THE SECOND ASK

The divestment pledge.

What it means for a church to pull its money from the occupation — and the pledge that makes it real.

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What we're asking

To divest is to withdraw two things at once: our money, and our blessing. A congregation that takes the pledge commits to finding every place its money touches the companies that **consistently, knowingly, and directly enable the genocide and occupation** — and to moving it. Not because a church's dollars will bankrupt an arms maker, but because the church cannot pray for Gaza on Sunday while funding its destruction through the endowment on Monday.

This is not a boycott of everything Israeli, and "complicit" does not mean "any company doing business in Israel." The pledge points to two published, researched lists: the American Friends Service Committee's *Investigate* divestment list, and the UN's database of businesses tied to the illegal settlements (158 companies as of September 2025). The recurring names are familiar: Caterpillar, Elbit Systems, Chevron, Palantir, GE Aerospace, Motorola Solutions, IBM, and the five largest Israeli banks.

The church has done this before

Divestment is not a novelty — it is an established practice of the American church, tested against apartheid South Africa and applied to the occupation for over a decade:

Institution	Date	Action
Methodist Board of Missions	1968	Moved its $10M portfolio out of First National City Bank over South Africa lending — the original "change your bank" witness
Friends Fiduciary (Quaker)	2012	Dropped Caterpillar, Hewlett-Packard, and Veolia on Peace Testimony grounds
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	2014	Divested ~$21M from Caterpillar, HP, and Motorola Solutions after a decade of failed corporate engagement
United Church of Christ	2015	General Synod voted 508–124 to divest from occupation-linked companies and boycott settlement goods
Mennonite Church USA	2017	Voted ~98% to screen occupation profiteers from its $3B Everence fund
Episcopal Church	2019	Placed Caterpillar, Motorola Solutions, and Israel

		Discount Bank on a Human Rights No-Buy List after 15–25 years of engagement
United Methodist / Wespath	2025	The largest faith-based pension fund ($26B+) excluded the government bonds of Israel and other occupying powers
Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)	2026	Named the genocide (454–15) and unanimously divested from Palantir and GE Aerospace

Secular institutions have validated the judgment: Norway's sovereign wealth fund — the world's largest — dropped five Israeli banks and Caterpillar in 2025, and Dutch pension giant ABP sold all its Caterpillar shares. When a congregation takes this pledge, it is doing what a major American denomination did last month — not something reckless, and not something new.

Where your church's money actually sits

Divestment sounds like a job for a Wall Street portfolio. In practice, a congregation's money sits in four places, each with a different decision-maker:

1. **Operating accounts.** Your checking and reserves at a bank. Your board controls this completely — and for a small church, the bank is the divestment lever: major banks finance the arms trade; credit unions and screened banks (e.g., Amalgamated, which excludes weapons manufacturers) do not.
2. **Endowment and investments.** Held at a brokerage or a denominational foundation. Your trustees choose the manager and the funds — screened, values-aligned funds already exist inside church ecosystems (Friends Fiduciary, Everence/Praxis, United Church Funds).
3. **Denominational pension funds.** Wespath, the Board of Pensions, the Pension Boards. Congregations don't control these — but petitions from congregations are exactly what moved Wespath in 2025.
4. **Members' retirement accounts.** The 401(k)s and 403(b)s in your pews. Members can check their funds' weapons exposure at weaponfreefunds.org, cross-check the AFSC list, move to the cleanest options in their plan menu, use a brokerage window, or ask HR for a screened fund. A church that teaches this multiplies its witness.

What the pledge commits you to

The pledge follows the implementation model AFSC recommends to institutions — policy, timeline, action, and public reporting — scoped honestly to what a congregation controls:

1. **Look.** Within ninety days, inventory every place the congregation's money sits: accounts, reserves, endowment, denominational funds.
2. **Adopt a policy.** A written investment policy excluding companies that consistently, knowingly, and directly enable or facilitate genocide, apartheid, or war crimes — as identified on the AFSC Investigate divestment list and the UN database.

3. **Move the money.** Sell direct holdings in listed companies and don't rebuy. Let any Israel Bonds mature without renewal. Press pooled-fund managers for screened alternatives. Where feasible, bank where the arms trade isn't financed.
4. **Petition what you can't move.** Formally ask your denomination and its pension board to divest — congregational pressure is how every denominational action above began.
5. **Report.** Tell your congregation — and the public record at churchdivest.org — what you found and what you moved, within one year and annually until the work is done.

The honest objections

"Our trustees have a fiduciary duty." A congregation's funds are held in trust for its charitable and religious purpose — trustees of a church answer to that purpose, and aligning investments with it is fiduciary faithfulness, not a breach. The screened universe is a small slice of the market with minimal tracking impact, which is why the world's largest sovereign wealth fund and major pension funds have made the same moves. (Have your own counsel confirm the framing for your polity.)

"Our money is too small to matter." One church's endowment won't move a stock price. But the witness compounds: over 1,000 congregations and organizations have taken the Apartheid-Free pledge, denominational funds have moved billions, and every public pledge lowers the cost of the next one. Churches divesting is how South Africa's isolation began.

"Shouldn't we engage companies as shareholders instead?" The denominations tried — for ten to twenty-five years — before divesting. For companies on the divestment list, AFSC's conclusion is blunt: engagement will not be fruitful, and remaining a shareholder risks complicity. Engage everything else; divest from these.

The pledge

> Because we have named the genocide in Gaza, and because we will not fund what we cannot bless, our congregation pledges: (1) To examine, within ninety days, every place our money sits — operating accounts, reserves, endowment, and the funds we reach through our denomination. (2) To adopt an investment policy that excludes companies which consistently, knowingly, and directly enable or facilitate genocide, apartheid, or war crimes, as identified on the AFSC Investigate divestment list and the UN database of businesses tied to the occupation. (3) To sell what we hold in those companies and not buy it back; to let any Israel Bonds mature without renewal; and to press the managers of our pooled funds for screened alternatives. (4) To petition our denomination and its pension boards to do the same with the funds we cannot move ourselves. (5) To report what we find and what we have done — to our congregation and publicly — within one year, and annually until the work is complete.

________________________	Congregation
________________________	City and state · Denomination or tradition
________________________	Adopted by (session / vestry / council / board) and date of vote
________________________	Authorized signature · Name and role
________________________	Authorized signature · Name and role
________________________	Contact email

Register your pledge — and get help keeping it — at **churchdivest.org/act** · hello@churchdivest.org. Every congregation ready to lead will find us alongside them the whole way.

Sources

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