

A Future with Hope

One Church's Answer to Climate Change

Responding to God's call to be good stewards of the earth, the West Concord Union Church has embarked on an ambitious fundraising campaign to replace its antiquated, oil-fueled steam heating system with air-source heat pumps that will reduce the building's greenhouse gas emissions to nearly zero.

This is a complicated and difficult project in a building that dates back to 1894 and has been expanded and renovated ever since. Supply chain issues and inflation have driven the expected \$870,000 cost to \$1.4 million. We are proud to be contributing to the town of Concord's goal of an 80 percent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050, and we invite everyone who is concerned about climate change to contribute to this important project.

What is West Concord Union Church?

We are an inclusive, creative Christian community empowering spiritual renewal and community engagement. We offer a warm welcome to folks of all identities, expressions, and abilities. We are affiliated with the United Church of Christ, a Protestant denomination which is known for its dedication to social issues and the way it honors each individual's spiritual discernment.

Our church was founded in 1891 as a non-denominational Protestant church by people associated with what was then the Concord Reformatory. Located in what was historically the working-class side of Concord, we initially ministered to prisoners and factory workers. Since then, we have continued to welcome and serve those who might be excluded elsewhere, including LGBTQ+ folks and people with disabilities. We have a vibrant and award-winning 32-year-old ministry to adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

Our building is also home to a thriving community music school and to support groups for military families and people with addictions. Our garden is used by the library across the street for outdoor children's story hours, and its stone labyrinth is open to all for walking meditation and reflection.

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How does the church's oil-fueled heating system contribute to global warming?

By burning fuel oil to heat its building, the church generates greenhouse gases equivalent to 144,000 pounds (65 metric tons) of carbon dioxide each year.

What will replace the old heating system?

The church will install air-source heat pumps to heat and cool the building. This is an energy efficient method that does not rely on fossil fuels and produces no climate-damaging emissions.

Don't heat pumps use electricity?

Yes, they do. But they can deliver up to three times more heat energy than the electrical energy they consume, according to the U.S. Department of Energy. The church already generates much of its electricity through rooftop solar panels. The remainder comes from the Concord Municipal Light Plant (CMLP), which supplies electricity to the town. The CMLP already buys much of its power from renewable sources such as wind and solar, and it has pledged to be 100 percent carbon-free by 2030.

What else are you doing to make the building more energy efficient?

We have recently replaced windows and added insulation to improve our building envelope. This ensures that we use less energy for heating and cooling.

How much will the project cost? How much money has the church already raised?

We have \$800,000 in commitments from members and friends of the church as of March 23, 2023.

What does our faith say about caring for the earth?

We believe that the earth is God's creation and that we are responsible for its care. We believe in supporting environmentally friendly policies and practices, and we want to express that with our care of our own building.

Why are you seeking broader community support?

Situated prominently at the intersection of Main and Pine streets, West Concord Union Church has been an integral part of the community for 128 years. It was built with financial support from 190 donors – some of them town residents who were not members of the church – and we hope to continue that tradition now. We invite contributions from anyone who wants to help the town achieve its sustainability goals or who has come to a service, attended a concert or support group, or spent time in our beautiful sanctuary.

How can someone donate to this project?

Visit our website at www.westconcordunionchurch.org/appeal or use this QR code to make an online gift. Checks, and gifts from donor-advised funds may be mailed to the church at 1317 Main Street, Concord, MA 01742. The church is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. Its tax ID number is 237 146 572. Please call 978-369-6309 with any questions; we will be happy to help.

**Do you have any special activities planned?**

Yes, we are planning an Earth Day Book & Bake Sale on April 22nd from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., an Online Auction from October 8th-22nd, and a concert on October 21st at 2 p.m. Watch our website for further details: www.westconcordunionchurch.org/appeal

Whom can I contact for more information?

Call the church office at 978-369-6309 or email us at wcuc.office@gmail.com and we will direct you to the right person to answer your question.