

Prisons and other detention centres

Key issues

- 1 The state detains people through a number of institutions: for example prisons, young offender institutions and immigration detention centres. For the purpose of this statement 'prison' includes all such institutions.
- 2 The trend towards outsourcing in the fields of prisons and prisoner transport has led to publicly listed companies being involved in these activities both as operators and as owners.
- 3 The Methodist Church accepts the necessity of the existence of prisons while emphasising the importance of the humane treatment of prisoners.
- 4 There are approximately 180 Free Church Chaplains to prisons, and Prisons Sunday is a regular feature in the Methodist Church calendar. Many individual Methodist churches undertake work with ex-prisoners. In 2007, the Methodist Church, in response to a government consultation, argued in favour of prisoners having the right to vote.
- 5 The Methodist Church supported the campaign to abolish the death penalty in the 1950s and 1960s in Britain, and continues to oppose the death penalty.
- 6 The Epworth position paper on issues involving children recognises the acute vulnerability of children especially when they are in custody, and the need for them to be protected from harm. Responses from Action for Children to government consultations stress the importance of rehabilitating and transforming prisoners.
- 7 The Methodist Church campaigns strongly against the detention of children and families in immigration detention centres.

Policy

- 1 Investment in companies operating prisons is ethically acceptable in principle.
- 2 Investment in companies owning prisons (e.g. through PFI contracts) is ethically acceptable in principle.
- 3 Investment in companies operating or owning prisons in which the death penalty is carried out is not acceptable.
- 4 Investment in companies operating or owning prisons in jurisdictions in which the death penalty is carried out, but not in those prisons run or owned by the company is likely to be acceptable.
- 5 Children are detained in prison for offences that they have committed; due to offences committed by others (e.g. babies too young to be separated from their mothers); and due to their families facing deportation under immigration or asylum laws. Before Epworth invests in any company operating or owning prisons in which children are detained, their operating regimes will be examined with particular care.
- 6 Before investing in any company operating or owning prisons, Epworth will seek to ensure that all such facilities operate in accordance with best practice.