



WHAT IS 1K CHURCHES?

1K Churches is an ecumenical Christian initiative to build a base of congregations and individuals committed to discovering God's Economy and transforming our own. Through participating in a Bible study and investing in a microbusiness in their community, church members explore their call as economic actors. The name "1K Churches" comes from the vision that by 2018, one thousand churches across the U.S.

will be actively engaged in this action-reflection process. 1K Churches is a program of Criterion Institute, a non-profit think tank focused on using finance as a tool for social change.

Here is how it works. A small group from a congregation comes together for the five-session 1K Churches Bible study. They reflect on new ways to connect their faith with the economy and issues of economic justice in their local communities. They choose a social issue where they feel compelled by their faith to work for change. It could be anything from food security, to immigration, to veterans' concerns, to the environment, to health. The Bible study ends in action, with the group making a small loan (\$500 to \$5000) to a small business in their community that advances the mission concern they have identified. Faithful reflection continues as the group lives into a respectful and caring relationship with the owner of the local business they have chosen. This experience changes how people think about their commercial transactions. It gives them courage and confidence to become more active, informed and faithful actors in shaping the economy over time to more closely resemble God's economy.

WHY 1K CHURCHES?

Our economy is broken. Economic inequality is growing. Families are struggling. Small business growth and job creation are uncertain and slow. Churches too, whether small parishes or whole denominations, are adversely affected by economic challenges. We are all caught up in the deep problems that plague our economic system. Is there anything we can do about them?

Churches themselves are functioning economic entities, though they seldom think of themselves that way. They own land, hire contractors, select vendors, and manage endowments. Churches continue to do great philanthropic work, as they always have, helping the poor, tending the sick, and advocating for the marginalized. They speak prophetic words against economy injustice. Today's urgent economic challenges, however, require new and innovative approaches to mission, alongside more traditional forms of prophecy, charity, advocacy, or direct service.

Great cathedrals in ages past were built in the town square, in the center of commerce. The church needs to reclaim that space today. People of good will from many sectors are working to build a better economic system. The church needs to bring its theological imagination to those tables where the economy is being reinvented, where finance is bent toward social good. Sharing a vision of God's economy and creating pathways toward that future is an integral part of the Church's mission and a critical dimension of each person's life of faith. Churches today do not often see themselves as players in shaping the economy of which they are a part. The 1K Churches initiative can begin to change that.

1K CHURCHES OUTCOMES

1. Through prayer and discernment, churches will discover their own agency as economic beings and participants in their local economy.
2. Churches will be better equipped to make theologically-informed choices about how they want to participate in the economy and what role they can play in manifesting God's Economy.
3. Churches will build real economic relationships through making a loan to a local business, supporting the local economy and growing their connection with their communities.
4. As more churches participate, thousands of individual leaders will be motivated and equipped for the long-term work of changing who is at the table where the economy is being reinvented.

RESOURCES TO GUIDE THE PROCESS

1K Churches Bible Study, the main resource for this process, is available in a version for participants and a version for the facilitator. It includes session guides, biblical texts and commentary, and educational information about finance and micro-businesses. Each of the five sessions introduces one of the recommended pathways, from which the congregation chooses as it prepares to offer a loan.

SESSION 1: CREATION - Economy as a household of relationships set in motion at creation
Investment Pathway: Angel Investor, a direct relationship with the borrower

SESSION 2: SIN & ALIENATION – How the brokenness of our economic relationships can signify alienation from God and neighbor
Investment Pathway: Mission Partner, a pay-it-forward model where the borrower pays back through donated goods and services in the community

SESSION 3: SALVATION – Embracing grace and releasing power in economic relationships
Investment pathway: Peer Lending Host, a group of potential borrowers decide who gets the loan

SESSION 4: SANCTIFICATION – The continual work toward justice in the economy
Investment pathway: Justice Partner, work through local community finance institutions

SESSION 5: LIVING HOPE – The hope and freedom to develop faith-filled economic relationships
Investment pathway: Public Witness, use Kiva as a platform to encourage others to also lend

1K Churches Getting Started Guide provides advice on how to organize for 1K Churches in your congregation, from gathering a group, to working with congregational structures, to planning sessions, to making initial decisions related to the loan.

1K Churches Implementation Guides provide information and processes for implementing loans following the Angel Investor and Public Witness pathways. Guides for the remaining pathways are currently under development.

For more information or to learn how you can get involved:

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