

Policy Statement - Gambling

1. Biblical tradition

- 1.1. Biblical writers do not mention gambling specifically. They are, however, critical of the love of money, which is a strong motivator for participating in gambling activities.
- 1.2. The Bible contains a clear warning against the desire for money, since greed and the love of money cannot lead to happiness or salvation.
- 1.3. The Bible advocates being content with one's current wealth and not trying to increase it hastily; the reckless and wasteful use of money is recognised as foolish.
- 1.4. The drawing of lots is frequently used to make decisions, where the element of chance seems to act as a guarantor of fairness; but this is distinct from gambling, understood as the pursuit of financial gain through the unequal distribution of stakes in events with an element of chance.
- 1.5. The Bible acknowledges that while some activities may be lawful, they are not always beneficial or helpful; Biblical teaching may therefore lead us to view certain forms of gambling in this light.

2. Precedents

- 2.1. The Methodist Church has a long-established concern about gambling given its propensity to be socially divisive and a means of gaining money at the expense of others. John Wesley expressed this view in his sermon, 'The Use of Money', where he stated that gambling was a means of gain inconsistent with love of neighbour.
- 2.2. John Wesley did not object to softer forms of gambling, recognising these as a form of entertainment and relaxation. The distinction between 'harder' and 'softer' forms of gambling is therefore long established, and still relevant.
- 2.3. The 1936 Declaration of the Methodist Church on gambling held a prohibitionist stance on gambling. It stated that: "belief in luck cannot be reconciled with faith in God." In addition, Methodists were asked to "avoid and discourage all forms of gambling practices."
- 2.4. The concern voiced by the 1936 Conference about the negative effects of gambling addiction on the individual and on others is still valid today.
- 2.5. The 1936 Declaration was superseded in 1992 by a [new Methodist Statement on Gambling](#). It recognised that while many Christians choose not to gamble at all on ethical grounds, others participate in some activities that may be considered leisure or social activities. The 1992 Statement also acknowledged the need to 'heed the experience of our tradition [in relation to gambling] but also to avoid the heavy-footed pursuit of the trivial'.
- 2.6. The Methodist Church is keen to ensure that gambling is well-regulated and carried out in a way that minimises the harm it can cause. Methodists remain deeply concerned that people get trapped by compulsive gambling. Problem gambling destroys relationships, families and lives. It can have a disproportionate effect on children.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. Epworth published a Position Paper on Investment in Gambling Related Companies in December 2013, and has adopted this Policy on investment in Gambling Related Companies:
- 3.2. Epworth will avoid investment in companies whose main business activity is gambling and gaming.

- 3.3.** Epworth will avoid businesses materially involved in the management of licensed gambling premises including casinos and betting shops. It will also avoid licensed operators of gambling venues including racecourses and dog-tracks.
- 3.4.** Epworth will avoid companies whose principal business is online betting platforms, the facilitation of online betting or the provision of specialist services (e.g. software) to the gambling industry.
- 3.5.** Epworth will avoid investment in companies whose principal activity or business is the manufacture of gaming machines.
- 3.6.** Epworth will avoid investment in companies whose principal activity or business is spread betting.
- 3.7.** Given the increasing concern about the impact of problem gambling on individuals, families and wider society there is a clear need for Epworth to engage proactively with companies that have some exposure to gambling such as the hospitality industry or those in the media.
- 3.8.** In the case of companies whose business is not principally involved in gambling but where exposure may be growing, there will need to be increased engagement around advertising, marketing, sponsorship, and the appetite to promote responsible gambling. If a company with growing exposure declines to engage with Epworth on these issues, disinvestment will remain an option.
- 3.9.** Businesses that facilitate or enable youth gambling will not be considered suitable for investment. These may include amusement arcade operators or where gambling activities are easily accessible to children.
- 3.10.** Engagement is the principal tool for monitoring companies where exposure to gambling is modest. Epworth will seek dialogue with companies on responsible gambling policies and practices including promotion and marketing, and the controls in place to prevent inappropriate targeting at children or other vulnerable groups.
- 3.11.** Companies involved in the promotion of ‘soft’ “forms of gambling such as lotteries and bingo, may be suitable for investment, but would be subject to engagement to understand their approach to marketing, promotion and advertising and their support for responsible gambling initiatives, which would include research, education and treatment for problem gambling”

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