

Solar Panels at St. Thomas'



2 Years and Looking Good!

St. Thomas signed an agreement in 2019 for the installation of a solar panel farm that became fully operational mid-November 2020. This past November marks two complete years of production. This article summarizes how the panels produced, their impact, and provides a glimpse into what is ahead.

Sunny days and dry conditions may have wreaked havoc on our lawns this summer, however, for our solar farm, it was the perfect weather. For 2022, the panels had a slight increase (28kWh) over the initial year for a total of 408,555kWh. For 2022, St. Thomas consumed 317,904 kWh, up from the prior year of 216,588 kWh. The pandemic has had a very material impact on the Church's energy consumption. It appears we are resuming activities but are still below pre-pandemic usage. The farm was "sized" based on 2017 usage or 405,000 kWh. The good news is we will be credited for this overage and could leverage this overage for electric heaters to replace retirement-ready, oil-based heaters, enabling even greater savings.

SREC income for 2022 was \$15,307, up from year one as PA SREC values have gone up. For those not familiar with SRECS, Solar Renewable Energy Certificate (SRECs) are a performance-based solar incentive that allows additional income to be earned from solar electricity generation. One SREC is earned for every 1,000-kilowatt hours (kWh) of electricity the solar panels generate. These SRECs are sold via a broker on an open market and provide a new revenue stream for St. Thomas. This revenue stream is likely to continue for years to come.

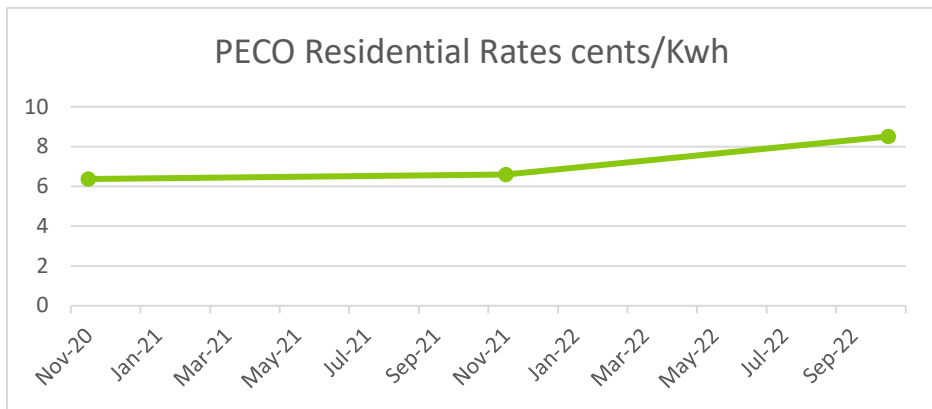
However, parishioners ask "What does all this mean?" "Is St. Thomas really saving any money with these solar panels?" The answer is yes! But like many things, it's complicated.

While under our 5 Year Power Service Agreement (PSA) which expires October 2025, St. Thomas has “capped” energy generation costs (of the electricity produced by the panels) to \$43,000 annually. Why is important? Look below at escalating PECO residential rates. It is a “peek” at what most PECO customers are experiencing...rising costs.

A closer look at St. Thomas’ residential rates shows the generation and transmission rate is 29% higher and illustrates why locking in our supply costs is so advantageous.

The combination of new SREC income and “fixed” PECO generation costs as a result of PSA, has allowed St. Thomas to enjoy a savings of almost \$20,000 a year. And as electrical rates continue to go up, St. Thomas’ savings will as well.

After October 2025, St. Thomas will take ownership of the panels which will enable even greater savings. With ownership, all associated *electric generation fees are eliminated*...a \$43,000 a year savings. It is always a challenge to predict future SREC prices or St. Thomas’ electricity usage, but with the SREC income covering much of the PECO transmission and solar panel maintenance fees, our electricity bills will have gone from \$55,000 a year (in 2017 when we started this project) to



less than \$10,000 a year. When considering yearly escalating PECO rates, the savings are even more profound.

Finally – to assist with the buyout, St Thomas has organized a Solar Panel Dedication effort that allows individuals to support this cause AND honor a loved

one. Currently hanging in the Narthex (on the left of the center doors when leaving) is our interim poster. If you have not done so, please take a moment to review. The response has been terrific! But we’re not done yet! If you have sent in a dedication – THANK YOU! If not, please take a moment to consider. For more information, check out: [Solar Panel Dedication Form](#)

Indeed, two years old and looking good!

Panel Dedication Form Dedication

Name Or Wording: _____

Donor Name: Contact Information: _____

For any questions or additional information, please contact solar@sthomaswhitemarsh.org

Please Complete and Place in the Offertory Bowl on Sunday or Return to St. Thomas’ Church/SOLAR 7020 Camp Hill Road Fort Washington, PA 19034