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U.S. DISTRICT COURT
N.D. OF ALABAMA

EXHIBIT "2"

Dockets.Justia.

IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE NORTHERN DISTRICT OF ALABAMA
NORTHEASTERN DIVISION

HISPANIC INTEREST COALITION OF ALABAMA; et al.,	)	
Plaintiffs,	)	
v.	)	**CASE NO. 5:11-CV-2484-SLB**
ROBERT BENTLEY, in his official capacity as Governor of the State of Alabama; et al.,	)	
Defendants.	)	

RT. REV. HENRY N. PARSLEY, JR., in his official capacity as Bishop of the Episcopal Church in the Diocese of Alabama, et al.,	)	
Plaintiffs,	)	
v.	)	**Case Number: 5:11-CV-2736-CLS**
ROBERT BENTLEY, in his official capacity as Governor of the State of Alabama; et al.,	)	
Defendants.	)	

UNITED STATES OF AMERICA,	)	
Plaintiff,	)	
v.	)	**Case Number: 2:11-CV-2746-LSC**
STATE OF ALABAMA; GOVERNOR ROBERT J. BENTLEY,	)	
Defendants.	)	

AFFIDAVIT OF WILLIAM H. WILLIMON

My name is William H. Willimon. I am over the age of 19 years and am competent to give this affidavit. I have personal knowledge of the matters stated herein. This affidavit is submitted in support of a motion for preliminary injunction filed by the Plaintiffs in Case No. 5:11-CV-2736-CLS, styled Rt. Rev. Henry N. Parsley, Jr., etc., et al., v. Robert Bentley, etc., et al.

I am the presiding Bishop for the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church. This means that I am the administrative and spiritual leader for churches in the geographical region of the State of Alabama which covers, basically, a line from Tuscaloosa through Birmingham through Anniston, and down to Alexander City, and all points east, west and north of that line extending to the borders of Georgia, Mississippi and Tennessee. There are 744 United Methodist Churches within the North Alabama Conference and those churches include more than 152,000 members. The United Methodist Church follows the teachings of its founder, John Wesley, in practicing what Mr. Wesley referred to as "practical divinity". This means that United Methodists continually strive to reach out to unchurched persons to welcome them into the church as a whole, and our denomination in particular.

Consistent with the United Methodist Church's mandate, as found in Matthew, Chapter 25 and elsewhere, to feed the hungry and thirsty, to welcome strangers, to clothe the naked and to visit the sick and imprisoned, the United Methodist Church seeks to welcome all individuals, regardless of their immigration status.

In seeking to be true to our mission, members of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church participate in numerous outreach ministries which extend to people all races, colors, creeds, national origins and ethnicities. Among others, the ministries of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church include supporting the "Carpenter's Hand" program which is committed to providing safe, decent, affordable housing to low income families. We also participate in the Birmingham Hospitality Network, an ecumenical program that provides temporary housing and meals to homeless individuals at local United Methodist Churches throughout the Birmingham Metropolitan area. We also sponsor and support, as one of the churches within the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church, the Church of the Reconciler. This church is a worship facility which is primarily focused on serving Birmingham's homeless and transient community. In addition, Highlands United Methodist Church, another of the churches in our Conference, participates in "Community Ministries", a program which seeks to provide hands-on services to homeless individuals throughout Alabama, including engaging in "Project ID", an initiative to secure photo identifications for transient individuals in Alabama. The North Alabama Conference is also a supporting sponsor of Greater Birmingham Ministries, an organization dedicated to providing meals, temporary shelter, clothing, job training and education to Birmingham's homeless and working poor. In providing or supporting these ministries, we do not – and would not – refuse to assist any person in need because he or she lacked legal immigration status.

In addition to the foregoing, many of the United Methodist congregations within the North Alabama Conference serve Latino or primarily Spanish-speaking bi-lingual congregations. For example, Pleasant Hill United Methodist Church in Bessemer, Alabama, is pastored by Reverend Christopher Barton Thau. Although this church was originally founded in

1832, today it primarily consists of Latino members, many of whom do not have any validated immigration status. In addition to facilitating spiritual growth, Pastor Thau provides the congregation with food, work for members, monetary assistance, counseling, support with Medicaid applications, and other social services that members may need. While rendering these services, Pastor Thau often transports members to and from appointments with physicians, to work assignments, benefits appointments and other appointments. Pastor Thau does not require that those he seeks to aid prove that they are "legal" immigrants. Other United Methodist members in the other congregations within North Alabama Conference engage in similar acts, and similarly without requiring validated immigration status.

While I know that Christians and others of good will may hold differing opinions about Alabama's immigration law, I have become convinced, after numerous discussions with our pastors and churches involved in missions work, that Alabama's immigration law may criminalize good Christian citizens seeking to live out their faith, in works of mercy and love to some of our sisters and brothers in need. I believe the law, as currently drafted, inhibits the rights of Alabama citizens to freely practice their Christian faith, specifically the right to welcome and love all of God's children without regard to their immigration status.

Within the United Methodist Church, only our "General Conference" (which consists of United Methodists from all over the world and which meets every four years) may speak for the entire denomination. Therefore, I am participating as a plaintiff in this lawsuit, individually, as a concerned Christian leader, responsible for United Methodists in the North Alabama area. If this law remains in effect, in its present form, many of the ministries of the North Alabama Conference of the United Methodist Church will be curtailed, discouraging our members from providing such ministries for fear of criminal prosecution if they continue to render services to undocumented immigrants.

Further affiant sayeth not.

William H. Willimon

STATE OF ALABAMA)
COUNTY OF JEFFERSON)

Before me, the undersigned notary public in and for said county in said state, personally appeared William H. Willimon, who is known to me and who, being by me first duly sworn, did depose and state that he has read the foregoing Affidavit and the statements contained therein are true and correct.

Given under my hand and official seal on this the 15th day of August, 2011.

[SEAL]

Notary Public

My Commission Expires: 7/11/12