

On Sunday, June 14th, First Parish in Concord voted at its annual congregational meeting to recommend that the First Parish Trustees of Donations divest from investments in certain fossil fuel companies. Before voting, the congregation conducted an open and reasoned debate on the pros and cons of divestment.

Specifically, the congregation asked the Trustees to divest from the Carbon Underground 200, the 200 global companies holding the largest oil, gas and coal reserves (and thus the largest potential producers of CO2 emissions). The resolution also asked the Trustees to consider investments in companies which are leaders in developing alternative energies and conservation.

An important inspiration to this First Parish vote on divestment was a Business Resolution on divestment passed at the 2014 General Assembly of the UU denomination. The denomination went through a process over several years of deciding first that action on climate change is a moral imperative for our faith and then that divestment from fossil fuels is a kind of climate action that we can and should embrace.

This First Parish vote was the culmination of a year-long process led by a subgroup of First Parish in Concord's Environmental Leadership Team. This subgroup began by researching the history of divestment policy and actions within the UU denomination and beyond. They then initiated a series of monthly conversations with the congregation at large, with the Trustees of Donations, and with the Standing Committee about what could and should be included in a formal divestment resolution that would be voted on at the Annual Meeting.

In the end, the vote to divest was supported by a large majority of the congregation; and the mood of the congregation was clearly upbeat and positive.

The Trustees plan to use these recommendations to evaluate their current investments and to adapt their current Socially Responsible Investing policy.

With this vote First Parish in Concord joins a worldwide movement of religious institutions, municipalities, colleges, and endowments addressing the role of fossil fuel companies in the climate crisis.

After adding solar photovoltaic panels to the church and divesting from the Carbon Underground 200, the Environmental Leadership Team and congregation are looking forward to addressing other pieces of the puzzle that is our climate crisis.

To learn more about how your religious institution could start a conversation about divestment, visit <http://gofossilfree.org/usa/>.