

St. Christopher's Church Goes 100% Solar

With Energize NY Financing and support from Westchester County, the church installed a 36kW solar system

By [Heather Flournoy \(Open Post\)](#) - Updated Date Don't show on local voices June 30, 2016 3:03 pm ET



St. Christopher's Roman Catholic Church in Buchanan, NY, was looking for ways to trim its nearly \$1,700 monthly electricity bill. Several council members had installed solar at their homes and felt that the church could save on its electricity bills and put that savings to better use.

Reverend Dr. George Oonnoony, who leads the St. Christopher-St. Patrick Parish's 4,000-members, felt it was in keeping with the Church's mission to protect the environment and reduce the effects on climate change by using more sustainable sources of energy, especially when facing their \$1700/mnth electric bill. "Pope Francis strongly urged the

people to protect the environment, and I thought what could I do to protect this environment?" says Reverend Dr. Oonnoony. "Installing solar at our church is another way of keeping His word in our practical life." [Video interview with Father Oonnoony here.](#)

The new roof-mounted 36kW solar system provides 100% of the electricity for the Church and four other structures on the property, which total 181,000 square feet. The solar installation was made possible with a twenty-year, \$150,800 Property Assessed Clean Energy loan from Energize NY with a 3.83% interest rate supported by Westchester County's Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds (QECBS).

With the Energize NY financing, which is accessible to nonprofits like St. Christopher's that often find it difficult to find sources for capital intensive improvements, the church was able to offset 100% of its electricity usage and repair their original 50+ year old roof structure and is expected to save \$3600 annually. [Energize NY Finance](#) offers Property Assessed Clean Energy (PACE) financing for energy efficiency and renewable energy improvements to buildings that are owned by not-for-profits and commercial entities. Unlike other loan products, Energize NY financing is repaid through an annual charge on the property's tax bill which automatically transfers to a new owner if the property is sold. Energize NY (PACE) financings generate savings to the building owner on day one, with annual energy savings exceeding the annual financing cost. The program is available in most of Westchester and the Hudson Valley. [See map here.](#)

"PACE financing is an ideal mechanism to finance clean energy upgrades for not-for-profits and small businesses because it enables them to overcome upfront cost barriers and easily access capital that is essentially paid for over time through energy savings." said Mark Thielking, Executive Director of Energize NY. "For churches and other not-for-profits, the choice too often comes down to a trade-off between using scarce capital resources to either upgrade their building or carry out their mission, which leads to substantial deferred maintenance challenges," said Thielking.

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This project is significant to the NYS solar market because it demonstrates that PACE financing can help solve this challenge for the nonprofit sector, which will help to meet NY State's goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions 40 percent by 2030.

"Cortlandt was an early member of Energize NY because we felt it was important to support the development of capital resources that could fund projects like this for buildings that contribute to the fabric of our town and to alternative energy sources," said Linda Puglisi, Supervisor of the Town of Cortlandt. "We hope to see more non-profit building owners, houses of worship and other organizations take advantage of this valuable Energize NY program as St. Christopher's Church has done."

The St. Christopher's solar installation is the third project in Westchester County that Energize NY has financed using QECBs, which makes energy-saving projects even more cost-effective. Last year Westchester County allocated up to \$4 million in QECBs to Energize NY to make available for clean energy upgrades to affordable housing facilities and buildings owned by not-for-profits, like St. Christopher's.

"With the unanimous support of the board of legislators, the solar installation at St. Christopher's Church is the latest result of Westchester's successful partnership with Energize NY. By leveraging Energize NY's resources and expertise with \$4 million in Qualified Energy Conservation Bonds financing, we are improving energy efficiency for non-profits and affordable housing developments throughout Westchester," says County Executive Rob Astorino.

More information on Energize NY is available at www.energizeny.org

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