

A Conversation with Jeffrey A. McCroy and John W. Geissinger, CFA



Jeffrey A. McCroy
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CBIS' Active Ownership program is much more than engaging with select portfolio companies. What can you tell us about the advisory committees you've put in place to enhance your shareholder advocacy efforts?

Mr. McCroy: Like most things in the Church, everything starts with Catholic social teachings. Recognizing those teachings are not prescriptive in nature, we formed the Charisms Council as a mechanism for a group of devoted people to discern how those teachings are evolving in the current world. The Council, which is essentially our voice to the outside world, assures us that we maintain a broad perspective.

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— Jeff McCroy

CBIS has an Impact and Justice Steering Committee, how is this group different than the Charisms Council?

Mr. McCroy: The steering committee is an internal group of leaders representing different facets of the CBIS organization. Broadly speaking, this group sets the tone for our entire CRI program. Committee members assess our resources and determine if we have the necessary skills to make a difference.

Mr. Geissinger: The committee essentially sets company strategy around enhancement. Why are we engaging with this company? What are we trying to achieve? What actions are we looking for that company to pursue? It's through that process of engagement that we are hoping to enhance the operation of the company.



Mr. McCroy: The committee also works on the exclusion activities, which is not an easy exercise. I think people would be surprised at the amount of resources and time that CBIS puts towards exclusion.

Mr. Geissinger: Exclusion at CBIS requires discernment. Our process discerns not only what issues we want to avoid but also considers the basic mechanics of revenue levels to determine whether you include the company or exclude the company.

Why did CBIS form these advisory committees?

Mr. McCroy: In our early days, engagement was essentially episode by episode, issue by issue. The industry was young and we chose initiatives based on what was current at that moment. CBIS is at a maturation level today that requires structure. We have experience, and we have a responsibility. We have a voice that the Catholic Church is relying on. We are the beacon for these matters. And as a result, we recognized that we needed to take that voice more seriously in a strategic way.

Mr. Geissinger: I think in terms of that evolution, the word that keeps coming to mind is intentionality. We're always thinking about our value add and where we can be the first mover of key issues facing society, like online child sexual exploitation and water rights.

All of this work eventually rolls up to the Catholic Responsible Investments (CRI) Team. CBIS has made a large capital commitment to the team with an eye toward enhancing the Catholic Responsible Investments process. Can you provide any insight into the decision?

Mr. McCroy: We doubled down on resource commitment because our investors were asking for more from the CRI Team. We've been asked to take what we've learned in the capital markets and go beyond where we are today with product. Our intention is to make sure we have the right investment skills and resources to accomplish that goal.

Mr. Geissinger: There was a secondary goal, and that was to be more active in engagement and enhancement. We were already at the forefront of exclusion. In the end, ours is a human capital business. You need people. You need lawyers. You need skills. To accomplish both the finance goals and the faith goals, the CRI Team needed to have more resources.

Is it fair, then, to think you're going to be engaging with more companies?

Mr. Geissinger: Absolutely. Last year, we engaged approximately 30 companies. As we ramp up our efforts, we expect that number to settle in around 60 companies a year.

What is all of this going to mean to Catholic investors?

Mr. Geissinger: Investors come to us because they want to make a difference. All of this is about amplifying the voice. We have prepared ourselves for a larger effort, which is exactly what our investors are asking us to do. I'm entirely confident they can rely on us going forward because of the enhanced structure we've put in place.

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