

Beer, wine not on church's list of immoral investments

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BERLIN (RNS) New guidelines issued by Germany's largest Protestant body advised parishioners to not invest in companies that make hard liquor, while beer and wine producers are fine.

The guidelines, issued by the Evangelical (Lutheran) Church in Germany, are meant to help investors invest their money wisely but morally in the wake of the financial crisis that has roiled world markets since 2007.

Many of the proposals, which were compiled by a special church commission, seem in keeping with Christian mores: no investing in companies that manufacture guns or pornography; avoid investing in countries that are considered dictatorships or that present a risk to the environment.

The guidelines say investing in the alcohol industry is appropriate, so long as the beverages contain no more than 15 percent alcohol by volume. That cutoff leaves the hard liquor industry in the cold, but allows investors to consider wine and beer, both of which have strong cultural ties and employ thousands in Germany.

Defending the decision, the church said "the noted borderline marks approximately the point at which alcoholic drinks go from beer and wine to spirits."

"Overindulgence or prolonged consumption of spirits has a higher danger of addiction," it continued.

Church officials urged readers to consider the entire document when making financial plans.

"This is about making it clear that money is not an end in and of itself, but -- like everything we do -- something that bears with it a responsibility before God and humanity," said Thomas Begrich, head of the church's financial department, in a statement.