

Energy:

Churches Take Steps in Conservation

By Religious News Service

Americans have been talking about the energy crisis for years. But now, the nation's religious communities are beginning to do something about it.

Not content to wait for the Carter Administration and Congress to end their wrangling over a national energy policy, religious groups are taking practical steps to conserve fuel and save money in so doing. In many cases, they also are pioneering the development and use of "alternative" energy sources such as solar heating.

David Fry, director of the Interfaith Coalition on Energy (ICE), stressed in March that "American churches and synagogues must offer moral leadership to a country that consumes a disproportionate share of the world's energy reserves." He made the statement in connection with the coalition's release of a "Conservation Checklist" with suggestions for how congregations can exemplify responsible stewardship in their energy use.

The ICE document asserted that inexpensive conservation measures could reduce energy consumption by 30 per cent or more in most of the nation's 330,000 religious structures and could save the small-to-medium church or synagogue in the middle and northern latitudes from \$1,000 to \$2,000 each year.

In many instances, congregations making such changes can receive assistance from national agencies of their denominations. The Board of Homeland Ministries of the United Church of Christ has offered a million dollars in low-interest loans to UCC congregations wishing to make energy-conserving renovations to their property.

The National Division of the United Methodist Church will donate up to \$5,000 to each of eight United Methodist congregations as an incentive "to explore the possibility of solar heating."

A joint project involving three Protestant denominations will construct at least four solar-heated church buildings, one in each major climactic area of the United States, to test the practicality of such a heating method for churches.

United Methodist churches will be built in the hot-humid (Southeast) and temperate (Northeast and Southern Midwest) areas. An American Baptist church will be built in the hot-arid (Southwest) area, and an American Lutheran church is to be constructed in the cold (North Central) area.

The project is sponsored by the Church Development Task Force of the Joint Strategy and Action Committee (JSAC), a consortium of 12 Protestant denominations.

Uniform criteria have been set by the project's work group for the amount of insulation required and the percentage of heat to be supplied by solar energy. Records of weather conditions and operating costs will be kept for five years and compared with those of similar churches using conventional energy sources.

Mount Zion Baptist Church, an inner-city congregation in Norfolk, Va., has begun construction on a \$600,000 structure which may become the first solar-heated church building in the United States.

The solar heating system has been designed to provide 44 per cent of the heat required by the building, according to a report by the American Baptist Extension Corporation, which is assisting with loan and consultative services.

Engineers said church buildings are logical choices for the use of solar energy because there are generally several days to collect and store heat between the times when such large spaces as the sanctuary are used.

A \$69,942 demonstration grant from the federal Energy Research and Development Administration has been received for the design of a new First Baptist Church in Aberdeen, S.D. About 30 per cent of the new building's space heating and 50 per cent of its hot water will be supplied by an air-type solar collector on the church roof.

A resolution on energy passed by the General Conference of the United Methodist Church last year suggested that solar energy is a particularly good power source because "the source of such energy is free. It is clean and offers no environmental problems such as the disposal of water that accompanies other resources. The supply is inexhaustible. It can be converted to usable power in a manner which places the energy under the control of the consumer rather than in the hands of large utility concerns."

But solar energy is not the only fuel source being explored. Jesuit-maintained Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., has been awarded a contract by the Energy Research and Development Administration to build a high-output energy plant producing increased steam power.

The plant will operate on high-sulfur coal, the most abundant and currently least expensive fuel in the United States. It is part of a federal effort to promote development of power systems which conserve dwindling supplies of oil and natural gas.

The 184,000-member Ohio Conference of the United Church of Christ is conducting feasibility studies on a self-help program to move gas from wells owned by the conference in Holmes County, Ohio, to conference churches affected most by winter shortages.

According to a proposal made by First Congregational UCC in Columbus, funds would get double-usage under the program. First, they would be used by the individual congregations to pay for needed fuel supplies, the money being paid to the conference. The only cost outside the church would be paid to the gas company for transmission fees. Second, the conference would then use the income money from supplying gas to conduct its business.

One unexpected side effect of the fuel crisis is that it has stimulated new approaches in education in some parts of the country.

In Columbus, both public and parochial schools were shut down for the month of February 1977 because of fuel shortages. Sister Barbara Thomas, superior general of the Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, reported that the situation led to unprecedented cooperation between school administrators of both systems and the rest of the community in providing "school without schools."

Restaurants, movie theaters, rectories, auditoriums, fire houses and other warm facilities were pressed into service as classrooms and sites for field trips. Local television stations also cooperated in providing religious instruction missed by the parochial school students.

Toma to Be Speaker at CYO Meet

Washington — The 14th national CYO Federation convention's Gold Ticket Banquet will feature David Toma as its guest speaker and will recognize a number of youth ministers for their outstanding service to youth.

The biennial convention, expected to draw more than 3,000 teenagers from across the country, will be in Niagara Falls, N.Y., Nov. 10-13.

Toma has been called "the man with a thousand faces" because of his mastery of disguises. He has been the subject of articles in leading magazines and a television series was named after him.

Archbishop Jean Jadot, apostolic delegate in the United States, will be presented with the CYO's "For God and Youth" award.

The Rochester CYO will present workshops on the problem of youth employment and Hispanic youth in ministry, the latter being conducted by the Project Poder staff.

DIRECTOR SOUGHT

The U.S. Catholic Conference (USCC) has named a search committee to seek a successor to Father Lawrence J. McNamara as executive director of the Campaign for Human Development. Father McNamara, 49, is leaving the post to accept a pastoral assignment in his home diocese of Kansas City-St. Joseph, Mo.

Sister Magdalena Notes 50th

Maryknoll, N.Y. — Sister Magdalena Urlacher, a native Rochesterian, joins this year 13 other Maryknoll missionaries who are celebrating 50 years of religious life.

Although the Maryknoll Sisters' community commemorated the occasion in ceremonies in October, Sister Magdalena celebrated her big day in April in Taiwan — among the Chinese people with whom she has worked for more than 40 years.

"Time has a way of passing very quickly, especially in the days are busy, happy, fulfilling," she commented. Nineteen twenty-seven suddenly became 1977 and we were celebrating my Golden Jubilee — 50 years as a Maryknoll Sister — surrounded, congratulated, being thanked and praised and loved by my sisters."

Sister Magdalena described the occasion as "a day of peace, joy — my thoughts going back over the years, reliving the memories, the people. These never die."

SCHOOL BENEFIT

St. Monica parishioners offer Santa Claus and a free baby sitting service at their Old Fashioned Craft Bazaar, a school benefit scheduled for Saturday, Nov. 19, noon until 9 p.m. The address is 841 Genesee. Anyone who wishes to contribute to the bakery booth may call Sharon Weaver, 235-7388, or Mrs. Jan Penberg, 328-9274.

Conservation programs adopted by religious communities frequently involve more than renovations to church buildings. Schools and hospitals are often participants, and the benefits accrue to all residents of the particular geographic area.

The Catholic Archdiocese of Newark has launched an "Energy, Now!" program involving members of the clergy and parish councils, and hospital and school administrators. Msgr. Harold A. Murray, director of administration for the archdiocese, has stressed that "many vital educational, medical and social services are delivered in these institutions. We want to continue to serve the community, but the most energy-efficient way."

By engaging in such efforts, religious groups are not only helping themselves, but are also demonstrating that their commitment to helping solve the energy crisis goes beyond making statements and passing resolutions.

The national Religious Public Relations Council (RPRC) warned members last Spring to avoid a credibility gap that exists "when we, too, fail to act to conserve and use energy and resources wisely." It challenged its members "and those whom we serve, where we or they have not done so, to join those who are consciously working to use and conserve resources."

On the day after President Carter brought his energy proposals to Congress last April, a member of the White House Energy Policy and Planning Staff met in New York with representatives of more than 40 voluntary organizations — including religious groups — to urge them to enlist their members in the energy effort.

Shelly Weinstein, whose assignment is to help the White House energy staff involve the public in the development of national policy, told the organizations' representatives that "your members look to you for guidance, and each of us has his or her challenge in this program."

Through innovative, practical programs, the nation's religious communities are beginning to meet that challenge.



SR. MAGDALENA

Sister Magdalena is the former Catherine Urlacher. Her brother, George, resides in Rochester.

Sister received her first foreign assignment to South

China in 1935. She remained there until expelled from the mainland in 1951. The missionary continued her nursing and catechetical work for two years at the Maryknoll Sisters' Hospital in Pusan, Korea. She spent another two years in refugee work in Hong Kong.

In 1955, Sister Magdalena returned to her work among the Hakka-speaking Chinese — the same people she had worked with on the mainland — this time in Taiwan.

Looking back on 50 years as a Maryknoll Sister, she hopes to remain among the Chinese people she has served for so long. She sees her work as changing in the coming years, she says, since she is "getting on in years." But she adds that she is "temporarily helping out where other sisters would be living alone or need help in various ways."

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