

TRINITY AME FIRST BLACK CHURCH in LANSING to INSTALL SOLAR



Lansing, MI On Sunday, Sept. 24, the power was switched on at the solar panel installation at Trinity African Methodist Episcopal (Trinity AME) Church in Lansing. Trinity AME Church is the oldest (first) Black church in Lansing and has been in existence for over 157 years. The solar panel installation at a Black church is the first in mid-Michigan and only the second to occur in the state.

Rev. Lila Rose Martin said that Trinity AME Church recognizes climate change and that the inspiration for the project stemmed from a desire to protect the environment along with achieving energy savings. “One of our members came to me and they were talking about solar,” said Rev. Martin. “We saw the solar panels go up at the South Side Community Coalition and we were intrigued. We looked at how we could go about it...and the rest is history.”

Rev. Martin asked Henderson Bodiford, a Trustee with the church, to explore how the church could go solar. Mr. Bodiford started making contacts and met Rob Rafson, a board member with [Solar Faithful](#). Once the church had all the information on how the financing worked, the Trustee Board took a vote and decided to move forward with the 26 kW solar project.

The 40 panel solar installation was funded by [Solar Faithful](#), a cooperative effort of the Climate Witness Project, World Renew, Michigan Interfaith Power & Light, Charthouse Energy, among others. Solar Faithful aims to increase solar access among faith-based nonprofits with a particular focus on congregations that have been historically excluded from the clean energy transition. Included are those

congregations who have predominantly Black, Indigenous, People of Color (BIPOC) leadership or membership, have low-income/low-wealth members, or belong to diverse faith traditions (such as those of a non-Christian, non-Unitarian faith tradition). The initiative aims to ensure that the benefits of clean energy are accessible to all.

Trinity AME Church's participation involved receiving solar panels at no upfront cost for the panels or installation, and Solar Faithful will maintain the panels for a 25-year period. The church will pay for the installation through a lease agreement similar to a Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) at a price not to exceed what the power would have cost if coming from the utility.

Mr. Bodiford said that for him the project was about relieving the financial burden on the church given that the congregation will save money over the life of the solar panels; money that can go back into the church's vital mission and ministries. "To me this is how we are doing our small part for the planet and for future generations."