

## COMMITTEE 10

### RESOLUTION URGING SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE INVESTMENT PRACTICES

Whereas the historic social justice witness of the United Church of Christ (UCC) has manifested itself in multiple strategies for social, political and environmental change inspired by the biblical writings, the prophets, the teachings and life of Jesus, the historic cloud of witnesses to the Christian faith, and the leaders and the witness of transformational movements for peace, justice and equality for all, and in the light of God's unbounded love for all creation;

Whereas we who are blessed with financial assets — from those with modest incomes to those entrusted with substantial wealth — bear a God-given responsibility to use our economic power to further the realm of God: From everyone to whom much has been given, much will be required; and from the one to whom much has been entrusted, even more will be demanded. (Luke 12:48, NRSV); and

Whereas the economic power derived from the ownership of financial instruments presents a unique opportunity to speak truth to power and advance the cause of justice for the earth and the women, men and children of every nation; and

Whereas the principles of socially responsible investing — using the power of ownership to improve environmental, social, and governance (ESG) behaviors — align with the mission of members and ministries across the United Church of Christ; and

Whereas the United Church of Christ's Council on Financial Investments (1969) recognized that in order to invest in a manner that lives out our faith in the marketplace, "All Instrumentalities and Conferences should actively seek involvement consistent with General Synod policies to achieve socially beneficial change in corporate practice through their ownership" of financial instruments; and

Whereas widespread acceptance of the benefits of socially responsible investing have led to a growing amount (currently over 12%) of the investable assets in the United States being intentionally invested in a way that is socially responsible; and

Whereas the United Church of Christ is recognized as a founding member of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR), a vanguard organization dedicated to engaging the assets of faith-based and values-driven investors in calls for corporate change; and

Whereas the witness of the United Church of Christ through ICCR continues through the work of current members The Pension Boards—United Church of Christ, Inc. (PBUCC), an Affiliated Ministry of the United Church of Christ, and United Church Funds (UCF), an Associated Ministry of the United Church of Christ, both of which have practiced the principles of socially responsible investing for more than 40 years on behalf of plans and assets of the UCC, respectively; and

Whereas socially responsible investing includes many practices and actions taken at many levels, including but not limited to —

- proactive investment in socially beneficial endeavors, behaviors and opportunities
- dialogues with corporate leadership in pursuit of ESG changes
- shareholder resolutions that call for better practices and more complete disclosures
- exclusionary screens which seek to limit or avoid investment in certain industries for moral or performance bases
- divestment as a last resort, when other means of engagement and witness have failed over time to achieve the desired goal(s); and

Whereas shareholder advocacy, alongside other strategies of economic leverage for social justice witness, is important because of its direct engagement of publicly traded corporations with the witness of the church and the particular call to justice that the prophetic voice may bring to other shareholders, boards of directors and managers of companies in ways that cannot be duplicated by other forms of social justice action by the church; and

Whereas socially responsible investors use internationally accepted guidelines and norms to determine the environmental, social and governance impacts of corporations and invested assets and do not rely on anecdotal evidence; and

Whereas UCF and PBUCC seek to invest in ways that are consistent with the resolutions of General Synod and the witness of the United Church of Christ while maintaining the fiduciary controls appropriate for the particular kind of assets entrusted to each organization; and

Whereas, UCC polity permits and encourages different ministries of the UCC to advocate and be a witness in ways that are unique to each ministry;

Whereas socially responsible investing — alongside personal and corporate activism, intentional purchasing decisions, legislative improvements, awareness raising and prayer; all established parts of the United Church of Christ's witness of faith — demonstrates the commitment of individuals, churches, ministries and institutions to the work of justice to which all believers are called.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls upon all Members, Local Churches, Associations, Conferences, Agencies, and Associated, Affiliated and Covenanted Ministries to examine and adopt socially responsible investing practices appropriate to their individual assets, retirement accounts, and endowments, as guided by the Holy Spirit's call for justice; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirtieth General Synod urges all settings and ministries of the United Church of Christ to implement investment and financial policies and practices that promote socially responsible investment, guidelines and commitments, and to continue socially responsible investment for social justice witness on issues that the UCC has made known in past pronouncements and resolutions of General Synod in ways that are appropriate to each one; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirtieth General Synod of the United Church of Christ calls for a range of Socially Responsible investing practices and actions taken at many levels, including but not limited to —

- proactive investment in socially beneficial endeavors, behaviors and opportunities
- dialogues with corporate leadership in pursuit of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) changes
- shareholder resolutions that call for better practices and more complete disclosures
- exclusionary screens which seek to limit or avoid investment in certain industries for moral or performance bases

divestment when deemed appropriate; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirtieth General Synod acknowledges, recognizes, respects and affirms that each setting and ministry of the church has unique and appropriate ways of responding to the call to implement strategies of socially responsible investing within each setting's particular charter, purpose, restrictions and resources; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirtieth General Synod recommends to all settings and ministries of the United Church of Christ the partnership inherent in the ministries of United Church Funds and the Pension Boards of the United Church of Christ, which offer socially responsible investing vehicles; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that in order to bring to life God's vision for the world, a choice to invest in a socially responsible manner should not stand alone, but should be complemented by those other acts of witness that speak truth to power — using the ways and means available to each individual or organization to demand justice, by sharing efforts, policies, results and experiences of social justice witness through socially responsible investing and through regular reporting and presentations at future General Synods as an important overall witness of the UCC to advocate for justice, peace, human rights and the environmental well-being of the planet; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Thirtieth General Synod, affirming its covenantal relationships, requests future General Synods develop a procedure to allow for collaboration and communication between authors of resolutions concerning socially responsible investment practices and appropriate implementing bodies prior to committee consideration.

#### **FUNDING**

The funding for the implementation of the resolution will be made in accordance with the overall mandates of the affected agencies and the funds available.

#### **IMPLEMENTATION**

The Collegium of Officers of the Church, in consultation with appropriate ministries or other entities within the United Church of Christ, will determine the implementing body.