

Pratt responds to MRTI call for ‘corporate engagement strategies’

Gwin Pratt, senior pastor of St. Luke Presbyterian Church, Wayzata, Minn., is disappointed in the reaction of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)’s Mission Responsibility Through Investment Committee to what’s been called a “growing movement” to summarily divest from fossil fuel companies. When EMerge carried a link to the Presbyterian News Service article about MRTI’s reaction, Pratt felt the need to respond. The complete story of MRTI’s reaction to the growing movement to divest can be found at <http://www.pcusa.org/news/2014/2/26/mrti-considers-fossil-fuel-divestment-overtures/>.

Pratt’s complete response to the MRTI article is below:

MRTI has an honored and distinguished history in the long and always arduous task of divestment. They have done great work in the interest of connecting social justice to how we spend our money.

But this one is different. Very different. It is the unanimous conclusion of all credible scientists that we have a very short window of opportunity to prevent runaway climate catastrophe. (Sadly, some of these scientists say it may already be too late.) Our only chance is to act, and to act immediately. The process that MRTI requires is always years, sometimes decades, in the making. We do not have that kind of time. We are in an emergency time. And urgent action is required. Even a big fan of MRTI, like me, recognizes that MRTI is not equipped to act in an urgent way.

There is also another consideration. "Shareholder resolutions" and other shareholder actions are always about modifying business practices. For instance, the Caterpillar situation would lend itself to working on the inside to create a movement to stop selling equipment to the Israelis who are dismantling the Palestinian settlements. The shareholder movement would not be to shut down the company.

But, what is required in this situation is that we stop using fossil fuels. It is not going to happen from the inside: no "shareholder" is going to argue that the company be shut down.

The current situation calls for a prophetic, moral word. Already the “least of these” (who have not caused the problem) are suffering and dying. Our progeny will join them. The climate, and thus a sustainable Earth, is being wrecked by carbon. It is immoral to profit from this wreckage. The church must lead the way in saying "no". If we as a denomination had investments in businesses that depended on slavery, we would not turn to MRTI to lead in negotiation. We would turn to the denomination to say, "slavery is wrong. We will not support it." Continuing to invest in the development of fossil fuels is destroying the Creation that the Creator called "very good." We do not negotiate about this. We say it is wrong. Now.