

UCC delegates to consider divestment: Economic pressure

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The United Church of Christ will vote in July on whether to pull invested church money from U.S. companies involved in constructing Israeli settlements and assisting with security measures in Palestinian territories.

If approved, the 1.4-million-member church (with a \$3 billion portfolio) would become the second U.S. Protestant body to explore pulling investments from Israel in protest of what they call Israel's harsh treatment of the Palestinians.

The Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) voted last year to begin divesting from U.S. companies profiting from Israeli construction in the West Bank and Gaza. The United Methodist Church and the Presbyterians have used shareholder actions to protest use of the Illinois-based Caterpillar's bulldozers to demolish Palestinian homes.

The UCC will also consider two related resolutions, one calling on Israel to tear down its separation wall in the West Bank and a second that proposes further study of divestment. Church delegates will vote on the resolutions at the General Synod conference July 1-5 in Atlanta.

The resolution urging divestment says economic pressure was used successfully to end apartheid in South Africa—a comparison that angers Jewish leaders. It also states the church's continued support of the existence of Israel as a nation and its opposition to anti-Semitism, noting that "both the ancient Jewish people and Palestinian people are known as Semitic."

Mark Pelavin, director of interreligious affairs for Reform Judaism, called the UCC resolutions "counterproductive."