

## **Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst Buys 100% Wind Energy to Meet Electric Needs**

The Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst in Williamsville NY has become the first church in New York State to purchase 100% wind energy for its church buildings. This purchase reflects the congregation's commitment to environmental stewardship, a basic principle of the Unitarian Universalist faith. "We believe in respect for the interrelated web of all existence," said Gemma Lanthier, Chairperson of the congregation's Board of Trustees. "By buying wind energy to meet our electric needs, our church is trying to make a difference. We are giving real expression to our heartfelt concerns about the world."

During the current year Unitarian Universalist congregations across the nation are studying the issue of global warming and taking action – through community education and by taking action as congregations to adopt sustainable energy practices and demonstrate community leadership. The Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst recently established a task force to examine energy conservation opportunities within its buildings. A detailed energy audit was prepared, after each church building was carefully studied. Additionally, a special "Green Fund" was established to finance the purchase of 100% wind energy for the church. It costs two cents more per kilowatt hour to purchase wind energy than to purchase conventional power.

New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) studies have found that New York has the potential for enough wind power to supply 20% of the state's electricity needs. Commercial wind turbines such as those located at the Fenner, N.Y., wind farm in Madison County, now each produce enough electricity to power 600 average New York homes. Approximately 10,000 residential, municipal, and commercial electric consumers throughout New York State have bought New York wind energy.

"They are creating the consumer demand that will result in the development of more wind power in the state," stated Ron Kamen, Vice President of Sales and Marketing for Community Energy in New York State. Noting that there is the potential for a ten-fold increase in New York wind power within the next few years, Kamen said, "this is an historic opportunity to help create a healthier, more sustainable, and energy independent future for ourselves, and our children."

"I am proud to be a member of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Amherst as we act to improve the environment and promote a better energy future for us all", said congregation member Walter Simpson. "In light of the threat of global warming and climate change, we all need to take steps now to kick the fossil fuel habit – and I think religious organizations need to step up to the plate and demonstrate leadership," Simpson added.

"We hope that our decision to buy wind energy will motivate other Western New York religious congregations and organizations to join us in this endeavor," said congregation chair Gemma Lanthier. "We stand by ready to share our energy audit with other congregations and to assist in other ways. We are also hopeful that our example will encourage other Unitarian Universalist congregations across the state, region, and nation to take action for clean energy."

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