



PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

UCF Partners to Protect Human Rights

New York, December 17, 2020 – United Church Funds (UCF) has recently joined two investor initiatives aimed at protecting human rights, domestically and abroad. As responsible investors, UCF is concerned with environmental, social and governance factors that contradict its clients' values and the associated risks to the reputation and value of their portfolio holdings.

The first initiative – developed with the support of the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) – seeks to end forced labor in the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China. More than 80 percent of China's cotton, and almost 20 percent of all global production, is grown in the Uyghur Region.¹ The [Call to Action](#) states that brands and retailers across sectors face a grave risk of benefiting from human rights violations, including forced labor, both in and from the Uyghur Region. It calls on global apparel brands, including Under Armour, Nike and Ralph Lauren, to commit to auditing their supply chain ties in and withdrawing from the region.

"Brands and corporations have responsibility to uphold internationally recognized human rights, even when state actors do not. As a faith-inspired organization, we see this work as a recognition of the divine dignity of every human being," said Matthew Illian, UCF's Director of Responsible Investing.

The second initiative seeks to protect dairy workers in Vermont. This effort, led by a worker-driven nonprofit called Migrant Justice, calls on grocery stores to buy milk from farms that commit to joining the Milk with Dignity program. Migrant Justice reports that in a survey conducted between 2018 and 2019, 40 percent of surveyed workers earn below minimum wage and only 16 percent had medical insurance coverage.

¹ "The Australian Broadcasting Corporation's Exposé on Forced Labor in Xinjiang," Jernigan Global, 1028, 22 July 2019, https://www.gujcot.com/upload_files/news/Jernigan%20Global%202022-July-2019.pdf.

And as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, workers in this industry face more stressful work and questionable safety conditions than usual. The [Milk with Dignity program](#) helps ensure that compensation is just and that workplace conditions are safe.

Ben & Jerry's Ice Cream has already committed to joining this effort, and UCF is joining Migrant Justice in asking one of the largest grocery chains in the Northeast region, Hannaford Supermarkets, to join as well. To read more about Migrant Justice and the Milk with Dignity campaign, [click here](#).

“Supporting human rights efforts across international markets is part of UCF’s commitment to responsible investing and to upholding the United Church of Christ’s General Synod resolutions on human rights and economic justice.² This is an important way we live out our motto: Investing with a Mission,” said Charles Buck, UCF’s President and CEO.

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About UCF

United Church Funds (UCF) is the leading provider of socially responsible, values-aligned investment management services to United Church of Christ churches and ministries, as well as all faith-based organizations. We offer customized investment portfolios and prudent investment strategies that provide competitive returns while also reflecting our clients’ values in seeking to achieve a just world. UCF also offers endowment governance consulting, planned giving programs and superior, personalized service from our dedicated Client Services team. To learn more about how UCF can help your church or faith-based organization further its mission while achieving its long-term financial goals, please visit www.ucfunds.org, email us at info@ucfunds.org or call us toll-free at 877-806-4989.

² Human Rights (Pronouncement) (79-GS-31)

Affirming & Supporting Human Rights in the People’s Republic of China (95-GS-47)

A More Just Economy: \$15 Minimum Wage, Living Wage and Job Creation (17-GS-47)