

## **Study Guide for Faithful Investing**

A note for pastors from the author, Jim Murphy:

The purpose of this study guide is to stimulate conversation, as well as supporting planning and personal reflection in a congregation or religious organization. Though it could be used by an individual, if used by an investment or other committee to share and discuss views and perspectives, it will be helpful to remind participants that everyone is not expected to agree on every issue and people should remain respectful as dissenting views are discussed. People will come with predispositions as well as different levels of knowledge and experience with investing. Participants will have very different views on what is best for the church to do in a variety of contexts. Please encourage groups who use this study guide to begin and end every meeting with prayer and to be mindful about listening to others without immediate judgement.

### Chapter 1 - Basic Concepts and Terms

1. What is most important to you personally regarding Socially Responsible Investing (SRI)? Would it be different from the leadership of your congregation/organization?
2. Would you tolerate lower performance if it satisfied other SRI goals?
3. How much do you have available to invest? What are your options as a congregation/organization? Do you have knowledgeable people who could oversee this effort?
4. If you are currently working with an outside advisor or denominational resources, how are they performing? Does your current provider have investment options that are suitable for your asset size? Are there options available to fit your various investment and socially responsible goals?
5. Do you have the ability to track different funds separately? Does your investment provider allow you that option?

### Chapter 2 - What This Means for My Congregation/Organization

1. Does your congregation/organization have an Investment Policy Statement (IPS)? If so, how often do you review it? [Review IPS examples on Faithful Investing site.](#)
2. What are the most important aspects of SRI to your leaders? Do you all agree? How do you plan to discuss and resolve/tolerate differences of opinion?
3. What investment options are presently used? What options are available from current or other providers?
4. If direct ownership of stocks and bonds is not advisable or possible, how are Pooled Funds, mutual funds, ETFs and other options viewed? Do leaders understand investment and fiduciary principles regarding your congregation/organization's assets?
5. If your congregation/organization cannot or chooses not to invest in a socially responsible manner, are there other ways to serve and improve your local community and the wider world? What are the ministry priorities of your community of faith?

### Chapter 3 - Is Perfect the Enemy of the Good? Starting Socially Responsible Investing incrementally

1. What are your ideals for SRI? Can you prioritize your goals?
2. What will be the most difficult goals to implement?
3. If every goal cannot be achieved immediately, what can be accomplished over time? What would be a reasonable timeline?
4. How will you reconcile your fiduciary responsibilities for investment performance and accountability to donors and other constituents with your SRI plans?
5. How is your congregation/organization seeking to build consensus on SRI priorities among constituents? How is it allowing space for discussion and legitimate differences of opinion?

### Chapter 4 - Repairing the World One Company at a Time – Shareholder Advocacy

1. Should your congregation/organization engage directly with companies? What would other options be? Are there other local or national organizations who could act on your behalf?
2. Can you hold stocks directly or is this not feasible? Would you be satisfied by your investment manager acting on your behalf? How would you learn about and report to constituents on what they are doing?
3. Can you balance your SRI goals with the goals of a particular company whose stock you are holding? Would you seek to enhance the company's success through collaborating with its leaders to contribute to future value and also achieve SRI goals?
4. Do you understand the latest update to SEC regulations taking effect 2022 regarding filing shareholder proposals? [Read the ICCR article on SEC changes.](#)
5. How will these recent SEC changes impact your investments and your plans for future engagement?

### Chapter 5 - Inclusion, Equity and Diversity

1. What are the benefits of diversity in the workplace and for investing in those companies who focus on it?
2. Do you personally encourage growing diversity in your congregation/organization? In your leadership?
3. Racial justice and reconciliation have always been important but are now being more openly discussed. What is your congregation/organization doing to address these important issues?
4. What aspects of diversity and inclusion have remained unaddressed in your community of faith? Why is that the case?

### Chapter 6 - Dignity of Every Human Being-Human Rights, Human Trafficking and Investing

1. How can your community of faith address issues of human dignity? Can you collaborate with other people or organizations to address human rights?
2. How is your investment provider addressing issues related to human rights? Is investment the only way for your congregation/organization to address human rights issues?

3. Are there new opportunities for ministry for your community of faith for enhancing human rights and dignity?
4. What would be the most impactful ways for your congregation/organization to address human rights issues?

#### Chapter 7 - Investor Action on Climate Change

1. How has your community of faith taken action to address climate change? Do you take actions regarding your own consumption of fossil fuels?
2. Is holding stock in “carbon-companies” something your congregation/organization would do? Will shareholder actions move carbon-focused companies to develop new energy alternatives?
3. What would you be willing to give up or change, as an individual or as an organization, to improve the planet’s environment?
4. Has investor action had “enough,” “too much,” or “not sufficient” impact on moving toward a carbon-neutral economy?

#### Chapter 8 - Creating Positive Change: Impact Investing, Community Development, and the Rethinking of Returns

1. Does your congregation/organization have the ability to do “impact investing” in any way?
2. How could you work on improving your local community through local action or focused impact investment?
3. Can your investments sustain lower returns when benefiting others? Can you segregate particular funds for this purpose?
4. Has your congregation/organization reviewed using local community resources for its banking needs?

#### Chapter 9 - Inspiring Donors through Investing with Values

1. Does your congregation/organization encourage all types of giving: annual, major/capital, and planned? Are your giving efforts coordinated?
2. Do you have donors who may be inspired to make gifts to support efforts in SRI?
3. Do your endowment or gift acceptance policies promote the creation of new funds, and what are your guidelines for creating such funds and keeping their purposes flexible for future developments and changes?

#### Chapter 10 - Taking Decisive Action, One Step at a Time

1. What are the next steps you will take at your congregation/organization?
2. How will you build consensus around issues of SRI?
3. What have been the most difficult issues to discuss around SRI? Why?
4. How will you report and promote your work in SRI to your constituents?

5. What collaborations on any particular aspects of SRI could you seek among other churches and/or organizations, even those outside your denomination?

#### Chapter 11 - Individual Investor Decisions and Considerations

1. What choices have you made individually regarding SRI? What options are you considering for the future?
2. How comfortable is the leadership of your congregation/organization on encouraging constituents to consider SRI for themselves and their own investments? Are there offerings available in retirement or other personal accounts?
3. Does your denomination/local judicatory have opportunities for doing individual banking/credit union options? Does your community have opportunities to participate personally in local credit unions which focus on reinvesting in your local area?
4. Are there new ministry opportunities for your congregation/organization to consider in serving local community needs? Are there ways to collaborate with other religious entities locally, or beyond, to help improve your local community?

#### Review of Case Studies

1. Which case study spoke to you the most? Why?
2. Would you choose performance over social impact?
3. Do you think that every community of faith must invest in a socially responsible way? Or can congregations/organizations make a difference in other ways?
4. Do you think that individual communities of faith should always comply with what their national bodies have promoted for SRI? What should be the process for NOT following national guidelines?
5. Can you relate to and understand why some church leaders do not want to participate in SRI?
6. What will your next step be regarding SRI, for yourself and for your congregation/organization?

#### Review of Resources

1. Does your denomination provide resources to assist in your SRI efforts?
2. If your denomination does not provide resources, are there other options you can investigate?

To provide feedback on this book and its resources, [please send a message by following James W. Murphy's Facebook author page.](#)