



Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)

*Keeping Vigil for Social Justice
within the Corporate World*

Forty years, four decades. A long time of faith-based, successful shareholder advocacy!

Much has changed and much is the same in the world of the **Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)**, or the world of shareholder advocacy for corporate responsibility. When ICCR began it was essentially the sole voice saying the it was possible to “do well and do good.”



Beginning ICCR Issues

The beginning issues were ✓**Apartheid** in South Africa, ✓the marketing of **infant formula to women in low-income countries**, and ✓the **dangers of nuclear weapons**. Mainline Protestant denominations and Catholic religious orders of men and women collaborated in using their institutional shareholder voices. They questioned corporate management regarding company policies and practices related to the above. In each situation, the motivation of the institutional investors was —

- Based in faith
- Grounded in tenets of social justice and peace

- Aligned with the investor reality of needing to earn income

Archbishop Desmond Tutu credited ICCR’s work as an important element of the demise of Apartheid. That tribute from the Episcopal anti-Apartheid leader of South Africa is mighty.

“Secular” Investing World Initially Skeptical

In 1971 and for at least a decade, the “secular” investing world remained highly skeptical of ICCR’s approach. The usual response to a description of **socially responsible investing (SRI)** or **corporate social responsibility (CSR)** was something to the effect that, “You can’t make money if you divert attention to those issues,” or “The responsibility of the investor is to make financial returns; nothing else matters.”

ICCR members have held steady in upholding that corporate social responsibility gives long-term good financial returns, and that NOT paying attention to social and

ICCR’s Mission
Through the lens of faith,
ICCR builds a more just and sustainable world
by integrating social values
into investor actions.

environmental issues costs investors and the company. Today, corporate reports on social/corporate responsibility are mainline. The “**triple bottom line**” is mainstream investor language, a far cry from 1971, when the financial managers and investment houses were nay-sayers to the possibility to earn good returns while focusing on anything other than the financials.



ICCR members in dialogue with representatives from the Hormel company on meat sustainability issues.

Wide Range of Related Issues

The **range of issues** which ICCR has brought to corporate management’s attention is wide, from human rights to environment to anti-violence, to access to health,

to supply chain, and to water and food. Each of these enfolds multiple facets of issues. For example, human rights interfaces with water and food; includes labor rights, human trafficking, and fair wages; in addition to non-discrimination. Environment includes forestry, climate change/global warming, toxins, and of course interfaces with water and food as well.

What Has Changed?

What has changed? Corporate reporting. Forty years ago, a corporate report on sustainability or social responsibility was nowhere to be found. Today, they are main stream. The [Global Reporting Initiative](#) (GRI) is internationally recognized as a protocol for corporate disclosure. The GRI is imperfect (*for example, toxics are not adequately delineated*), but it is a standard reporting mechanism for corporate disclosure that is light years of progress in transparency. There is also the ●[Carbon Disclosure Project](#), ●[Forest Footprint Disclosure](#), and ●[Water Disclosure Project](#).



Margaret Weber (*left*), representing the Congregation of St. Basil, and Connie Takamine of the General Board of Global Ministries, United Methodist Church, at an annual general meeting of ICCR.



Former ICCR Executive Director Tim Smith, presenting a shareholder resolution at Xerox's annual general meeting.

Climate change [resolutions](#) to corporate management in the early 1990's barely survived the shareholder process through the [SEC](#) (*Securities and Exchange Commission*), which governs shareholder initiatives for annual meetings. Now those same initiatives receive shareholder support in the range of 20-40 percent. In many cases, corporate management agrees to reporting and disclosure early in the dialogue, a true indication that perspectives have evolved. Corporate executives understand that climate change has a direct impact on their long term sustainability.

In 1998, ICCR published the [Benchmarks for Global Corporate Responsibility](#), as a complement to the newly launched GRI. In 2011, ICCR published its [Social Sustainability Resource Guide](#), emphasizing multi-stakeholder collaboration as essential to long-term, real sustainability.

Building on 40 years of Dialogue and Advocacy

Throughout the years, ICCR has partnered and worked with countless social justice organizations. ICCR's membership includes commercial SRI firms, businesses that

make their profit doing corporate social responsibility work — a far cry from the days of being told it was impossible to “do well while doing good.”

“Inspired by Faith, Committed to Action,” ICCR remains non-profit, keeping the vigil for social justice within the corporate world.



Further Information

For more on ICCR, you are invited to check these out:

- [About ICCR](#)
- [Arc of Change: The ICCR Story](#)
- [News/Media](#)
- [Jobs & Internships](#)
- [Publications & Research](#)
- [Shareholder Resolutions](#)
- [TAKING STOCK: Shaping the New Age in Corporate Responsibility](#) (*ICCR's 40th Anniversary Special Event Celebration*)

*“Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)” by Margaret Weber.
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You are invited to read Margaret's introductory piece: [Socially Responsible Investing](#).