



# CHRIST CHURCH

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*The Rev. Matthew Hoxsie Mead, Rector*

June 3, 2019

*O merciful Creator, your hand is open wide to satisfy the needs of every living creature: Make us always thankful for your loving providence; and grant that we, remembering the account that we must one day give, may be faithful stewards of your good gifts; through Jesus Christ our Lord, who with you and the Holy Spirit lives and reigns, one God, for ever and ever. Amen. [Collect for the Stewardship of Creation, BCP pg. 259]*

Dear Friends in Christ,

I write with a brief update on two related issues: the status of the replacement of the roof on the Ranck Building which houses the Parish Offices, Library, and School, and various energy conservation improvements in our buildings.

As you may recall our Capital Campaign in 2018 included goals to replace much of the roof over the church, the entire roof over the tower, and the entire roof over the Ranck Building. The work on the church and tower was completed last year and was funded by donations to our Capital Campaign made by Parishioners. We were awarded two grants, one from the Diocese of New York and a second from the Bedell Fund of Saint Matthew's Church in Bedford, totaling \$175,000 to replace the slate roof on the Ranck Building. These grants cover the cost of replacing the current Pennsylvania slate (expected lifespan about 50 years) with new Vermont slate (expected lifespan 75+ years – some estimates place Vermont Slate at 100-200 years). The grant awards specify that the roof replacement is completed by the autumn of 2019.

At the January Annual Meeting a parishioner asked that we explore the feasibility of solar panels in conjunction with the Ranck roof replacement project. The Buildings Committee Chairs (Kari Black and I) and Buildings Liaison to the Vestry (John Fox) have spent the past four months exploring the viability, benefits, and challenges of putting solar panels on the Ranck Building roof. In addition to doing the background research, we have met and toured our facilities with our roofers, our roof consultant, and several solar companies; we have met with the Pelham Manor Building Manager; we have consulted with the Vestry and Buildings Committee; and we have received formal bids from two solar companies (both recommended by our roof consultant).

Research done in the past four months has helped to clarify whether or not and where solar panels can be installed at Christ Church. The research has also made clear that there are significant benefits, concerns, and outstanding questions.

The benefits include reduced energy usage by approximately 30,000 kwh which translates into savings of approximately \$6,000 per year or about ¼ of our current, annual electric bill. In addition,

the surrounding communities would see that Christ Church supports sustainable energy use, and this dovetails with the Episcopal Church's ongoing commitment to creation-care.

There are structural, longevity, aesthetic, maintenance, and financial questions and concerns. Solar panels are not normally affixed to slate roofs and therefore a solar array on the Ranck Building would likely mean that we would replace the Garden of Resurrection side of the roof with Vermont slate (lasting 75+ years) and the Shore Road side of the roof with asphalt shingles (lasting 25+ years). Because the roof (but not the solar panels) is funded by a grant, we would not realize any cost savings of downgrading to a cheaper roof.

There is also the question of how we would pay for a solar array. The installation of solar panels on the Shore Road side of the Ranck Building will cost at least \$80,000. This does not include structural engineering guidance or possible structural upgrades. The remaining money raised from the Capital Campaign is designated for very specific buildings repairs and safety upgrades so there is not enough money from that Campaign to also cover the cost of solar. The Church is working to close a \$40,000 to \$50,000 deficit for 2019, and we are already asking for additional pledges and financial support from our members to cover that shortfall. Likewise, the 2019 budget shortfall makes it unappetizing to draw money from the endowment for a capital project that isn't related to a repair or safety issue. A significant portion of any annual savings would also need to be set aside for future replacement/upgrade of the roof/solar.

I believe that Christians and the Church should lead when it comes to caring for the environment. It is important to note that solar roof panels are only one possible way that we can help make our church more energy efficient and environmentally sustainable. We are in the process of upgrading many of our lightbulbs with more energy efficient and cost saving LED bulbs. We have improved recycling in our buildings. We are looking into the cost of installing more energy efficient windows in the Ranck Building (the first bid was \$150,000). We are in the process of scheduling a full energy audit of our facilities. There are some obvious benefits to solar and there are also important questions about whether solar is viable at Christ Church.

The Vestry met on May 22 and discussed all of this at length. We felt it prudent to report back to the entire parish what progress has been made around various environmental initiatives and that a great deal of research has been done around the possibility of solar. No final decision has been made on solar because there are still some outstanding questions, and we have some limited time to gather more information. However, the timeline mandated by our grants require that we make a final decision on whether or not to pursue solar on the Ranck Building by mid-June. I invite you in the next few weeks to share any thoughts, ideas, concerns, and questions with me, Kari Black, or John Fox. We have been at the meetings and immersed in the materials for months, and I think we can probably answer your questions. I also invite you to contact any member of the Vestry to share your thoughts.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Matthew Hossie Mead". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end.

The Reverend Matthew Hossie Mead, Rector