Episcopal Parish Network
Where the Church Gathers

Summary and Transcript
From Aspiration to Action: Building Your Parish's Net-Zero Playbook
Originally presented June 16, 2026

Summary

The webinar focused on practical facility stewardship strategies parishes can use to support the Episcopal Church's net zero aspirations, especially through day-to-day operational decisions. Participants discussed heating and cooling practices, maintenance and replacement planning, waste reduction, and the pros and cons of solar and other energy solutions, along with available tools and networks that support this work.

Key takeaways:

1. Practical Stewardship & Net Zero 2030

Translation of high-level carbon goals into **concrete, daily facility decisions**. The focus is on simple, controllable actions—reducing waste and optimizing space usage—rather than complex carbon accounting.

2. Dynamic Climate & Comfort Management

Shifting away from heating or cooling entire buildings 24/7. Key strategies include **zonal HVAC use** (moving small groups to smaller rooms), embracing wider comfort ranges (e.g., "sweater weather"), and utilizing programmed controls to prevent inefficient ad-hoc adjustments.

3. Proactive Maintenance & Master Planning

Moving from "reactive fixes" to **lifecycle-based planning**. By using Phased Preservation Master Plans (PPMP), parishes can avoid the "emergency replacement trap," budget for long-term renewals, and extend the life of existing equipment to reduce financial and environmental costs.

4. Radical Simplicity & Waste Reduction

Systematic elimination of recurring costs and waste through **low-impact systems**. This includes switching to washable dishware and reusable name tags, installing motion-sensing lighting, and transitioning to low-maintenance "dryscape" landscaping.

5. Strategic Energy & Infrastructure

A "measure-twice-cut-once" approach to renewables. Emphasis is placed on **efficiency first**—such as reflective roofing or battery storage—over costly solar installations that may be hindered by grid constraints or high lifecycle disposal impacts.

6. Data-Driven Facility Management

Leveraging **assessments and software** to institutionalize knowledge. Using digital tools for room scheduling and maintenance tracking ensures that facility wisdom isn't lost when staff or volunteers transition, while connecting with peer networks (like NACFM) provides shared expertise.

Transcript

OBJ Jim Lamm (EPN)

Okay. Hello, everybody. As people jump on, it's a little bit after 02:00, and we wanna get started. So, we only have an hour, and we just wanna get as much information as we can for you. Reminder couple reminders.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

One is that this is being recorded. And so since you registered for this, you will have availability of that recording and the slides after it's over probably tomorrow sometime or this week. Also, if you have questions or comments, feel free to put them in the chat. I will be monitoring that, and we'll try to get as many of your questions answered as we can. With that, I'd like to introduce Patrick Hart.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

He's with Smart Church Solutions. Some of you may be familiar with Smart Church Solutions through their eSpace program. They also have several other things, and they're involved in a lot of different aspects of church work and church ministry. Today, our workshop's called *Aspirations to Action, Building Your Parish's Net Zero Playbook*. And to speak with us today about that is Patrick Hart from Smart Church Solutions.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

And so without any further ado, I'd like to hand it over to Patrick and, take it from there.

Partick Hart

Thanks, Jim. I am happy to be here, and thank you all for joining today. I know some of you are experiencing less than pleasant weather these last few days, and into the beginning of the week here. I come to you from Seattle, Washington where our weather has actually been fairly good, and and and we had an exciting weekend of football. Bet some of you are gonna be tired of hearing about that, by the time the Super Bowl rolls around.

Partick Hart

I'd like to thank EPN for inviting us, inviting me to speak here. And so let me just set the tone a little bit about why we're here. The Episcopal Church stated back in 2022 that they wanted to address climate impact, and and, so I wanna clarify that what our focus is today is really on practical facility stewardship. Got some slides here if I can get it shared here. Alright.

Partick Hart

So, yeah, what is the Parish NetZero Playbook? The context really comes from the Episcopal Church's church-wide level goal of moving toward a net zero impact with a target year of, shockingly, 2030, which now feels right around the corner. For and really was for their church wide operations and leadership bodies. But at the diocese and and and parish levels, it was more of a broad invitation for congregations to engage and, practically in creation care. So, that's where we're gonna look.

Partick Hart

It's not a top down mandate for every parish to say, hey. We're gonna be net zero. But it's really a shared aspiration, rooted in stewardship and care for God's creation. Again, I'm from Seattle. We've been way at the leading edge of care for the environment for way longer than I've even lived here.

Partick Hart

But many parishes have chosen to support that goal, and I've spoken to several myself who have felt a little bit uncertain about what it realistically looks like when your boots-on-the ground. What does that mean for us, in your own parish? It may mean that facilities, teams, and your volunteer base, if you don't have a facilities paid staff, are stretched thin, especially if it's volunteer folks that they're stretched thin. So we're gonna look at some practical operations focus, today. The path forward could be unclear.

Partick Hart

We're gonna help make it not so overwhelming and try to make it so that you can have some actionable items, that you can move forward with and feel good about it and feel some success. So that maybe some low hanging fruit. The goal is net zero, but the practice is stewardship. It's what we are doing daily that as we're caring for what has been entrusted to us that will lead us into these net zero goals that the church has put forward. Well run facilities, naturally, will reduce your impact on the environment.

Partick Hart

So what is this about? Practical stewardship actions. What can you do in your church, every day, every week? Things that you can control. Reduce waste, cost, and distraction from mission.

Partick Hart

That's one of the great things about facility stewardship is, that the goal is to not be out front, it’s to guide, and do things behind the scenes that enable ministry to take place. We don't wanna be doing things that take up funds from ministry. We don't wanna be doing things that make people uncomfortable, maybe not want to be in our churches. So, we wanna reduce waste cost and distraction permission. But what is it not about?

Partick Hart

It's not about carbon credits or offsets. I can't figure out how to do the math on that. A long time ago, I stopped counting calories because I couldn't figure out how to do that. It was easier just to manage portions. So you find a simple thing that works.

Partick Hart

Ultimately, you may have to figure out how to do the calculations for carbon credits. But, the complex emissions accounting and technology without a process to support it are all things that we're not gonna focus on today. I'm gonna give you some real simple things you can move forward with. So good intentions versus meaningful impact. I guess maybe a good way to start would be to give you an example of this.

Partick Hart

I was in a conversation with an Episcopal parish, and they were looking for some assistance with this program. How do we move forward? And they were pretty adamant that I not fly in to be with them in their congregation to help with that because of the carbon emissions generated from the airplane. And the reality to me is that plane flies with or without me. There is very little there's no carbon impact.

Partick Hart

Now you might be able to count that in your carbon offsets, but that has done nothing to really achieve anything within your church. So I wanna focus on what are those things that you have the control over and the decisions that you make inside your own building every week. So meaningful impact comes from what we can control. Some actions might feel impactful, i.e., don't fly an airplane. But the outcome, it doesn't just really change anything as far as what you're doing in a parish.

Partick Hart

But many, many everyday decisions can have a large impact. The more you do, the larger the impact will be, and some of them are very, very simple. Now where do you have control? How are your spaces used in your buildings? When are your systems operational?

Partick Hart

How consistently are decisions applied? What gets maintained? What gets replaced? These are all decisions that happen within the facilities realm, and those are things you can control. And I I visit a lot of churches every year.

Partick Hart

And part of my job at Smart Church, I travel around the country, and I visit churches. And they, oftentimes, you'll see things that they're trying to control, human behavior through signage. You know, remember to turn the lights off. Remember to turn the temperature down. Those are all efforts at being better stewards in that.

Partick Hart

How do we, you know, do we let something run until it completely dies before we replace it? So that might be one way of viewing how you're gonna maintain or replace. They might not always be the most cost effective way. So let's look at stewardship principle number one. Only condition what you use.

Partick Hart

Heat and cool occupied spaces only. Some of you don't have heating and cooling, depending on what part of the country you're in. Some of you have to have both heat and cooling, but what I'm saying is you need to avoid conditioning unused space. Some of the churches that I've been in have pipe organs, and this may ruffle some feathers, but they've been told that it always needs to be at the same temperature and humidity in order not to damage the pipes. But I've evaluated churches that are over 150 years old as a pipe organ.

Partick Hart

They had no ability to control temperature or humidity back in the day. Maybe they didn't sound as good as army pipe organs, but the reality is you can actually set the

temperature and humidity, get your organ tuned, and then let it vary throughout the week. So it doesn't mean you're not wasting energy on that space when nobody's in there. But it's far broader than that within a church facility when you don't have events throughout the week or certain rooms aren't occupied. One example in the church that I served was, we had a women's ministry that met every week, but they wanted to meet in our, worship space, which could seat 700, and there might have been 20 women, which required us to pull up some seating, set up tables, and run the air conditioning system, in a ginormous room, way oversized for 20 people.

OBJ Partick Hart

Adjacent to that room was what we called the fireside room, had leather furnishings, built in TV, it was comfortable, had, and it had a fireplace. And convincing them to move there, they really wanted to be in the workshop space. And I had to say, look. The stewardship here is we're spending a lot of money on labor to reset the room, not only set it up for them to reset it for worship, but cleaning and utilities and lighting. Those are all things that were impactful versus a smaller room, much easier to maintain, much easier to clean.

OBJ Partick Hart

No no setups required. Once they understood the stewardship impact, they were on board. So we could only condition that space and didn't have to condition an oversized space. So, looking at your entire facility, even in a small church, you can make some decisions here on how you're gonna condition space. Principle number two, comfort is a range, not a number.

OBJ Partick Hart

I'm not gonna tell you 71. It's you with commercial, heating and air conditioning equipment, you can't just set it. You have to have a temperature span. But you gotta find the sweet spot. It will not be perfect for everyone.

Partick Hart

It's gonna require some compromise. It might mean that people bring sweaters during the time when maybe the air conditioning's running, and, you know, it's too cold for me, but other people are saying, no. It's so hot here. I need air conditioning. The same can happen in the winter.

Partick Hart

Everybody has coats. The people, as Jim and I were discussing earlier, he's in Texas. They're wearing coats now that they might not normally have worn this time of year. But looking at how can we participate in this in a way where we can find the average spot that without extreme set points that will allow your system to run efficiently without, constantly bouncing back and forth between heating and cooling, but that will make it the average comfortable zone and that some people may have to put on a sweater or take a sweater off. And understanding that as you fill a room, the temperature rises.

Partick Hart

And so you'll look at a space for a large gathering like worship and realize you can set the temperature lower because the body heat will automatically raise that temperature. Well, you've used less utilities by not running and generating and creating heating and cooling. So it's a range, not a number. Be willing to, to compromise a little bit. And one of the things that I had to do was I would turn off the adjustable thermostats just so everybody's not going by.

Partick Hart

It gets forgotten. It gets left running. It's a, set it into some kind of a system and then kind of forget about it. Principal stewardship number three. Consistency beats perfection.

Partick Hart

So you're never gonna be perfect with this. We're moving towards a goal. Yes. If you'd like if you get to net zero, that's awesome, but there's gonna be times where it just didn't happen. So if you're consistently doing things, you're going to get better and better and better at it.

Partick Hart

So if you find simple practices will outperform complex systems, consistency will lower your stress. You're not thinking about it. You're just it's it's it becomes part of your DNA. This is just what we do. It's like where they talk about how you form a habit.

Partick Hart

If you do something three times in a row, I feel like it may be more than that. But, if you're doing it and you're practicing it and they're simple, you're going to have success in reaching your goals in terms of, bettering your stewardship. Principle number four, reduce what you replace. Reduce what you replace. So, deferred maintenance, if you have not deferred maintenance for anybody, it doesn't understand that, is that if you have neglected or you just say, hey.

Partick Hart

We're gonna put off repairing an item. You see this HVAC unit that is not in the greatest of shape. It's got rust on it. There's panels missing. It is probably not as efficient as it should be, which means it's wasting energy.

Partick Hart

But planned care supports your stewardship. Having it, having somebody work on it and look at it and change filters and and to make sure that it's running as efficiently as it can be, during its expected life cycle. But don't just replace it for the sake of replacing it. Certain things can be carried on and have a lot longer lifespan than what we might think. At the same time, you can go too far, and you could be spending way too much money and effort to repair something that's absolutely inefficient and should be replaced.

Partick Hart

And so not knowing what you have, not knowing the condition of your stuff is gonna be a challenge. So, figuring out how you can reduce what you're gonna replace. Because when you tear that HVAC unit out, that has to go somewhere. It has to be torn down. It's gotta be moved off of the roof.

Partick Hart

In this case, it's gonna require a crane, a new crane to put the other unit up. It's gonna have to be disposed of. It might go in a landfill. There's the cooling gases that have to be disposed of in environmentally sound ways. There's a lot that goes into it that can affect the environment, with every piece of HVAC equipment that you're dealing with.

Partick Hart

And so you can't just cast it aside, and that isn't, you think about the greater stewardship of something, it seems easy to just say, let's replace that. But, let's try to reduce that a little bit. Don't replace things unnecessarily or too soon. Principle number five, eliminate single use and reuse, where it's reasonable. In the city where my wife works, oh, she works in Shoreline, Washington.

Partick Hart

The city of Shoreline has a mandate where her preschool now cannot use single-use serving ware. They can't use plastic silverware. They can't use paper plates. They can't use paper cups or Styrofoam or any of that. They, her preschool, now has to use all reusable, dishes, cups, silver.

Partick Hart

Everything gets washed. So it changes their whole perspective of how they do things. But it's great stewardship. The kids are eating you know, eating on paper plates at home isn't an awesome thing. We'll just think about going to preschool.

Partick Hart

So it's raised the level within the student body at her school, but it's really eliminated the costs involved in buying these products and the stuff going into the landfill, or is that recyclable? The Seattle area has really confusing ideas, at times, about how to divide out. If you go anywhere from the Seattle Airport into Downtown Seattle, anywhere in the greater area, there isn't just trash and recycle. There's trash, compost, recycle. The trash barrels are small, and the recycle and compost barrels are big.

Partick Hart

You don't see that around the rest of the country as much. So look at all the little things that you could do, to eliminate single use. One that I'm thinking of in my own church, and it's a really cool idea. Instead of having name tags for everybody, when we walk in, someone greets you at the door on Sunday morning, and they write your name on a little, sticky, like an Avery label, like a mailing label, and they put it on you. So everybody knows your name.

Partick Hart

Not just visitors, but everybody can always know each other's name. So visitors aren't singled out, but it seems incredibly wasteful. They're going through all these sheets of sticky labels when we could make some name tags that would go on a magnet board that we could reuse. You come in, grab your name tag. Then we would still see everybody's names.

Partick Hart

But just even that small thing is, what are you doing with that when you're on your way out? You're dropping it in a garbage can. It just seems wasteful, and somebody's printing those you know, there may not be any ink on it, but they're they're being produced in a factory that is using utilities, that is using energy, that is, and so even that could be a small reduction in in your, towards your net zero goals. Small changes add up. Principle number six, simplicity lowers cost and impact.

Partick Hart

Simple systems are easier to steward, and landscaping counts. So what does that mean? What's a simple system? Don't get hung up on doing the most difficult thing you could do. Think about landscaping.

Partick Hart

If you were to reduce the amount of landscaping that needed to be watered and maintained and cared for, if you had a a dry scape, something if you're not watering, you're not mowing, you're not trimming, those are all times where fuel is used to use a blower and to mow the lawn and to trim, and and you're using water. And if you're in areas like mine, sometimes water is a very precious commodity, and other times it's, when we're not in a drought period, it's then we seem to have plenty. But, you wanna care for that. You don't wanna be just dumping it into your lawn unnecessarily. So if you could change how your landscaping is, not only are you gonna save on the cost of maintaining your landscape, but you're going to be more environmentally conscious.

Partick Hart

So that's a simple, low cost over time and impactful that you could still have an attractive, welcoming presence of your building. Trying to think of another simple like, if we go back to the HVAC, just not adjusting the thermostats. If you can set them and not have them, you know, have them locked down, mention people putting signs up, turn the lights out. You can actually buy motion sensing light switches so that if there's no motion in the room, the lights go off. So you're not depending on someone remembering, seeing the sign, which they see every day.

Partick Hart

They're bound to, at some point, forget to turn the lights off. So, like, just having it be automatic. Now you might have a time when you're in there, you're not moving very much, and the lights qualify. You just wave, and it'll come back on. But finding ways of reducing that cost so without putting it onto, having to remember to take an action.

Partick Hart

Principle number seven, plan before you spend. Sometimes we don't think about it. We're like, oh, no. We're gonna have to do that. We're gonna, it's an emergency.

Partick Hart

Well, clarity prevents waste, and planning reduces surprises. So how do we do that? You know, how do you find out what your baseline is? How do you plan before you spend? I'll use my church as an example again.

Partick Hart

They have a couple of HVAC units that are not working at the moment, and they got a bid that was way too high for the repairs that were needed. But they were ready to like, oh, we're gonna go spend thousands of dollars to replace the unit, which would have been even more money. I heard about what was going on. We sat down. We talked about it, and we found we developed a plan that said, hey.

Partick Hart

Hey. Wait. Slow down a minute. Let's make sure we do this right. The best use of money, the best use of time, maybe seeking out multiple vendors who can give you their opinion, not just taking the first one that jumped out.

Partick Hart

And so clarity helps you have that value of time. It is that it doesn't become an emergency. For us, it's our lobby space, and we live in Seattle where the temperature is pretty temperate. So we've gotten by with running it less using the part that's functional to kinda warm it up a little bit, during the colder days. But as we're leaning into, hey.

Partick Hart

How do we get this repaired long term? Making the best decision by planning it ahead, not not being reactionary. What does that look like in real life? Fewer system failures, more predictable budgets, and facilities that actually support your ministry. You want people to come in and to be impacted, in their faith, not by the fact that it's cold in the in the room or the carpet's worn out.

Partick Hart

Then, you know, there's no distractions. We don't want you to have distractions. But we also are trying to drive to this goal of being better stewards. And if you bring

everybody along on this and help them understand that, if we lean into stewardship of our facility, and we might have to share the load of being a little bit uncomfortable or and compromising in some of these areas to to not have just a maybe bring your own coffee cup instead of having a cup that's there. Little things that may seem like an imposition at first, we're all sharing the load.

Partick Hart

They understand it's all part of the greater stewardship of not only your facility, but God's creation. And so that's what it is, that's what it looks like. Fewer failures, more predictable budgets, and facilities that support, ministry. So I just wanna pause here and just make it very clear. When parishes apply even a few of these principles consistently, the results tend to look very similar regardless of size or budget.

Partick Hart

You start to see fewer system failures, not because the equipment is new, but because it's being operated and cared for intentionally. Budgets become more predictable, not cheaper overnight, but it's less surprising. Staff and volunteers spend less time reacting and more time supporting ministry. And most importantly, facilities stop being a constant source of distraction for your leadership. They're able to do what they need to do while things are being maintained.

Partick Hart

I visit churches across the country, and it doesn't matter the context. It can be urban, suburban, historic, brand new. The pattern is repeated through all. So it isn't what you do. It's just being consistent in doing these things.

Partick Hart

So let's bring it all together. These are the three words that I think of that just you think about this for a minute, wise, intentional, and consistent. Wise stewardship is about making informed decisions. No get not guessing, not reacting, not chasing. So you gotta know what's your baseline.

Partick Hart

What's the condition of what you have? How are we going to make these decisions? And not just having one person, doing it. Be having dialogue. Have had some conversations with one another.

Partick Hart

How are we gonna do this? Intentional stewardship means choosing actions that align with your mission. So they're not just convenient, and their consistent stewardship is where progress comes from. So you're gonna be consistent about when you make that decision. None of these require perfection.

Partick Hart

They all require discipline. I might forget to bring my coffee cup next week. That's on me. So it's so, again, discipline, the practice. We're all in this together.

Partick Hart

So supporting ongoing stewardship, clarity about facility conditions, planning ahead instead of reacting, systems that support consistency. So what does that mean? Clarity. For many churches, ongoing stewardship starts with clarity. So just simply knowing what systems you have, how old they are, what condition they're in.

Partick Hart

When your leaders have clarity, planning becomes less stressful. They're not guessing as to, oh, well, how soon will we need to do that? Or, they're they know because they have the data to back up and make those informed decisions. Capital decisions, stop being reactive and start being intentional. You're planning for that eventual replacement versus trying to pay for something that sprung up and surprised you.

Partick Hart

Consistency. Another common support is using systems not to replace people, but to reinforce consistency. So let's talk about the light switch signs. That's a step in the right direction. Turn off lights on your way out.

Partick Hart

But, it is inconsistent because it's randomly somebody forgot, or I'm just coming back in a minute. And so finding a system that is gonna help you support that. If you're programming your HVAC units, how can you consistently not condition unoccupied space? Finding a system that works for you. How do you know when equipment was worked on?

Partick Hart

Do you have a system for tracking the maintenance that goes on on your equipment and your buildings and your grounds? Somebody knows. But if they're not there tomorrow, who is gonna be able to step in and fill that role? So when schedules, maintenance, and decisions live outside of one person's head, stewardship, and will survive staff changes. It'll survive volunteer turnover.

Partick Hart

In smaller churches, the volunteer basis for facilities, trustees, They go by lots of different names. There's an incredible turnover in that, and most of the time, the information is lost in between, as these things shuffle back and forth. And so, finding a system that works for you that will increase your consistency is really gonna help you achieve your goals. So, there are a lot that we do. My company, we offer software, church facility management software, but, really, we're a church stewardship company.

Partick Hart

My role is to help churches be better stewards of that which they've been entrusted with. And so I just want you to know that if you have any questions about this, moving, how you're moving down this or or how do I get more clarity in my church, conversation is always welcome. We want to serve all churches whether or not they're customers or ours or not, which is why we do things like this webinar. But, I just wanna put it out there. I want you to be a better steward.

Partick Hart

I want to help you be a better steward of what you've been entrusted with. And so that's why we're here. So with that, I would love to open it up to some questions. I will share what I know and where I, maybe, guide you a little bit. And, I would love to hear how you guys are all handling this move to net zero.

Partick Hart

I mean, it's been a couple of years since it was announced, and I would love to hear, are you doing it? Have you jumped on this, and what kinds of things have you achieved? Let's see. Pat Yeah.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Have a question in the chat. I think you just, I think you just saw it.

Partick Hart

We've been told we should keep our HVAC system on the same temp all the time all week. Do you have a pipe organ? My question. That is not, that is not efficient. I'm trying to think here.

Partick Hart

I'm looking back. Port Angeles. Okay. So Port Angeles has pretty decent weather. You do get some oddball storms and stuff, but there's no reason.

Partick Hart

You're in Washington. You can get by without it being the same temperature all the time. Would love to discuss that with you. But at some point, if you want to just shoot me an email, my email address will be up here at the end. But getting it set, find a set point.

Partick Hart

This is not like your home thermostat where you just set it for although you might have one that's more like a home thermostat. But if you just set it for, you know, 70 degrees and you just your furnace is kicking off and on constantly to get it and keep it at 70 degrees. In a commercial system, you want a range where you're not constantly generating heat or generating cooling. And in Washington State, in particular, we can take advantage of what they call free cooling, which is taking the outside air, which may be the appropriate temperature, and bringing it inside the building without having to heat or cool it. And so there's a good chunk of the year where free cooling through fresh air makes sense here.

Partick Hart

In a humid environment, like Dallas, this is less likely that they're getting a lot of free cooling. But in the northern areas, and then particularly on the West Coast, that's one one way you can really reduce your energy load. I will point out that the church that I worked at was also kind of coastal. It was in Everett, so right near right near the Puget Sound. One of the things that we did was we installed controls on our large rooftop air conditioning systems so that, they took advantage of the free cooling, and they also adjusted the fan speed.

Partick Hart

So the typical rooftop unit, the fan runs at 100% all the time. We had them, a controller put on that allowed us to lower that fan speed when the demand wasn't as high. And it's like, we had a school, so if kids were in a classroom and the CO2 level rose, the fans would kick up higher so they could bring in more fresh air, and then it would lower again. So we weren't running everything at 100%, and it saved us, like, 20% of our utility bill the first month we had it installed. So, there's creative ways, but there's also some really inexpensive ways of doing it too.

Partick Hart

And sometimes it's just setting some parameters within your, your, thermostats.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Yeah. Patrick, I have a question for you. Here at Saint David's in Austin, we have a very large solar panel on top of our parking garage, which was put in, in 2013, I think it was. So what's your take on installing solar panels to help offset that electric bill as well as electric usage?

Partick Hart

Solar has its place. It's not as popular now because a lot of the incentives went away, and the incentives for installing it were not always available to churches because they were tax credits. In the right environment, it's great, especially if you're generating the power that you need without having to take it off of the grid. But then you look at what is your energy cost. You're in Texas.

Partick Hart

And in Texas, electric rates are, the electric industry was deregulated. So, you can actually, you can negotiate your power bill, which is phenomenal, which has left a lot of folks without any real need to do solar power because it is expensive, and they don't last forever, and then they'll need to go in a landfill as well. So, be cautious about it. One method that I heard last week, I was in Dallas visiting over the church, and their facilities manager had had a backup battery installed on his house. And I think he said it cost $600, and it builds up its storage so that if there's a power outage, which coulda happened during this ice storm, it would provide his whole house with electricity, and he'd be able to just use it like the power never went out.

Partick Hart

But when it's, when the power is on and he's not utilizing the battery, it's generating power. It's collecting power and feeding it back to the grid so that it can be sold back to the power company by the battery company. Now that's not happening here in Seattle. I've not seen that. And my mother, who lives on Whidbey Island in Washington, just installed a $30,000 generator so she doesn't have to be without power.

Partick Hart

So there's just some crazy discrepancies in the you know, depending on where you live and what energy costs are like. But backup batteries might be the way to go in a

smaller parish. But if you have, like, large, covered parking areas, Phoenix being one area where, if you can use solar power to generate, a little bit of electricity for on these, covers where you're using it for your outdoor spaces and people with, you know, ten, twenty, 30 degrees cooler in the sun, I've seen really good success with that, because they're not just putting up a roof. They're actually making use of it. The other thing that I think about, in terms of when you're talking about solar, you're usually thinking about putting it on a roof.

Partick Hart

You can reduce your energy consumption by having a different colored roof. The roof on our church largely was a black, torch down style, rolled out, you know, and a torch down roof. When it needed to be replaced, we replaced it with a grayish colored, TPO roof, which meant that the roof wasn't as hot. So it didn't generate these disparity of, temperature ranges. It certainly wasn't as hot when you're on the roof, but it kept the building cooler.

Partick Hart

And so that, reduced our reliance on air conditioning during the the hot months.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Yeah. Just on the solar panel, again, I wanna emphasize this was put in before I came here. So they built one. It's the largest privately owned solar array in Downtown Austin. And, for good reason why we're the biggest, because they built it in 2013.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

And my guess is the city said, oh, we're gonna upgrade our downtown grid so you'll be able to sell it back to us. Well, thirteen years later, and they still have not upgraded their grid because it's too expensive and too hard to do because everything's

underground. And so Downtown Austin is the only electrical grid that does not accept inbound power from solar arrays. So we're sitting on a solar array that we have governed down and can only use 50% of it. But it still is saving us $3,000 a month in the summer, so it's nothing to sneeze at.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

But, it's still, before and we have, I've had churches call me about solar rays, and that's my caveat. Be sure to check with your energy company or the city if they own it, and find out if the grid that you're on can take inbound power so they can you can sell it back.

Partick Hart

Yeah. That's key. And the other piece of that is too, because of the cost factor, find a vendor that isn't just somebody trying to sell you solar, but find a vendor that can do it in a way that if there are any credits available, they might be able to get the credits and give it back to you and the cost up front. Right. There are organizations that are catering to churches to do just that.

Partick Hart

I can't think of the name of the one I'm that I know a guy from. I just can't think of the name of his company now, but that's what they do. They're trying to find a way to regain those credits that have typically been off limits to churches.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. We have a very strong environmental guild here, and I think that they were probably the drivers of solar panels back in 2013. So

Partick Hart

Yeah. I mean, I actually looked into things like wind generation to put because we had a lot of wind at our church, and we thought, oh, we can put some things on the roof, and that will generate. It, just for the cost factor, it wasn't gonna give a big bang. And by upgrading our HVAC equipment, we saw an immediate return Yeah. That covered the cost of that project completely.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Right. The other thing while we're talking about, you know, upkeep of your buildings and maintenance and, you know, deferred maintenance, which we all have, I just wanna put a plug in for the EPN conference. The property as the property track, the first session on Wednesday is I'm hosting it. And, also, our architects that worked on our historic church, did a PPMP, which is a phase preservation master plan for our entire campus. It's ours is five phases, and the historic church renovation was the first phase of that.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

But it gave us a road map of what to do. First it was a historic church, then it's, you know, HVAC systems, then it's life safe or it's life safety systems, then HEV systems, and then, you know, plumbing, things like that. So you have a whole plan, and you can fundraise if you need to for each phase as it progresses. So and then, of course, when you get to the end, you have to start all over again because by that time, you know, twenty years has gone by, and you have to do it. So I I invite anybody who's gonna be at the EPN conference in March, Episcopal Parish Network who's hosting this, to please come in and see that that first session on Wednesday about PPMP because it kinda goes along with keeping your facilities and your equipment and things like that up to speed and and even replacement, so you have time to fundraise to have a replacement.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

So just putting in a pitch there while we have time, Patrick.

Partick Hart

No. That's all good stuff, Jim. One of the things that I do, in my role, is I when I'm visiting churches, I just go around, hey. Visiting a church. It's really, I visit to perform facility condition assessments.

Partick Hart

And I look at their entire facility from the roof down. I look at the exterior. I look at the parking. I look at the HVAC equipment. I look at the interior of their buildings.

Partick Hart

I look at how well it's being cleaned. I look at how well their maintenance is taking place or isn't taking place, and they get a report that gives them that baseline. It gives them the clarity that they need in order to say, okay. How do we know when this equipment is expected to last until? And, what do we do with this one that's well past its life?

Partick Hart

And, we can put project costs toward those. And and and so they can look over the next ten, fifteen, twenty years and see how much they need to be putting aside every year to be prepared for that cost. And so that's that clarity that I was talking about is how can you, how can you get there? And that is what we do, through a facility condition assessment. We also offer scheduling software that helps you manage how your rooms are being used.

Partick Hart

You know, if you have a high activity level in your parish, how do you schedule those rooms? If even just thinking about how you schedule them in ways like so that the impact is, can we clean less? Can we put more people in one area versus multiple areas throughout the building and not have to clean so much, not have to use so much chemicals. How are you using your chemicals is another question is, are you using ready to use bottles, or are you using something that's a concentrate that's, less less stuff going in the landfill, and stuff that's being measured appropriately for your usage? Just an aside there. So scheduling software is good.

Partick Hart

We also have, facilities maintenance software that allows you to track all these things that you're doing in maintenance, putting work orders, to track your equipment, to you can see how much you're spending on these things over time, and and help make that informed decision as to do we need to replace this unit now, or can we go a little longer on that?

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Any other questions? You could throw them in the chat still if you have a question or a comment. Okay. Patrick, do have any

Partick Hart

throw my email in here.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Yeah. You please do.

Partick Hart

There we go. I would love to have a conversation with anybody that just wants to chat even if it's just, hey. I just need some simple ideas. But I would leave you with this. As somebody who's been there in the role, larger facilities, I've also worked in some smaller churches over the years, sometimes you just need to get the sound of the word for somebody, and we're happy to talk.

Partick Hart

If I can help direct you to something, it's awesome. The National Association of Church Facilities Managers is a great organization that I'm part of, that if you have facilities manager or you are a facilities manager or even if you're just the person tasked with managing those things but or volunteer, just some great resources. Just like what Jim was talking about, take advantage of the Episcopal Parish Network and and some sessions that will help you do what what you're doing, what you're tasked with and trusted care about.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Exactly. Alright. Again, don't forget we have our Episcopal Parish Network conference coming up in March. There's a link to it or information about it in the chat, but also it's episcopalparishes.net is the website. Patrick, thank you so much for imparting your knowledge and experience to us and helping us be better stewards of not only our time, time, treasure, but our buildings and equipment and all the things that we rely on to do all the other things that we do in ministry.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

They're all intertwined, and you can't ignore one at the detriment of the other. So

Partick Hart

I really appreciate it.

Jim Lamm (EPN)

Thank you so much, and thank you all for joining us today. And we'll see you either at the conference and or the next webinar. Thank you very much.