

Churches eye new solutions

By Laura Crimaldi and Katy Jordan | Sunday, August 10, 2008 | <http://www.bostonherald.com> | Local Coverage

Following are energy-saving measures taken by congregations interviewed by the Herald this month:

Saint John the Evangelist, Beacon Hill: The church does not plan to turn its heat on until Oct. 15, said the Rev. Katharine C. Black. It rents its space to a Roman Catholic group, which shares the heating costs. Black said donations from cash-strapped worshippers have fallen off.

St. Stephen's Episcopal Church, Lynn: During the first six months of the year, the church spent \$32,996 of its \$47,250 fuel budget on heating oil, despite creating heating zones and purchasing a high-efficiency boiler several years ago, church officials said. The church, which rents to several community organizations and provides space to 12-step groups, is considering a plan to move all meetings into a parish house that is easier to heat, said the Rev. Jane Gould. "Where do community groups go to have meetings if church space can no longer be free? We used to be able to say, 'Sure you can use our space.' Now we really have to think about it," she said. Massachusetts Interfaith Power & Light has helped improve its energy efficiency.

Greater Love Tabernacle Church, Dorchester: The church is considering a plan to weatherize certain windows in a balcony area of the former synagogue, which was built in the 1930s, said the Rev. William Dickerson. The church may also consolidate its programming to smaller areas that are easier to heat. It costs \$5,000 to \$6,000 to heat the church with oil during a "moderate" winter, Dickerson said.

Peoples Baptist Church, Boston: The church is resigned to paying more for natural gas, said the Rev. Wesley A. Roberts. "We don't have the option of doing anything else. We just have to spend the money to do what we have to do," Roberts said.

First Baptist Church, Cambridge: The Rev. Harry Petter said he expects that the \$22,000 annual heating oil bill will increase by 20 percent this year. The sanctuary has an "amazingly high" ceiling. The church rents its sanctuary to two other congregations. "What are you going to do? Cover all your windows with plastic? Oh sure - that's going to look great," said Petter. "There is a limit to what people will put up with. There are no simple solutions."

Ruggles Baptist Church, Boston: The church is setting aside money during the summer months to pay for heat in anticipation of a 60 percent increase to its monthly oil bill, said office manager James Marohn.

St. Gregory's Church, Dorchester: The church is turning on the air-conditioning only once a week, said the Rev. Vincent E. Daily. He said they will watch the heating bill closely. "We're being very conscious, making sure in the cold weather that the windows are shut," Daily said.

Congregation Beth Israel, Worcester: A 5 percent assessment has been added to the synagogue's annual dues to cover heating costs, said executive director Judy Moseley.

St. James Episcopal Church, Cambridge: The church removed an oil boiler using steam and converted to a three-boiler system to heat the sanctuary and parish hall after underdoing an energy audit by MIP&L, said vestry member Peter Merrell.

Trinity Episcopal Church, Weymouth: The church plans to replace a 40-year-old oil burner with natural gas, said the Rev. Clare Yarborough. The conversion, which will cost at least \$30,000, will be financed through fund raising and loans.

Our Lady of Lourdes, Brockton: The church may run extra collections or consider office staff reductions to pay fuel costs, which ran about \$12,000 last year. The church's annual budget is \$420,000, said bookkeeper Janice Loonie.

Old South Church, Copley Square: The church plans to convert an older boiler, which can use natural gas or heating oil, to natural gas, said Lois Corman, chairwoman of the Operations Committee. After an energy audit from MIP&L, the church is also considering geothermal or wind power.

Boston Chinese Evangelical Church, Chinatown and Newton: The Rev. Steven Chin said that worshippers will be asked to bring a sweater or coat to wear inside the sanctuary.

River of Life Church, Jamaica Plain: The church is converting from heating oil to natural gas this summer, said senior pastor Thomas G. Griffith. The church operates on a timer that only heats the sanctuary for large gatherings.

Temple Beth Israel, Waltham: The synagogue is considering closing off its large sanctuary and only using smaller areas. New efficient windows or ceiling fans costing a total of \$23,000 are also under consideration.

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