



ENVIRONMENT

Social Criteria Investment Screen

AUTHORITY

The Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) has laid out its concern for the environment in a social statement, “Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice” (1993), acknowledging both God’s goodness in creation and acceptance of the caregiving responsibility of Christians. It has expressed those concerns in relation to investments in several social policy resolutions since that time, such as “Toward a Responsible Energy Future” (2016). The recent message “Earth’s Climate Crisis” (2023) declared the present climate crisis a “kairos moment,” demanding that consequences for future generations be taken into account while also emphasizing the intersectional nature of any attempt to address environmental justice.

WORDING OF SCREEN

The ELCA recommends limiting investments made in corporations that are the most egregious in terms of damage to human health or the natural environment. The ELCA recommends investments in corporations that are taking positive steps toward a sustainable environment.

DEFINITION OF PROBLEM

“The earth is a planet of beauty and abundance; the earth system is wonderfully intricate and incredibly complex. But today living creatures, and the air, soil, and water that support them, face unprecedented threats. Many threats are global; most stem directly from human activity. Our current practices may so alter the living world that it will be unable to sustain life in the manner we know.” —*Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope, and Justice* (ELCA social statement, 1993)

“We believe God yearns and strives for Earth’s ecological well-being, and we trust that ‘God’s faithfulness alone sustains the Church and renews our faith, hope, and love.’ As God’s people we address the climate crisis with active hope rather than paralyzing despair.” —“Earth’s Climate Crisis” (ELCA social message, 2023)

On page 13, this message endorses specific goals, practices and policies, as well as those that are to be rejected. On page 16, the message specifically challenges the church to screen out fossil-fuel stocks or to engage in shareholder advocacy around fossil-fuel funds.

Corporate Social Responsibility in the ELCA uses the tools of screening of investments, shareholder advocacy and community investing to work with corporations, calling them to ensure that people are treated fairly and with dignity and to create sustainable communities.

More at [ELCA.org/CSR](https://www.elca.org/CSR).

Recognizing that various investors will implement this along a continuum, for the purpose of this screen, investment might include companies working toward just transition away from environmentally destructive or harmful practices and toward practices that serve the ends of intergenerational, intragenerational and intersectional justice. Investors may look at an industry or sector that harms the environment and distinguish between culling out the worst players (such as companies with high Environmental Protection Agency fines, multiple toxic spills or certain fossil-fuel companies, etc.) and those that are most actively addressing the environment or taking corrective measures. While a continuum exists, the ELCA is on record that efforts should be taken toward removing the largest fossil-fuel companies from portfolios as an expression of its concern for creation's care and that priority be given to investments in companies that are taking corrective measures as well as those corporations (such as clean-tech companies) that are contributing toward a sustainable environment in a way that protects human rights and promotes just distribution of resources.

SOCIAL POLICY AND STUDIES

Caring for Creation: Vision, Hope and Justice (ELCA social statement, 1993), [ELCA.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation](https://www.elca.org/Faith/Faith-and-Society/Social-Statements/Caring-for-Creation)

“Global Warming” (ELCA social policy resolution, 2001), CA01.07.57, elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Global_WarmingSPR01.pdf

“Environmental Concerns” (ELCA Churchwide Assembly Action, 1989), CA89.08.108, elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Enviromental_ConcernsSPR89.pdf

“Toward a Responsible Energy Future” (ELCA social policy resolution, 2017), CA 16.06.30, elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Toward_Responsible_Energy_Future_SPR16.pdf

“Earth's Climate Crisis” (ELCA social message, 2023), elcamediaresources.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/Earths_Climate_Crisis_Social_Message.pdf

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