

General Convention of The Episcopal Church 2024 Archives' Research Report

Resolution No.: 2024-A028
Title: Support for Freedom to Consider Ethical Issues in Investing
Proposer: Executive Council Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility
Topic: Socially Responsible Investment

Directly Related: (Attached)

2022-A073 Encourage Adoption of Ethical and Responsible Investment Programs
2022-A089 Divest from Fossil Fuel Companies and Invest in Renewable Energy
2018-A020 Divest From Fossil Fuel Companies and Reinvest in Clean Energy
2018-A061 Create a Task Force on the Church's Theology of Money
2018-D068 Develop Social Responsible Investment Criteria for Guidance
2015-C045 Call for Investing in Clean and Renewable Energy
2006-A109 Mandate Purpose of the Committee on Social Responsibility in Investments

Indirectly Related: (Available in the [Acts of Convention](#) database, searchable by resolution number)

2022-C013 Oppose Legislation that Penalizes Non-Violent Boycotts or Divestitures
2018-C021 Call for Shareholder Advocacy for Environmental Impact
2018-D081 Call for Community Development Efforts and Government Policy Initiatives to Address Transition to Clean Energy
1994-A042 Encourage Church Investment Strategy on Hazardous Chemicals
1985-D073 Mandate Divestment in Companies Doing Business in South Africa and Namibia
1973-D050 Commend Responsible Investment by Executive Council and Request Diocesan

In preparing this report, the Archives researched the resolutions in the Acts of Convention database for the period 1973 through 2022, selecting “direct” resolutions that have a substantive bearing on the proposed legislation. The “direct” resolutions are attached and “indirect” resolutions are available in the Acts of Convention database. Committee members who require other research assistance should contact the Archives through the [Research Request Form](#).

A028 - Support for Freedom to Consider Ethical Issues in Investing

Final Status: Not Yet Finalized

Proposed by: Executive Council Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility

Has Budget Implications: No

Cost:

Amends C&C or Rules of Order: No

Requests New Interim Body: No

Changes Mandate Of Existing Ib: No

Directs Dfms Staff: No

Directs Dioceses: No

Directs Executive Council: Yes

HiA: No House Assigned

Legislative Committee Currently Assigned: No Committee Assigned

Completion Status: Incomplete

Latest House Action: N/A

Supporting Documents: No

Resolution Text

That the 81st General Convention reaffirm its commitment to and encouragement across the Church of faithful and ethically responsible investing addressing ethical concerns for social, environmental and governance matters, including climate change and human rights, commonly referred to as ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) investing, as set forth in General Convention resolution 2022-A073; and be it further

Resolved, that General Convention reaffirm the Episcopal Church's long practice of aligning its investments with the values of Jesus Christ as expressed in General Convention and Executive Council resolutions, through such means as corporate engagement through dialogue, filing and voting on shareholder resolutions, voting in director elections, and divestment and affirmative investment, including ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) investing, and, more broadly, participation in boycotts and sanctions campaigns, as with South Africa, all in order to help carry out the Church's commitment to environmental sustainability, justice, and equal rights at home and globally, while generating positive financial returns; and be it further

Resolved, that General Convention affirm the use of ESG investing by Executive Council's Investment Committee in its management of the investments of the Domestic and Foreign Missionary Society (DFMS), and affirm the work of the Executive Council's Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility (CCSR) in advocating for corporate engagement through

dialogue, filing and voting on shareholder resolutions, voting in director elections, and divestment and affirmative investment, including ESG (Environment, Social, Governance) investing, as CCSR supports General Convention and Executive Council in carrying out their responsibilities for the Church's investments; and be it further Resolved, that General Convention affirm and support the Church's advocacy for the right of all investors, whether or not they are guided by faith commitments, to consider all financial and other factors relevant to investing, to use ethical criteria, including ESG investing, to assess investment risks and opportunities, and to engage with companies, including through dialogue and voting, in making responsible investments; and be it further

Resolved, that General Convention lament, condemn and oppose proposals and actions of some federal, state and local legislatures and agencies, and attorneys general, to suppress and outlaw the consideration of all financial and other factors relevant to investing and the use of ethical criteria, including ESG investing, to assess investment risks and opportunities; and be it further

Resolved, that General Convention encourage the Church to advocate publicly for the freedom to invest responsibly and against legislation that would prohibit divestment, or ESG investing, or consideration of all environmental, social and governance factors relevant to responsible investment decisionmaking; and be it further

Resolved, that General Convention encourage active support for the rights of shareholders to raise important issues through the proxy resolution and voting process, including support for the authority of the United States Securities and Exchange Commission to rule on shareholders' access to corporate ballots; and be it further

Resolved, that General Convention direct CCSR, as part of its advocacy of responsible investing, to continue its ongoing engagement, divestment and investment work with companies that contribute to and/or benefit from human rights violations and/or environmental exploitation in areas of conflict and high risk, such as Sudan, Myanmar, the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and elsewhere; and be it further

Resolved, that General Convention commend CCSR's 53-year record of promoting corporate responsibility and encourage all dioceses and congregations to view The CCSR Story video (currently linked at <https://www.episcopalchurch.org/video/the-ccsr-story/>) that celebrates our Church's witness, and to share the video with their people.

Explanation

ESG:

Environment – striving for protection of all God's creation, especially through a clean energy future

Social – Promoting human and civil rights through justice for all humanity

Governance – promoting equity in the workplace and diversity among corporate leadership (gender and ethnicity)

(See generally General Convention resolution 2022-A073, appended at the end of this explanation.) Using ESG promotes responsible investing that aligns with the Church's values while also assuring sound financial returns. Divestment has been a tool of the Church for decades, as has been affirmative investment. The Church has used these tools on issues like tobacco, fossil fuels, private prisons, military contractors, and South Africa apartheid, and other instances where human rights have been or are being denied and/or routinely ignored, such as in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia. Other tools include boycotts—such as those of Nestle infant formula (1979) and of oil companies doing business in South Africa (1988)—and advocating with government for government action, such as imposing government financial sanctions on South Africa (which ultimately led to the end of apartheid). In the United States, some federal, state and local legislatures and agencies, and attorneys general, have sought recently to ban or stifle use of ESG by government investors. These efforts, while not aimed directly at the Church, threaten the Church's ability to continue its efforts, now carried on over many years, advocating for applying ethical standards by all investors, including faith-based investors. The Freedom to Invest campaign, launched by CERES and other responsible investors, is pushing back against this dangerous threat. The Church can influence the public to reject such efforts to suppress ESG.

Previous General Convention resolution on this topic: 2022-A073 Encouraging Faithful, Ethical, and Responsible Investing

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention affirm to all institutional investors across the Church the value and importance of faithful and ethical investing (defined as investing institutional assets consistently with the Church's faith and teachings and the Church's mission) and responsible investing (defined as addressing, ethical concerns for social, environmental and governance matters, including climate change and human rights); and be it further

Resolved, That all institutional investors across The Episcopal Church be encouraged to adopt faithful and ethically responsible investing for their investment programs and portfolios and to manage their investment assets using the following elements of ethically responsible investing: ethical and theological guidelines for investment selection and management; shareholder engagement, including voting proxies; and investing for responsible social and environmental outcomes as well as for financial return.



Resolution Number: 2022-A073
Title: Encourage Adoption of Ethical and Responsible Investment Programs
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention affirm to all institutional investors across the Church the value and importance of faithful and ethical investing (defined as investing institutional assets consistently with the Church's faith and teachings and the Church's mission) and responsible investing (defined as addressing, ethical concerns for social, environmental and governance matters, including climate change and human rights); and be it further

Resolved, That all institutional investors across The Episcopal Church be encouraged to adopt faithful and ethically responsible investing for their investment programs and portfolios and to manage their investment assets using the following elements of ethically responsible investing: ethical and theological guidelines for investment selection and management; shareholder engagement, including voting proxies; and investing for responsible social and environmental outcomes as well as for financial return.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022* (New York: General Convention, 2023), p. 446.



Resolution Number: 2022-A089
Title: Divest from Fossil Fuel Companies and Invest in Renewable Energy
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention, affirming resolution 2015-C045 and 2018-D081, direct the Episcopal Church to continue to divest all funds from fossil fuel companies and mutual funds including fossil fuel companies, including but not limited to natural gas, oil, coal, and fracking, by 2025 and that these divested funds be reinvested in renewable energy funds and that no fossil fuels funds be purchased in the future; and be it further

Resolved, That dioceses and congregations continue to explore the moral and ethical benefits of divesting from fossil fuel and reinvesting in renewable energy and support their fund managers to act on divestment and reinvestment; and be it further.

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention, also affirming resolution 2018-D081 and recognizing that many of our communities and congregations have been grown and sustained by fossil fuel industries, urge a pastoral and practical approach to just transition to new economies, and direct the Episcopal Church staff to form partnerships with existing just transition organizations to support our dioceses and congregations; and be it further

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention urge the Church Pension Fund (CPF) to be mindful of the Church's desire to become increasingly invested in renewable and clean energy; and be it further

Resolved, That the 80th General Convention request that the Church Pension Fund provide a report that includes a sustainability plan to the 81st General Convention; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention direct the Office of Governmental Relations to advocate for and support public policies that support a just transition for fossil fuel dependent communities.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Baltimore, 2022* (New York: General Convention, 2023), p. 454.



Resolution Number: 2018-A020
Title: Divest From Fossil Fuel Companies and Reinvest in Clean Energy
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention call upon the Investment Committee of the Executive Council to report to Executive Council all steps taken in the past triennium to divest from fossil fuel companies and reinvest in clean renewable energy in a fiscally responsible manner in accordance with General Convention resolution 2015-C045; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention reaffirm the language of resolution GC2015-C045 urging all institutions, dioceses, and congregations of the Episcopal Church to engage the topic of divestment from fossil fuels and reinvestment in clean energy and encourage them to share progress toward this goal with the Executive Council and the Advisory Council on the Stewardship of Creation; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention commend the Church Pension Fund for its passion in responding to climate change and for its statement “This does not mean that we would never divest; to do so, however, we would have to believe that divesting would not negatively impact the financial performance of our portfolio” (CPF Report to the House of Deputies, November 2, 2017, page 6); and be it further

Resolved, That in light of this statement, that the General Convention urge CPF to be mindful of the Church’s desire to become increasingly invested in renewable and clean energy; and be it further

Resolved, That the General Convention request that the Church Pension Fund provide a report that includes a sustainability plan to the 80th General Convention.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), pp. 1095-1096.



Resolution Number: 2018-A061
Title: Create a Task Force on the Church's Theology of Money
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention direct the Presiding Bishop and President of the House of Deputies of The Episcopal Church to appoint a Task Force on the Church's Theology of Money, consisting of four (4) bishops, five (5) presbyters or deacons, and six (6) lay persons, who represent the cultural and economic diversity of the Church; and be it further
Resolved, That the Task Force be directed to use scripture, approved liturgical resources, other theological texts, and previous actions of General Convention to summarize the ways in which The Episcopal Church understands the theology of money and financial resources in the way we give, invest, and spend; and be it further
Resolved, With regards to investment beliefs, that the Task Force should examine the following elements of responsible investing consistent with the Church's faith and mission as practiced today by many institutional investors across the Church: applying ethical guidelines in investment selection and management, shareholder activism, and investing for responsible social and environmental outcomes as well as financial return; and be it further
Resolved, That the Task Force be directed to present its findings and recommendations to the 80th General Convention; and be it further
Resolved, That the Task Force be directed to make available its findings and recommendations as a resource to guide and inform policy on giving, spending, and investing across The Episcopal Church; and be it further
Resolved, That the General Convention request the Joint Standing Committee on Program, Budget, and Finance to consider a budget allocation of \$30,000 for the implementation of this resolution.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), p. 1068.



Resolution Number: 2018-D068
Title: Develop Social Responsible Investment Criteria for Guidance
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 79th General Convention requests Executive Council to ask its Committee on Corporate Social Responsibility (CCSR), in consultation with, among others, those in the Church engaged with concerns for human rights and with concerns for the care of creation, to develop and propose to Executive Council for its review and adoption:

- (a) criteria by which the Church may assess the Church's investments in companies that the Church finds to be inconsistent with the Church's faith and mission or questionable under the Church's ethical teaching, and criteria by which the Church may evaluate the effectiveness of efforts to engage with such companies and the effectiveness of divestment through creation of a No Buy list from such companies, and
- (b) procedures for the Church to follow in making a decision to engage companies or to establish a No Buy list, and
- (c) to accomplish this work, CCSR is encouraged to look for partner organizations outside of The Episcopal Church in which to participate in Collective Action;

And be it further

Resolved, That this work be completed by CCSR by March of 2020 for consideration and action by Executive Council in that year.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Austin, 2018* (New York: General Convention, 2018), pp. 1069-1070.



Resolution Number: 2015-C045
Title: Call for Investing in Clean and Renewable Energy
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred as Amended
Final Text:

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention of the Episcopal Church welcomes the release of the Environmental Protection Agency's proposed carbon rule for existing power plants; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention calls upon the Investment Committee of the Executive Council, the Episcopal Church Endowment Fund, and the Episcopal Church Foundation to divest from fossil fuel companies and reinvest in clean renewable energy in a fiscally responsible manner; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention calls on the Investment Committee of the Executive Council, the Episcopal Church Endowment Fund, and the Episcopal Church Foundation to refrain from purchasing any new holdings of public equities and corporate bonds of fossil fuel companies; and be it further

Resolved, That the 78th General Convention urges all dioceses and parishes of the Episcopal Church to engage the topic of divestment from fossil fuels and reinvestment in clean energy within the coming year.

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Salt Lake City, 2015* (New York: General Convention, 2015), pp. 879-880.



Resolution Number: 2006-A019
Title: Amend Constitution Article I.7 [General Convention--Second Reading]
Legislative Action Taken: Concurred
Final Text:

Resolved, That Article I, Section 7, of the Constitution be amended to read as follows:
Section 7. The General Convention shall meet not less than once in each three years, at a time and place *determined in accordance with the Canons.* ~~appointed by a preceding Convention; but if there shall appear to the Presiding Bishop, acting with the advice and consent of the Executive Council of the Church or of a successor canonical body having substantially the powers now vested in the Executive Council, sufficient cause for changing the place or date so appointed, the Presiding Bishop, with the advice and consent of such body, shall appoint another place or date, or both, for such meeting.~~ Special meetings may be *held as provided for by Canon.*

Citation: General Convention, *Journal of the General Convention of...The Episcopal Church, Columbus, 2006* (New York: General Convention, 2007), pp. 568-569.