



Solar Power for Congregations

MNIPL helps congregations go solar with justice for people and the planet. We are a founding member of the Just Solar Coalition-- a gathering of organizations working to spread the benefits of solar to all people and to reduce the barriers to solar.

Going Solar 2022

MNIPL helps you navigate the changing solar landscape, connecting you with incentives and programs that make going solar not only solve the climate crisis, but also help you save financially.

Congregations, while tax exempt organizations, can still receive a portion of the federal tax credit for solar. Additionally, faith communities often qualify for utility and other incentives. MNIPL connects congregations to trusted developers and financial institutions that are practiced in working with the unique needs of faith communities. We are familiar with congregational decision-making processes and multiple levels of leadership, and have helped numerous congregations install solar arrays.



Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs)

PPAs allow a congregation to put solar on their property at no cost. A partner investor pays for the solar array, assumes all system maintenance and risks, and receives all tax credits and incentives available. The investor passes on a portion of these savings to the congregation by selling them solar energy at a locked-in discount below what they would otherwise have paid their utility. These agreements, common in the industry, typically last from 10 to 25 years and allow for buy-out options. In 2022, MNIPL has a 10-year PPA program available for Minneapolis congregations and a 25-year PPA available for all other Xcel customers. Additionally, working with Avisen Legal, MNIPL is able to help congregations explore creating their own investor LLC with a group of their members. This can be a complex option, and it requires members have a particular type of passive income, but it can offer congregations more savings than a typical PPA.

Community Solar Gardens (CSGs)

In some cases direct solar installation is not feasible for congregation facilities. Shading, older style construction, and esthetic concerns may be reasons that direct installations will not work. In these situations, Community Solar Gardens (CSGs) are an excellent answer for faith communities located where CSGs are available. CSGs are large, centralized arrays to which customers can subscribe for their electricity. Subscribing is free with no upfront costs and locks in a modest utility savings for 20 to 25 years. CSG contracts include buy-out options and can be transferred. In Minnesota, customers must live in the same or an adjacent county to the CSG. For this reason, CSGs are rarely available to congregations in Hennepin or Ramsey counties. Contact us for a list of currently available CSG arrays and counties served.

Direct Purchase and Installation

Congregations can realize larger utility savings by purchasing their own array. While nonprofits cannot receive the 26% federal tax credit, they can get utility incentives and the energy offset savings, known as “net-metering.” MNIPL will connect you to a trusted installer who will give your leadership team a preliminary design and proposal free of charge, including a 25-year cost-benefit analysis. ROI varies widely depending on size of array able to be installed, amount of electricity consumed, current costs of electricity, etc.

If your congregation chooses to go forward, the installer will apply for utility incentives on your behalf. They will conduct structural and electrical engineering studies of your building, finalize design, and schedule installation to fit your congregation’s schedule. They will work with your roofing company to ensure any warranties remain intact. Installation typically takes two weeks. The installer will work with your utility company to connect your array to the grid and “go live”. The installer will set up your monitoring system and train congregation leaders to use it. Maintenance contracts



are not necessary for most congregation arrays. These solid-state systems rarely have any issues and parts are warranted for 15 to 25 years with many systems still producing electricity after 40 years.

Build Back Better

In 2022, MNIPL and other climate change partners are lobbying for passage of the federal Build Back Better legislation. This package of legislation provides for, among many renewable energy provisions and incentives, congregations to receive the federal tax credit as a direct payment. This resolves the disparity that congregations have long faced of being shut out of this solar benefit.

To explore solar for your congregation, contact Buff Grace at: buff@mnipl.org