

FAQ:

“Why should a small congregation care about socially responsible investing? We have other priorities. What can we do that makes sense?”

8 ways small congregations can benefit from getting involved in socially responsible investing and have an impact

1. Churches can use **checking, savings and money market accounts in socially responsible ways**. You don't need a big endowment to do something significant. Where you park your money – even temporarily – can have a positive community impact. Choose your financial institution with this in mind. Check out the bank's track record for local investing practices. Review a list of reputable community financial institutions published by the Social Investment Forum in their Congregational Community Investing Handbook. A link is on the conference home page.
2. One way churches seek to establish a firmer long-term financial position is to engage members in a discussion around estate planning/bequests, etc. And sometimes they come out of the blue. Even before your church has any bequests to deal with it is important to prepare by: a) understanding what the fiduciary responsibilities of staff and leaders are; and b) creating a **good investment policy that will attract potential donations/bequests**.
3. **The UUA and UUSC are interested in partnering with local congregations on a combined corporate responsibility initiative, to put more muscle in what the denomination does with its investments**. This involves pairing a denominational shareholder action with respect to a certain corporation with local congregants' letter-writing campaigns as shareholders and/or customers of the corporation. Again, your particular congregation need not be an investor. For more information, contact Tim Brennan, the UUA's Treasurer. Contact information is on the conference website and UUA website.
4. **UUs often find it difficult to talk about money, race and class issues**. A UU minister who is expert in socially responsible investing is developing a curriculum about how to foster values clarification and dialogue in a congregation about these often sensitive subjects. This is useful work, even if a congregation has no collective investment funds to manage! Contact Rev. Sydney Morris, co-chair of the UUA's Committee on Socially Responsible Investing through this website.
5. **Build member's financial and spiritual capacities at the same time**. One of the more popular ideas coming from the Money, Values and Impact Conference was the inspiring example heard about a United Methodist Church that sponsored a socially responsible investing adult study group. This consisted of United Methodist Women who met to share the research and collectively invest. Why not host a UU covenant group with this focus? It could have many positive ripple effects down the road for members and your congregation!
6. Congregations alone or together could decide to be a **conduit for loan funds** related to various initiatives (e.g. supporting affordable housing, weatherization, green micro-enterprises, etc.). Again, this does not require the congregation to have the pool of money in the first place. It requires a vision and a commitment to making something happen in your community.

7. **Congregations of various sizes may find themselves with unused property.** Enterprise Partners has a program to help congregations use that land/building and partner with others to use it to create affordable housing – to make a big community investment impact. Contact David Bowers about this program. Contact information in the speakers' section.

8. **Existing and emerging carbon markets** in the U.S. may be a source of investment funds that UU congregations could tap to engage in carbon-emissions reductions on their own behalf or to advance energy-saving in low-income communities, small businesses, green job creation and training, etc. For more information, contact Leslie Lowe, of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility.