

Church of England sells News Corp. shares after scandals

by [Trevor Grundy](#)

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(ENInews)--Two of the Church of England's investment entities announced 7 August that they have sold all their shares in Rupert Murdoch's News Corp., worth about 1.9 million pounds (US\$2.97 million), due to continuing concerns about the company's ethics.

News Corp. journalists last year were accused of hacking telephone lines belonging to celebrities, politicians, law enforcement officials and crime victims; bribing police officers and paying private investigators for illegally-obtained information.

The charges centered on the company's News of the World British tabloid, which was closed in the aftermath.

The church "first raised concerns with the board of News Corporation in the aftermath of the phone hacking allegations that surfaced in July 2011," according to a statement on the church's website.

However, it added, "after a year of dialogue ... the Church of England was not satisfied that News Corporation had shown, or is likely in the immediate future to show, a commitment to implement necessary corporate governance reform."

The Church of England Pension Board and the Church Commissioners were following the advice of the church's Ethical Investment Advisory Group (EIAG), they said.

"Our decision to disinvest was not taken lightly and follows a year of continuous dialogue with the company, during which the EIAG put forward a number of recommendations around how corporate governance structures at News Corporation could be improved," Andrew Brown, secretary of the Church Commissioners, said.

The Guardian newspaper quoted Brown as saying that the church is particularly concerned that Murdoch remains both chairman and chief executive of News Corp.

Murdoch told a parliamentary committee last July that he did not consider resigning as News of the World was a small part of News Corp.'s global business.

The Church of England's three national investing bodies -- the Church Commissioners, the Church of England Pensions Board and the CBF Church of England Funds -- hold total assets worth more than eight billion pounds.

The church already excludes investment in companies involved in military products and services, pornography, alcoholic drinks, gambling, tobacco, human embryonic cloning and high interest lending.