



MARCHA

Metodistas Asociados Representando la Causa de los Hispanos Americanos

9845 E. Desert Cove Ave.
Scottsdale, AZ 85260

November 2, 2011

Ms. Barbara Boigegrain, General Secretary
General Board of Pension & Health Benefits
The United Methodist Church
1901 Chestnut Avenue
Glenview, IL 60025-1604

Dear Ms. Boigegrain:

We greet you in the name of our Savior Jesus Christ.

We write on behalf of the MARCHA's Consejo Directivo to express our deep concern about the investments that the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits has in companies whose primary business is incarceration. Specifically we are referring to the CCA (Corrections Corporation of America) and The GEO Group. We are disturbed that an agency of our United Methodist Church would invest pension funds in an industry that profits from the imprisonment of persons many of whom are persons of color.

However what disturbed us most is the fact that this industry also runs and manages the detention centers where persons without documents are being held and deprived of their basic legal rights. Some of these persons are members of our local United Methodist churches.

The private prison industry has lobbied for and supported the adoption of regressive and unjust anti-immigrant legislation in several states of which Arizona and Alabama are obvious examples. These laws have caused much anxiety and suffering in Latino communities, promoted racial profiling and created a hostile environment for all Hispanics the vast majority who are US citizens. Our Latino UM congregations are often called to deal with the negative impact of these laws and the suffering that the detention and incarceration creates in the communities they serve particularly among the youth and children who are separated from their parents and are left to fend for themselves at a rather young age, or become wards of the state.

The investments of the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits in companies such as the CCA and the GEO group who are part of an industry that profits from detention centers and incarceration of Hispanic/Latino persons compromises the ministry of our church among Hispanic/Latino persons. The Hispanic/Latino community is aware of the courageous actions and eloquent statements that our church has made on behalf of immigrants, however investments in corporations such as the CCA undermines and negates the witness of the United Methodist Church.

We refuse to believe that a general agency which at the core of its mission works to secure the financial wellbeing of our pastors and lay personnel can be invested in companies such as the CCA and the GEO Group who profit by the incarceration of people. The ministry of our church in the Hispanic community and the ministry of our Hispanic/Latino congregations are made more difficult each day by the investments of the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits in companies who operate in the prison industry.

It is our fervent prayer that the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits will recall its past courageous actions in the years when apartheid was part of the governance of the country of South Africa and through its actions became part of the solution by divestment in companies doing business in that country until that system of apartheid was abolished. MARCHA calls on the General Board of Pensions and Health Benefits to divest itself of investments in companies who operate in the industry of the management of prisons and incarceration centers. We call on you to invite other church/faith group whose pension funds may have such investments to join you in this action of divestment from companies who operate in the prison industry.

MARCHA is open to dialogue and conversation about our letter on this issue. Let us know how that conversation can be initiated.

Grace and Peace,


Raúl B. Alegria, President


Bishop Elías Galván, Executive Director

Cc: Bishop Michael Watson, President GBOPHB Board of Directors
Daniel Ivey-Soto