

Institutions and Organisations

The Ecology Building Society, 7 Belton Road, Silsden, Keighley, West Yorkshire BD20 0EE. 0845 674 5566. www.ecology.org.uk

Triodos Bank, Brunel House, 11 The Promenade, Clifton, Bristol BS8 3NN 0117 973 9339. www.triodos.co.uk

The Co-operative Bank PLC, PO Box 101, 1 Balloon Street, Manchester M60 4EP. 0161-832 3456. www.co-operativebank.co.uk

Association of British Credit Unions, Holyoake House, Hanover Street, Manchester M60 0AS. 0161 832 3694. www.abcul.org

Shared Interest Society Ltd, 25 Collingwood Street, Newcastle Upon Tyne NE1 1JE. 0191 233 9100. www.shared-interest.com

Friends Provident run the oldest and largest ethical funds: the Stewardship Unit Trusts. Friends Provident, PO Box 1550, Milford, Salisbury SP1 2TW. 0870 607 1352. www.friendsprovident.com/customer

LETSLINK UK, 12 Southcote Road, London N19 5BJ. 020 7607 7852. www.letslinkuk.org (Send name, address and cheque for £1.50 for your nearest LETS contact.)

Charities Aid Foundation, 25 Kings Hill Avenue, King's Hill, West Malling, Kent ME19 4TA. Tel. 01732 520000. www.cafonline.org

Where to go for advice.

The Ethical Investment Research Service (EIRIS) offers a screening service on a wide range of ethical issues for private investors. EIRIS, 80-84 Bondway, London SW8 1SF. Tel. 020 7840 5700. www.eiris.org

The magazine **Ethical Consumer** examines the record of companies using a wide range of criteria. *The Ethical Consumer*, 41 Old Birley Street, Manchester M15 5RF. Tel. 0161 226 2929. www.ethicalconsumer.org

Christian Ethical Investment Group (CEIG)
The CEIG is an independent voluntary body formed in 1988 to promote Ethical Investment within the Church of England. It is now committed to serve all the churches and to help individuals, both within and outside the churches, who wish to invest ethically. CEIG, 1 St Georges Close, Leighton Buzzard LU7 1ZX. 01525 630097. www.ceig.org

The Ethical Investment Association (EIA) website gives plenty of useful information and addresses of ethical financial advisers who are members of the EIA. www.ethicalinvestment.org.uk

EcoCongregation is a programme providing a framework and resources for practical church action on environmental issues. Visit www.ecocongregation.org Click on 'Free Resources' on the left and scroll down to find Module 8 'Greening the purse strings'. EcoCongregation, 0114 263 6421; Scotland: 0131 240 2274.

Disclaimer:

CEL is not making recommendations and can take no responsibility for investment decisions taken by readers of this leaflet.

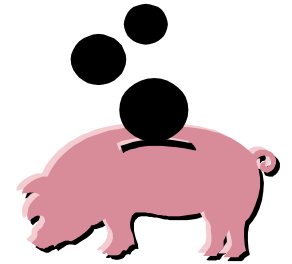
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CHRISTIAN
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ETHICAL INVESTMENT

'From everyone who has been given much,
much will be demanded.' Luke 12:48

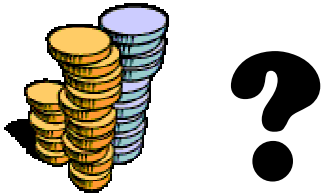
Anyone who has an account with a bank or building society is an investor. You don't need stocks and shares. Even with an account which offers no interest, your money is still being lent out by the bank or building society. So it's important to find out what is happening to that money. The actions of the companies in which we invest can affect the quality of the water we drink, the air we breathe, and the food we eat.

What is ethical investment?

Ethical investment means choosing investments in a way that reflects your ethical values. Some investors prefer not to benefit from activities of which they disapprove. Others do not want companies, of whose activities they disapprove, to benefit from their investment. Others want to support companies that they view positively. The health of any economy is dependent on the health of the Earth's natural ecosystems. In many regions this is deteriorating rapidly. So many ethical investors are looking especially at the environmental credentials of the companies in which they invest.

Where to Invest?

With money comes responsibility — responsibility to find out about the return that your money will get, the risks involved and the conditions applied. You also need to know that your money will not be used to exploit others or the planet: **'For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.'** Mt. 6:21.



Savings

Many ordinary savers do not deal with stocks and shares, unit and investment trusts, pensions and ISAs. They simply put their money in a bank or building society.

Some building societies are likely to rank higher than banks, on the ethical scale, since they act solely in the interest of their members and their main lending is for housing. Others have converted into profit-driven banks. Some banks are closing local branches which disadvantages car-less and computer-less people.

The Ecology Building Society has a reputation for lending for investment in ecologically-sound properties and projects.

Triodos Bank will lend money only to projects having social or environmental worth. Its underlying principle is to encourage savers and investors to specify where they want their money to be invested and then to let them know exactly to whom their money is lent.

The Co-operative Bank is the only large bank which has actively sought to attract the ethical saver. It has a tightly drawn list of ethical criteria. Because banks operate within a system of confidentiality they won't always disclose details of where your money is lent out. So it is difficult to know whether the Co-op will exactly meet your own individual ethical criteria.

Credit Unions There are over 500 credit unions operative in the U.K. They operate only within a community with a common bond. Members agree to save a sum each week. After they have built up a certain level of savings, they become eligible to borrow up to specified multiples of this amount. Dividends are paid to savers and interest is charged to borrowers. The union is non-profit making and owned and controlled by the members. The Association of British Credit Unions suggests to member unions that they use the Co-operative Bank to deposit their money.

Shared Interest finances fair trade by lending to and working with producer and buyer organisations who use fair trade principles. They enable investors in the UK to share risk and take positive action to direct funds to borrowers working in poorer parts of the world.

Other Financial Investments

If you buy a pension or invest in individual companies, Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs), Unit Trusts, Investment Trusts or open-ended investment companies (OEICs) your money will probably be passed to mainly four sectors: industry and commerce, governments, property and other banks and investment trusts.

Ethical judgements about your investments may lead you to avoid companies involved in advertising, armaments, gambling, smoking, alcohol, animal testing, intensive farming, biotechnology, pharmaceuticals, unsustainable energy production, pollution, rainforest destruction, oppressive regimes, political funding, pornography, etc.

You may want to choose investments which *make a positive contribution* to the environment. As a minimum you would want companies in which you invest to publish an environmental policy or statement and produce an annual environment report.

As a prospective investor, you can research particular companies by examining their annual reports and by consulting pressure groups working in areas that concern you. As the standards applied by a given fund may improve or deteriorate, it is very important to check a fund's current literature before you invest. Our concern as Christians is that the company shares which make up the 'ethical fund' are indeed ethical.

Caution!....An ethical fund may be part of a larger institution which operates other funds which invest in many companies unacceptable to you. Also, some institutions running ethical funds are actually owned by companies that you may view as unacceptable. On the other hand, by investing in their ethical fund you prove to the company that ethical funds are worth launching.



Some Alternatives

If you have no spare money to save or invest, you could consider 'investing' your time and energy instead of money.

The Social Economy. In recent years there has been a growth in what is known as the 'social economy'. Businesses in the social economy are run primarily to supply the goods and services people need while making a contribution to human welfare or the environment, with any profits being a desirable extra. The social economy spans housing associations; retail, distribution and manufacturing co-operatives; community development associations; fair trade organizations such as Traidcraft and charities such as the Centre for Alternative Technology. You can invest your time working in this sector, in either a paid or voluntary capacity.

Local Exchange Trading Systems (LETS) are trading groups set up within communities to exchange goods and services without using government-issued money.

Spending as an Investment! Even when we spend our money we can make an 'investment' for the planet. For example we can buy clothes made of organic, unbleached natural fabrics, food from local, organic suppliers and electricity from renewable sources. We can cut down on the electricity we use by buying energy saving products

Charitable Giving. When donating money to charities which work to protect God's earth, tax payers can use the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) to increase the value of their giving by about 28%. Or they can sign Gift Aid forms with the charities of their choice and again increase the value of their giving.