

# St. James of Jerusalem: Zeroing our buildings' carbon footprint

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St. James of Jerusalem Episcopal Church, Long Beach, recently completed a five-year, eight-part, \$98,000 project to reduce – and ultimately eliminate – the church’s emission of greenhouse gases. And therein lies a tale.

When the Interfaith Association of Greater Long Beach met in the garden of St. James in fall of 2020, the Protestant, Roman Catholic, Jewish and Islamic faith leaders agreed that action on the climate crisis is a moral imperative. Following deep and enthusiastic discussion about their shared responsibility to be good stewards of God’s creation, the group committed to raising awareness of Creation Care, and the need to turn away from behavior that alters the Earth’s climate.

The group of faith leaders launched a series of weekly webinars, [This Fragile Earth, our Island Home](#), to help people learn about the climate crisis- its causes, solutions–its causes, solutions, and actions they could take to reduce the amount of heat trapping gas in the atmosphere, at home, in their workplaces and their respective houses of worship. Each faith leader invited their people, and the wheels were in motion.

Simultaneously teaching and learning, St. James’ leadership team set about securing a comprehensive assessment of energy use aimed at identifying inefficiencies and suggesting improvements.

“St. James Episcopal church and rectory were built in the mid-1930s and have not been upgraded with insulation or air sealing to improve energy efficiency,” the report stated. “The gas boiler remains approximately the same as the original in operation and efficiency...” The church and rectory were putting out roughly 17 tons of carbon dioxide each year.

We had our work cut out for us.

St. James’ eight-part project was based on the strategy presented at the Episcopal Diocese of Long Island (EDLI) [2022 Creation Care Retreat](#): stop using fossil fuels by electrifying everything and then generate or purchase your electricity from zero emission sources. Meanwhile, conserve energy.

1. Secure electricity from a clean source: St. James contracted with [Harvest Power](#) for solar-generated electricity via the [community solar program](#).
2. Air seal and insulate the church and rectory to keep drafts out and heat and cooling in;
3. Convert the rectory Heating, Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC), and
4. the church HVAC from natural gas to electric;
5. Install electric hot water heaters in the church and rectory;
6. Replace all gas appliances – two stoves and a laundry dryer – with electric appliances.



LEFT: St. James of Jerusalem Episcopal Church, Long Beach, NY. Retrieved from: <https://www.stjameslb.org/>

7. An electrical upgrade to support the increased demand for electricity created by the complete conversion, and finally
8. Remove the natural gas equipment.

All new equipment was installed above the level of flood risk, providing resilience in the event of storm surge or flooding.

The funding came from various sources. The [Metro IAF](#) (Industrial Area Foundation) provided \$38,000; the parish committed \$34,000 from our Building Fund; and the Diocese contributed almost \$23,000. In addition, National Grid did about \$16,000 worth of insulation work at no cost to the church, and the project qualified St. James for \$4,000 in rebates from PSEC. Total: almost \$98,000.

Energy conservation, through behavior modification, continues to be an essential element in achieving then maintaining our goal of being among the first – and indeed a model – emissions-free church. This is fitting, as Creation Care’s essential element is turning away from behavior that alters the Earth’s climate.

