenham United Church

Humber Valley United Church, Toronto

Trinity United Church, Huntsville

Jubilee United Church, Toronto

Palgrave United Church

### AWAKENING

#### News from the Green Awakening Network

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We welcome your feedback and comments on AWAKENING. Do you have a greening story to tell about your church, or a request information? If so, we would like to hear from you. Please contact us – see the details above.

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## GREEN AUDITS

(Continued from page 7)

The audit offers plenty of simple tips, as well as more substantial steps. “Some sanctuaries, have high ceilings which collect hot air in the winter, but the ceiling fans are not used during this time. Turning on the fans will recirculate the air, reducing heating costs by far more than the cost to run the fan,” said Stephen Collette, one of the auditing team in a recent GAN webinar.

In another case, air quality at a church was compromised by storing Windex near Bleach. If mixed, the resultant ammonium chloride is a poisonous gas. Here, the solution was simple and inexpensive. Store the cleaning agents separately, or better yet, switch to baking soda and vinegar. The audit identifies advice applicable to each building.

Core elements of the audit usually include checking the building’s envelop with a blower door test, iden-

tifying where cold air infiltrates the building. Sealing these can reduce heating costs significantly. Reducing extremes in temperature overnight also prevents organs from going out of tune.

“Our Coldwater United congregation was able to complete about 85% of the audits recommendations,” reports Cody Smith, member of the church. “We have repaired windows, fixed insulation and replaced toilets. As well, we pay more attention to operational details. The audit is our guide for future action plans.”

While all congregations find cost a barrier, knowing exactly what can be done is universally found helpful. Consider at Green Audit for your church.

More information is available in *Greening Sacred Spaces’ [Green Audit Brochure](#)*.

### Why Join GAN?

- Join a network of 55 other churches and faith communities who are committed to taking responsibly to live with respect in creation, and are taking whatever steps they can to live out that mandate
- Receive updates on GAN events, by visiting the [Green Awakening Network](#) homepage and find many helpful resources on the [GAN resources site](#)
- Promote your environmental community events by emailing us at <greenawakening@tucc.ca>
- Through networking at events, link with other congregations to share expertise when undertaking a new project, and access grants otherwise inaccessible

### GAN joins the Toronto Climate Action Network

The Climate Action Network is a global entity which brings together groups working on climate issues big and small, such as the Sierra Club and Green Neighbours 21. The Toronto chapter (TCAN) provides opportunities for climate action groups to collaborate locally. Members meet 4 times a year, collaborate in subcommittees, and share events through a common calendar.

Visit: [tcan.ca](http://tcan.ca)



**The Green Awakening Network (GAN)**, an initiative of the Toronto United Church Council, is a network of United Church churches and faith communities in the Toronto area committed to responding to the challenge of climate change by reducing the carbon footprint of their buildings and those of their congregation members. Through collaboration with other faith communities and local environmental groups, congregations can be catalysts for action within the wider community. Currently, there are over 55 members in the Network from across Southern Ontario.



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