



THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH

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MINERVA G. CARCAÑO
RESIDENT BISHOP
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September 28, 2011

Ms. Barbara Boigegrain
General Secretary
General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits
The United Methodist Church
1201 Davis Street
Evanston, IL 60201

Dear Barbara,

Grace and peace to you in the name of Christ Jesus. I write to you in behalf of our United Methodist Interagency Task Force on Immigration (UMITFI) in response to the GBPHB document on Private Prisons in the U.S. that you forwarded to Bishop Julius Trimble and me this past summer. Bishop Trimble and I shared this document with the entire UMITFI at our meeting this past September 15 and had a lengthy discussion about it.

First of all allow me to state that we are grateful for the opportunity to engage with you in a conversation about the GBPHB's investments in the private prison corporations, Corporation of America (CCA) and The GEO Group. Bishop Trimble and I particularly appreciate the time you gave us at the recent spring meeting of the Council of Bishops for conversation about this critical matter. We all further acknowledge that you and your staff have clearly taken our concerns very seriously as demonstrated by the document you have shared with us. At the same time we continue to be profoundly concerned about United Methodist dollars being invested in CCA and The GEO Group. We would bring the following concerns and recommendations to you.

We believe that profiting from the incarceration of persons is immoral and antithetical to our Christian faith. The fact that an inordinate number of persons incarcerated in the U.S. are people of color and persons who come out of poverty raises serious concerns about investments in prisons serving to perpetuate racism and classism. The detention of immigrants without the due process of law further raises serious questions of justice; immigrants in increasing numbers are being detained and treated as persons guilty of a crime until proven innocent, a troubling reversal of our understanding of justice and a threat to basic human and civil rights. Another impact of such detention practices is the growing criminalization of entire migrant communities giving rise to even greater racial profiling and the demonization of migrant communities. We commend for your consideration a resolution that has been sent forth by United Methodist Women to the 2012 General Conference entitled, *The Criminalization of Communities of Color in the United States*, which we are attaching.

Your document on the matter of CCA and The GEO Group references efforts on the part of our GBCS, GBGM, and Women's Division on public policy issues and human rights abuses in for profit prisons and detention centers, as well as your intention of having GBPHB staff enter into conversation with representatives of CCA and making a site visit to the CCA Indianapolis, Indiana facility. We applaud this work, but would bring to your attention that undocumented immigrants who in growing numbers are being detained at for profit detention centers including CCA and The GEO Group detention facilities do not receive the same legal protection in the U.S. as do citizens and residents. We are also aware of the fact that at the present time there are no enforceable government standards that govern the condition of for profit prisons and detention centers or the treatment of those imprisoned or detained in them.

In our UMITFI conversation it was reported that our United Methodist Foundation may also be holding investments in CCA and The GEO Group. I am copying Byrd Bonner, Executive Director of the UMF so that he is aware of the dialogue we are having with you and our colleagues at the GBPHB and our concerns.

Finally, as we work under the charge of assisting The United Methodist Church to faithfully address the immigration situation in the U.S. as well as the forced migration that is affecting persons, families and communities globally, we would strongly request that the GBPHB join us in giving a clear witness to the need, not for the detention and deportation of immigrants living and working in the U.S., but rather for just and humane comprehensive immigration reform. We would further call upon the GBPHB to divest from the CCA and The GEO Group. The investment of United Methodist funds in these for profit prison and detention corporations only serves to undermine our witness in behalf of immigrant families and the gospel values by which we aspire to live.

Sincerely,



Bishop Minerva G. Carcaño
Co-Chair of the UMITFI

cc: Bishop Michael Watson
Mr. Byrd Bonner
Bishop Larry Goodpaster
Bishop John Hopkins
Mr. Jim Winkler
Mr. Thomas Kemper
Ms. Harriett Olson
Mr. Moses Kumar
Ms. Erin Hawkins
Members of the United Methodist Inter-agency Task Force on Immigration