

Peoples Church of Flint, MI

Statement of Financial Guiding Principles, adopted 12-2-2020

*“The Spirit of the Exalted God is upon me, for God has anointed me:
God has sent me to bring good news to those who are poor;
to heal broken hearts; to proclaim release to those held captive and liberation to those in prison;
to announce a year of favor from God, and the day of God’s vindication;
to comfort all who mourn, to provide for those who grieve in Zion—
to give them a garland of flowers instead of ashes,
the oil of gladness instead of tears, a cloak of praise instead of despair.”*

With that passage from Isaiah 61, in May 2020, Peoples Church adopted the Garland Declaration, to “reaffirm our commitment to the common good, God’s vision of a just world illuminated by the prophets ancient and modern, and lived in the life of Jesus.”

In it, we stated our commitment to “be on the side of creation — people, animals and the earth itself, struggling to breathe under the weight of greed, power and self-indulgence,” and reiterated our care for the most vulnerable, “those with and without home, with and without documentation, with and without a place in the mainstream or a voice in the conversation” and “beyond humans to the earth itself and all the creatures with whom we share it.”

This Statement of Financial Guiding Principles is to be our roadmap for *how we care*, a guide for how we spend and invest, with whom and on behalf of whom we do business.

How We Spend

Even our daily spending as a congregation is an opportunity to do good. Therefore, as a congregation purchasing goods and services:

1. we will try, when possible, to do business with locally owned businesses, supporting the city of Flint where possible.
2. we will seek, where possible, to engage minority-owned businesses and services, recognizing our role in the the historic disadvantage and our opportunities to help mitigate this.
3. we will remain aware of the investing parameters set above, and seek to follow them in all our spending.

How We Share

Peoples Church is the legacy of many generations, having been built on the exploitative and discriminatory practices and mores we now decry. We will seek to share as we are able with those who have been historically harmed and those seeking to undo the damage:

1. **Discretionary.** We will continue to strengthen our discretionary spending, sharing whatever we can with neighbors in difficult circumstances.
2. **Tithing.** Upon receipt of any bequests, we will immediately share 10 percent with some community organization or organizations whose principles and mission are compatible with ours.
3. **Scholarships.** We have substantial scholarship funds whose principle balance we cannot spend, but which investment income we award. We will, where possible, award these: to afford higher education for minority students; to support non-traditional education for those who choose non-college vocations; to provide educational support for vulnerable populations in need of special services; to provide education related grants to organizations working with vulnerable populations in any of these circumstances.

How We Invest

Peoples Church has been blessed with the savings of prior generations, held in trust for our mission purposes. While we manage this in a way that provides annual income for our operations, we are also cognizant of the secondary reality — that the fund balance is working on behalf of other entities, other purposes. We intend to ensure the secondary purposes also align with our missional principles.

We will invest in ways that promote the causes of racial justice, economic justice, bodily autonomy, integrity of the earth and restoration of creation, an end to militarism and war, an end to exploitation and abuse. We will embrace corporations that seek to mitigate the exploitative effects of capitalism, that promote peace among and between peoples and species, that honor labor and neighbors, locally and around the world.

Therefore, we will divest or decline to invest in corporations or entities whose services, products, labor practices or political activities and affiliations undermine these goals, including:

Peoples Church of Flint, MI

1. those that manufacture weapons, underwrite or supply the means of conflict, or traffic in products that lead to war or community violence;
2. those whose products or services contribute to militarization of police forces and over-policing of communities, including surveillance systems, equipment or weapons beyond the needs of building and supporting community;
3. those whose products or services are intended to militarize our borders and create harm for people seeking refuge, asylum or a better life, or whose products are the result of war, exploitation or irresponsible and unsustainable extraction;
4. those whose products or services undermine the prior rights of ancestral lands of indigenous peoples;
5. those whose product, primary service or business practices are destructive to the earth and dismissive of the climate crisis, including fossil fuels, fracking, plastics, destruction of wetlands, habitats and ecosystems, and food production that is high on the "food chain;"
6. those whose primary product or service is reliant on disrupting or undermining the well-being of communities, including prisons, detention centers, and publicly-funded private schools and clubs;
7. those whose business practices are exploitative of incarcerated people or those with limited options, including phone and vending services inside prisons, check-cashing/payday lenders, grocery stores in food deserts or where transportation is limited, or pharmaceutical companies that dump dangerous products in ravaged communities;
8. those that manufacturer products with a primary purpose of harm, including handguns, addictive chemical products or products which are poisonous to the earth itself (such as Round-up or Teflon);
9. those that support or lobby for policies that restrict the right of women to control their reproductive life;
10. those that diminish the well-being of workers or exploit the desperation of immigrants;
11. those that discriminate in any way or impose oppressive or religious requirements on workers or clients;
12. those that test products on animals or vulnerable people;
13. those whose business models or practices encourage or ignore the reality of human trafficking or protect those who traffic in people;
14. those whose existence in community poisons earth or air and threatens the well-being of people living nearby, including mining, fracking and concentrated animal agriculture;
15. those whose corporate mission includes privatization of the means of life, including public spaces, waterways, and infrastructure;
16. those who afford extravagant compensation to a few at the expense of the labor force or consuming public.

Conversely, we will seek proactively to invest in companies whose products, services or business practices stoke the common good, including:

1. those that work for the seamless return of incarcerated citizens to their homes and communities;
2. those who support alternatives to policing and surveillance, including community services of mental health, physical health, restorative justice, addiction treatment, recreational outlets, green spaces, and social well-being;
3. those whose lobbying and political activities and affiliations seek the well-being of people, animals and the planet;
4. those whose products, services and manufacturing processes encourage responsible citizenship and care for the earth, including consumption that is plant-based, promotes renewable energy, minimizes packaging, encourages recycling and reuse, and seeks to reduce harm in every way;
5. those that honor the rights of workers to organize for collective bargaining, and especially those who embrace worker-ownership of the means of production;
6. those that recognize the pervasive racism, misogyny, xenophobia, homophobia and transphobia in our world and seek a better world;
7. those that create products and services that lift up oppressed communities and provide the means for self-reliance and well-being, including accessible and affordable housing, water, health care, child care, internet access, transportation and employment;
8. those that support voting rights and the re-enfranchisement of any who have been disenfranchised.

Further, we will seek first to invest in companies and entities for whom justice is foundational, not merely optional or extraneous, including banks and investment houses whose entire practice is socially responsible investment in communities, families, countries, industries and corporations.

The Bottom Line

We recognize that we cannot be completely "pure" in our spending or investing, but as a congregation will seek always to minimize harm, lift up peoples and communities, and care for all the inhabitants of the earth, so that all may live freely and well.

We will further encourage congregation members and friends to consider these parameters, as families and individuals determine their own personal spending, giving and investing habits.