



**Provided by the Eco-Justice Team of the
Congregational Support Network,
Presbytery of the Cascades**

**CARING FOR CREATION:
GOOD EARTHKEEPING IDEA # 3
Invest with Your Values**

“ Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God”

WHAT:

- Socially Responsible Investing (SRI) is “Making money while making a difference.” Invest individually, and seriously consider investing church money, to promote Christian values of creation stewardship, peacemaking, community and social justice.
- The key SRI strategies are Screening, Shareholder Advocacy and Community Banking. (See back of this sheet for details).

WHY:

- The use and abuse of money is a key topic of the Holy Scriptures. SRI is way of expressing faithfulness to the Kingdom values we know through Jesus Christ.
- Corporations have ever-increasing power over the government, the media (now owned mostly by five large corporations), the military and the consumer through advertising. SRI is one effective way to change the way corporations do business.
- Globalization of the economy has taken jobs from the United States and without consideration of impacts on those suppliers and workers as stakeholders.
- The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A) believes that Church investment is more than a practical question. It is also "an instrument of mission and includes

theological, social and economic considerations." (183rd General Assembly, UPCUSA, 1971). This belief flows from our understanding of the stewardship of God's resources entrusted to the church. Thus, "we confess that the Lord is really the acknowledged Master of our entire life-moral, physical and material." (116th General Assembly, PCUS, 1976).

HOW: Some ways you can be a Socially Responsible Investor:

- If you invest in stocks, learn if the companies you hold are supportive of your values. Investigate companies before investing. *Business Ethics* publishes a survey of “100 Best Companies,” and *Forbes* is a good source of information.
- Vote your shareholder proxy.
- Check www.PCUSA.org/MRTI for shareholder resolutions and divestment list.
- Write letters to corporations you hold to give your opinion about their social or environmental performance or write as a consumer expressing your preference for Fair Trade and environmentally responsible products.
- Support CDIF Community Banks with your savings accounts and CDs etc.
- Consider joining or starting a SR investment club.
- Choose a SR Mutual fund and check the screening chart for that fund; then check Morningstar for a fund report. See: www.socialfunds.com, www.socialinvest.org

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RESOURCES:

Co Op America. An excellent resource for learning how to become more socially conscious in economic life. Provides a guide on SRI. www.coopamerica.org

Social Investment Forum. A national nonprofit membership association dedicated to promoting the concept and practice of SRI. Provides an online guide to SRI. www.socialinvest.org

SocialFunds.com features over 10,000 pages of information on SRI mutual funds, community investments, corporate research, shareowner actions, and daily social investment news.

Presbyterian Church, USA Foundation. Acts as a trust manager for small church related trusts, invests and administers gifts, distributing proceeds according to the direction of trust founders. www.presbyterianfoundation.org

Presbyterian Church, USA Mission Responsibility Through Investment. Implements the General Assembly's policies on socially responsible investing by engaging corporations in which the church owns stock. Issues are selected annually upon referral from the General Assembly, and in consultation with ecumenical partners. www.pcusa.org/mrti

Overview of SRI Strategies

1. **Screening** out companies that consider only shareholders at the expense of other stakeholders, such as workers, suppliers, and communities, as well as the environment. An individual will determine his/her own screens. It is the policy of the Presbyterian Church, USA Foundation and pension fund not to hold stocks held on the Divestment List. Forty percent of major corporations now report their efforts towards accountability on their web site. This reflects tremendous growth in the visibility of corporations.

2. **Shareholder Activism** means letter writing and dialoging with a company about issues of equality or fairness; voting shareholder resolutions, or filing resolutions for the shareholders' proxy votes. When dialogue

and shareholders resolutions don't work, divestment is considered. Individuals can write letters as stockholders, and will most often receive a reply. Sending letters to a magazine, such as *Better Investing* can provide a lot of mileage on social issues.

3. **Community Banking** means putting your money in banks that loan to the marginalized that other banks won't lend to. These banks give assistance to help small new businesses be successful. Started in Chicago by Shore Bank, the success was phenomenal in redlined areas designated by corporate banks excluding lending to poor blacks with run-down homes. With help they renovated their homes, took pride in their communities, enhanced property values and repaid their loans. Community Banks in Oregon include ShoreBank and Albina Community Bank. Credit unions are member-owned and also have a community mission.

Microcredit Funds are nonprofit banks that give small loans primarily to people in third world countries to help them develop a skill and start a business on the street. Microcredit started in India at the Grameen Bank and is growing throughout the world. The Presbyterian Church has a relationship with Oikocredit www.oikocredit.com, an ecumenical organization that provides micro-loans to small businesses in developing countries. "It is a peacemaking way of development because it raises people from abject poverty to where they have secure incomes. They become less prone to violence because they are pleased with their lives."

