

# STEWARDS OF ENERGY



Reducing energy consumption with HVAC automation  
by Lauren Hunter

As energy prices soar and church giving declines, there's a growing need for churches to embrace energy reduction practices to help conserve resources on every level. I know, you're hearing your own mother remind you, "Turn the lights off when you leave the room!" While it's pretty simple to train your family to turn off the lights and keep the doors and windows shut when the heat or air conditioning is on, it's a completely different ball of wax to train your church staff and members to do the same thing.

With heating and cooling costs at an all time high in most states, many churches are looking for ways to not only use less energy, but become better stewards of the energy they do use. New solutions are now on the market to give facilities managers the ability to automate heating and cooling HVAC systems for any and every part of a church building.

In the facilities management industry, it is commonplace practice to have automated thermostats; however, churches' needs are vastly different from your typical workplace in that most rooms are not used 100 percent of the time. Sure, you might have a suite of offices that need climate control all day, everyday; but chances are, your meeting rooms, worship facility, preschool room, kitchen and youth centers don't. Do you ever wonder how much energy is being wasted in cooling down or heating up rooms that are not in use?

## Control Issues

Often, the office manager or facilities manager aims to be in control of the temperature, but this can be a full-time job in and of itself, depending on the size and scope of your church facility. Also, if you have "hold" buttons on your thermostats, you probably know what a nightmare it can be when the Monday night support group sets the air at 68 degrees and hits that "hold" button only for you to return Tuesday morning to an empty, yet chilly room.

"The issue with HVAC management within churches, or any other buildings that aren't used full-time, is that a standard programmable thermostat is only useful if you can keep people's hands off the control. If it has the magic 'hold' button, even well-intentioned people can leave the thermostat on for hours or even days," says Jerry Drew, president and CEO of NetworkThermostat, a high volume networkable thermostat manufacturer that recently partnered with ServiceU Corporation to automate church facilities through EventU Green™.

There's a growing need for churches to EMBRACE energy reduction practices to help CONSERVE resources on every level.

He continues, "When you're using a networked thermostat, this problem goes away because you can limit, copy, distribute and manage schedules throughout the facility instead of going to each room to make a change."

EventU Green was designed to work in conjunction with EventU™, a web-based event scheduling and resource management application, to control a church's facility, resources and events. Because the information on events, rooms, resources and events is managed online via this software application, adding on HVAC control features makes perfect sense.

"We anticipated that our customers would need tools to help control their heating and cooling costs and overall energy consumption as rates rise," notes Tim Whitehorn, president and CEO of ServiceU. "Now, churches and ministries can very simply set up and automate the temperatures for each room and turn the air on and off according to the online schedule. Changes are made online in real-time, so if an event gets changed, the thermostat can be controlled remotely."

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## EventU Green Highlights

EventU Green™, an add-on package to the EventU online event management tool, allows you to coordinate heating and air conditioning online based on your event schedule. It interfaces with your HVAC system to handle your organization's heating and cooling needs by automating the process based on your events calendar.

### Highlights:

- Single online calendar system for managing events, rooms, resources and HVAC.
- Real-time control of all HVAC zones for an entire campus, church or facility.
- Reduces energy consumption and costs by as much as 20 percent or more.
- Higher "user satisfaction" since room temperature is automatically controlled.
- Frees up valuable labor time currently spent manually managing HVAC controls.
- HVAC control continues even if the Internet is down.

### HVAC Automation

For some organizations that aren't sure if they should automate their HVAC systems, here is a good rule of thumb according to Drew: "If your facility has more than two or three HVAC units, you need to be looking at automation. If you have more than four units without automation, watch out, you're really in for trouble."

Drew's nonprofit division of NetworkThermostat recently helped Colonial Baptist Church in North Carolina automate their 20 thermostats, and in four months, they saw a savings of \$10,000. The bigger your facility, the more potential there is for cost savings through HVAC automation.

"On average, we anticipate that the average church that automates their HVAC system will see an energy savings of 10 to 20 percent," comments Whitehorn.

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**Churches and ministries can very simply set up and automate the temperatures for each room and turn the air on and off according to the on-line schedule.**

While this is a conservative estimate, several churches that have automated their heating and cooling and have already seen a savings of 25 percent or more in the first quarter of automation. This is good news for churches waiting in the wings to see if automation will be worth the trouble. The overwhelming answer is yes.

### Getting Started

The cost of automation is a fraction of the anticipated savings on utility bills, not to mention the savings of staff time and resources. In addition, organizations that are increasingly concerned with energy usage and becoming more "Green" can know that creating a more efficient HVAC management system will put them on the right path.

### Facility Energy Savings Tips

Below are a few tips to help you reduce energy consumption at your facility:

- Unplug electronics, refrigerators, excess computer equipment in rooms no one is using. One easy way to do this is to install power strips and plug multiple items in to make turning off and on easier.
- Put lights in bathrooms on auto sensor motion switches to automatically turn off when no one is in the restrooms. This simple change can cut down on energy consumption significantly.

## Look for the Energy Star rating and only purchase new equipment that is certified as ENERGY EFFICIENT.

- Lower temperature setting on hot water heater to 120 degrees. This can also help keep kids safe in that they can't overheat water when washing hands in the bathroom.
- Set all computers in church office to "hibernate" mode after 30 minutes of inactivity.
- Use energy efficient equipment such as computer monitors, copiers, etc. Look for the Energy Star rating and only purchase new equipment that is certified as energy efficient.
- Switch out light bulbs to more energy efficient ones. Check you local city and/or energy companies for rebates on new energy efficient light bulbs.

- Set up church office and church member-run recycling programs for items such as bottles, cans, and paper. There are many private recycling companies now that pay good money for recyclables, or check your city for guidelines.❖

*Lauren Hunter is a freelance writer and owner of Lauren Hunter Public Relations, a communications firm dedicated to the faith-based technology market. For more information on how internet technology can improve your organization, contact Lauren at [lauren@laurenhunter.net](mailto:lauren@laurenhunter.net) or visit [www.laurenhunter.net](http://www.laurenhunter.net). For ongoing discussions regarding church technology, visit her blog at [www.ChurchTechToday.com](http://www.ChurchTechToday.com).*

*For more information on EventU Green visit [www.ServiceU.com](http://www.ServiceU.com) to get started*

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National Corporate Headquarters  
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