

First Christian Church, Black Mountain
Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) Pastor Joe Friddle
201 Blue Ridge Rd, Black Mountain, NC 28711
Written By Katie Breckheimer

One of the first things you see on Black Mountain's First Christian Church website is: "We see ourselves as a community of companions on the journey of faith." That journey has recently taken them to a place of stewardship, and a realization that interdependence is a part of their Christian narrative.

About two years ago, one special inter-generational event hosted by the church, sparked a lot of action. It was a Creation Stewardship event, where mothers, fathers, grandparents, and kids of all ages participated. By walking around and observing, they became intimately familiar with the four acres and bordering stream that their church was built on. They identified species as well as cleaned up the stream.



The conversations were ongoing about sharing the property with the community as a "sacred space." Their meditation garden was already in place, but now they wanted to create a meditation walk along the stream as well.

The event triggered talks about energy efficiency in their main church building, built in 1997, and their meeting room, added in 2008. The Church's Board had an open discussion with the congregation about going solar. They generated email documents, solicited responses, and turned to the Appalachian Institute for Renewable Energy for information and legal support. An LLC model for financing was used. In the first 4 months of 2015, the solar photovoltaic panels generated more power the church used (115%).

A new lighting system has also cut the church's energy consumption, but it was the 7-day programmable thermostats that significantly contributed to the savings, a 35% drop in their gas and electric bill.

When Pastor Joe Friddle was asked what he would say to another congregation considering solar? "It's worth it! But you'll need perseverance because it took us over a year from start to finish." Then he reflected, "There's satisfaction in taking those concrete steps, and not just thinking and talking about it. The solar project became a touchstone for us in our ongoing conversations about being better stewards."