



# PatchQuilt

A publication of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia

Summer 2018

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## THE CHRIS HALE ENVIRONMENTAL AWARD

This past June in Charleston, WV, CCA hosted a special event to honor the first anniversary of the passing of Chris Hale, a fellow Catholic and a ferocious ally in the realm of Appalachian activism. In the wake of the chemical spill into the Kanawha River in 2014, Chris founded "Friends of Water," the online organizing platform which has been a galvanizing force for thousands.

The evening began with the presentation of CCA's new "Chris Hale Environmental Award" given first to his father, Bernie Hale, for keeping his son's legacy alive. The biggest gift Chris gave to us during his life cut too short was a living reminder that all the environmental issues we address, all the battles we fight against industry and by lobbying, will only make a difference if faith-based and environmental groups can come together as one.

Since people of Chris' caliber don't emerge very often, CCA's board will annually take nominations for future award recipients and research them, then vote on the possibility of an award being given that year. If someone is chosen, that name will be announced in CCA's Spring newsletter, and the award will be given at that year's CCA Annual Gathering with the Bishop Sullivan and FOCIS awards.

The Chris Hale Environmental Award is reserved for individuals who are widely recognized by both faith-based and environmental groups for 1) having shown outstanding activism in the protection of Appalachia's waters, lands, air, plant or wild life, 2) exemplified Chris Hale's desire to collaborate with others, and, 3)

demonstrated Chris' tireless commitment to hands-on-service when people are most in need.

After Bernie's acceptance speech, and tributes from friends and colleagues, we were delighted by the facilitated conversation entitled "Reflections on Sacred Action for Earth," between renowned native West Virginian author-activists, Denise Giardina and Ann Pancake led by OVEC's former director and CCA's long time friend,, Janet Keating.

Each author read an excerpt from one of her books as an example of how her connection with the environment influenced her writing. All three women shared how faith and spirituality played a role in their activism, and, they reminisced about their experiences with faith-based and environmental groups working together over the years.

We want to give special thanks to our co-sponsors, OVEC and the Diocese of Lexington for helping us to make possible this heartwarming and thought provoking evening for so many from as close as Charleston to as far as Atlanta. ▲

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## News & Events

### FROM THE CO-COORDINATORS

*Jeannie Kirkhope and Michael Iafrate*

It has been an exciting year as always for Catholic Committee of Appalachia and for new reasons. For starters, we congratulate Michael Iafrate and his wife, Jocelyn, who welcomed little Isadora Day into the world on June 10th and, for the first time in CCA history, a director received six weeks of paid paternity leave!! Jeannie especially welcomes his return, and we are so very grateful to all those who support the work of CCA in order to help pay our salaries and provide a perk like that, so Izzi can start get to know her daddy enough to remember him before he's back to giving talks, heading to meetings, and stuck at his desk writing!

Speaking of those who support us, we are doing better financially than we have in at least a decade. Jeannie has been painstakingly researching and furiously writing grants to earmark funding for programs and projects and the responses have been tremendous. We've received a total of \$27,000 in gifts and grants from *St. Eugene Catholic Church in Asheville, NC, Appalachian Ministries Education Resource Center (AMERC), Glenmary Home Missioners, Sisters of Loretto, Sisters of Charity of Nazareth* and the *Appalachian Community Fund*. This incredible bounty has been put towards general operations; our annual Cherokee Seminar/Retreat; promulgation of the People's Pastoral; LGBTQ advocacy and initiatives, and the upcoming Annual Gathering.

Our loyal and beloved religious communities have given us just shy of \$6,000. We want to thank *Mt. Tabor Benedictine Community, Ursuline Sisters of Louisville, Daughters of Charity, Sisters of Charity in Dubuque Iowa and in Nazareth, Kentucky, Our Lady of Victory, Congregation of Divine Providence, Province of St. John the Baptist, Sisters of St. Francis-Oldenburg, Sisters of St. Anne, Sisters of Mercy, and the Order of Friar Minors-Cincinnati*.

So many generous members have given above and beyond their annual support in dues. That number comes close to \$7,500, with special thanks to *Gerard Weigel, Jane Davies and Art Millholland & Luan Mostello* who gave us the lion's share of that. We have received a total of \$2,100 in membership dues alone. Although that is less than half of what we expected for our numbers, there is still plenty of time to become a member or renew membership for 2018. Historically, whether we've had a feast or famine, when all is said and done, it has been our members' commitment and annual dues that and keeps CCA's doors open and our numbers in the black.

The real financial surprise this year has come from bishops. Just before Thanksgiving last year, our Ecclesial Liaison, Bishop John Stowe of the Diocese of Lexington, graciously expanded our reach by sending appeal letters on our behalf beyond our mountainous region to bishops across the country. Since then, we have received warm greetings and generous contributions from some faithful standbys, the *Dioceses of Atlanta, Nashville, Wheeling-Charleston, Louisville, Covington and Steubenville*, as well as new support from the likes of the *Dioceses of Nashville, Santa Fe, Trenton, Jackson, St. Petersburg, Chicago, Gaylord and Brooklyn* for a total of just over \$21,000. That's a number we haven't seen from bishops since 1999!

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### CCA, BISHOP STOWE, AMONG SUPPORTERS OF RECLAIM ACT OF 2017

Last December, religious communities sent a letter to the leadership of the U.S. House of Representatives expressing support for a bipartisan bill that could jump start economies in coal communities: the RECLAIM Act of 2017.

The RECLAIM Act brings hope for real help for Appalachian communities most in need of economic revitalization. According to the Appalachian Regional Commission 2010-2014 poverty rate report, the combined Appalachian regions of Alabama, Kentucky, Tennessee, Virginia, and West Virginia have a poverty rate that is 4 percent higher than the national average.

Co-Coordinator of Catholic Committee of Appalachia Michael Iafrate said of the legislation, "People in Appalachia have been working to change the dominant story we tell about the region in an effort of reimagining their communities and forging new paths forward beyond coal. The RECLAIM Act is a reasonable first step in assisting these communities to bring these efforts to life as we continue to have difficult conversations about our region and its place in this nation's history."

Signed by 40 religious denominations and faith-based organizations, the letter provides faith communities' reason for supporting the RECLAIM Act:

*"...we are deeply invested in ensuring every person has the opportunity to reach his or her God-given potential. We also believe in our moral responsibility to ensure God's creation continues to help future generations thrive. For these reasons, we urge you to look towards real solutions for a just transition for coal communities."*

West Virginia Council of Churches Executive Director Rev. Jeff Allen said, "In West Virginia alone, the RECLAIM Act could help us work on

*(Continued on page 6)*

## WALKING OUR SPIRITUAL PATHS: MY CHEROKEE RETREAT EXPERIENCE

*Deirdre McLoive*

My journey began forty years ago, on the day my beloved Aunt Kathy handed me a copy of the children's book, *The Education of Little Tree*. I was in my twenties and a bit confused as to why she'd given me a children's story, but her genuine enthusiasm enticed me to begin reading. By the time I had finished the last page and closed the book, my view of life and religion had been forever changed.

The beautiful story of a Cherokee boy and his grandparents taught me a new way of looking at things. It made me question my views on love, loyalty and family; it made me see rocks and streams and trees with a new awakening. I now understood that humans, alongside creatures as tiny as a spider or as majestic as an eagle, had each been made by the creator, and each deserved to be treated equally, with reverence. I learned never to be wasteful or take more than is needed, and to share what I have with those who have less. Not in a self-righteous way, but from a place of genuine caring and sense of responsibility to all people. I am now sixty and retired, but the passion for a life based on these principles still remains strong in me.

It was at a CCA NC Chapter Meeting where I fortunately met Mary Herr. When Mary shared information to the group regarding a spiritual retreat in Cherokee, I expressed a strong interest in attending. She kindly took my information and promised to send me a registration form for the coming year. Mary was as good as her word, and a year later I found myself checking into the Drama Inn in Cherokee, NC to attend Walking Our Spiritual Paths: An Introduction to the Spirituality of the Cherokee People.

Our group, made up of seventeen, gathered in a circle at our first meeting, awkwardly making introductions to one another. We were strangers that day, but by the end of our last evening we stood as friends, comfortably chatting, singing, sharing experiences. It was a wonderful transformation, thanks to the warmth and guidance of Father John and Mary Herr, and to the Cherokee speakers who shared their knowledge and lessons.

As each day came to a close, Father John would gather us to share in the traditional "Talking Circle", a Native American style of communication quite different from ours. When Native people engage in conversation they listen intently and respectfully, in a non-competitive way. In the Talking Circle, a stick, called a talking stick, is passed around the circle. Each person who receives it may speak for as long as they wish, while everyone else



remains quiet and listens until their turn. The stick is then handed over to the next person. This type of communication allowed us the freedom to express ourselves without limitation or fear of interruption. I must say it encouraged me to speak thoughtfully and to listen intently. Father John's questions to us were thought-provoking, and since we were encouraged to share our feelings and experiences, we learned about each other in a way we might not have otherwise. It created a kinship, a family, and suddenly we were no longer strangers.

We asked many questions throughout the retreat, but no matter what information we needed, Mary was always there with the answer. From good places to eat, to information about the speakers, ways of the Cherokee, museum hours, how to get anywhere in town, informative books to read – our questions were endless and Mary answered them all. I told her Google had nothing on her!

The Cherokee speakers were inspirational and remarkable, each in their own way. They shared with us their stories, their laughter, their sorrow and pain, all the while showing an amazing resilience in light of all that they had been through.

On our first day, Native Cherokee Russell Townsend gave us a window into the history of his people. It was a heartfelt, gut-wrenching narrative that left us painfully awake. This was a history lesson we had never heard before, much less read about in school books, and it left us feeling unsettled and questioning our long-held beliefs. That was the beginning of our journey together.

An afternoon spent in the church of Pastor Jack Russell showed us how the Christian and Cherokee

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## News & Events

### CCA TAKES ITS PLACE AT RECENT CONFERENCES AND EVENTS

CCA members have been busy lifting up Appalachian concerns in a variety of academic, economic, and activist activities in the region and around the world.

In November 2017, CCA Co-Coordinators Jeannie Kirkhope and Michael Iafrate were present at the 20th annual Ignatian Family Teach-In for Justice in Washington, DC. The annual event attracts about 2000 young people representing over 120 Jesuit and other Catholic universities, high schools, and parishes in the U.S., as well as Canada, Mexico, and El Salvador. The 2017 theme, *Rowing Into the Deep: Magis Meets Justice*, challenged attendees to explore a more deeply authentic, courageous, generous, and compassionate response to the changing realities of our world, with a primary focus on racism and immigration.

Kirkhope presented a breakout session titled "Feedback from Appalachia: The Honeymoon is Over" which explored a "culture of encounter" in the context of volunteer groups visiting Appalachia. From the conference mainstage, Iafrate presented "Taking Our Place in a New Appalachian Story," sharing the message of *The Telling Takes Us Home* as it relates to *Laudato Si'* and the Jesuit mission.

Fr. John Rausch, former Executive Director of CCA, presented on a side panel organized by the Congregations of St. Joseph at the 56th session of the United Nations' Commission for Social Development in early 2018. Rausch presented a Catholic perspective on ending poverty and hunger, focusing on Appalachia and the rural South.

Sr. Mary Joyce Moeller represented CCA while speaking about the RECLAIM ACT at Glenmary Home Missioner priests' retreat this past March. We thank Tom Navin, Director of Glenmary's Commission on Justice, Peace and Integrity, for inviting us and keeping in mind his other fellow CCA members to talk about their ministries.

Iafrate and CCA Board member Eddie Sloane once again presented papers at the 2018 annual conference of the Appalachian Studies Association this past April in Cincinnati, Ohio. Sloane's session, co-presented with Gloria McGillen, was titled "Far Afield: A Dialogue on Pursuing Graduate Research in Appalachian Studies Out of Place." Iafrate presented a paper titled "The Promotion of Justice Will Cost Us Something: Jesuit Radicalism and the Option for the Poor in Appalachia in the 1970s and Beyond."

Two additional papers by Iafrate were presented at recent conferences. "Who Else But the Church is Called to Be the Prophet: Appalachian Social Movements as the Soil of a Regional Prophetic

Ecclesiology," was presented for the College Theology Society at St. Catherine University in St. Paul, MN in June, read by Dr. Jessica Wroblewski, CCA member and professor of theology at Wheeling Jesuit University. In July he presented "The Audacity of the Laity and the Option for the Poor in the Appalachian People's Pastoral Letter" at the Lay Movements as Structures of Grace conference in Cincinnati.

CCA member and former Board Chair Donna Becher was invited by Creation Justice Ministries to accompany Cassandra Carmichael, Director of the National Religious Partnership for the Environment, to visit the offices of West Virginia senators Manchin and Capito to discuss the Antiquities Act and the importance of protecting public lands in the face of threats by the Trump administration, as well as the importance of a September re-authorization the Land and Water Conservation Fund, established by Congress in 1964.

Please contact the Spencer office and let us know the good things you are doing in your neck of the woods! ▲

### STATE OF APPALACHIA CONFERENCE HELD IN PIPESTEM, WV

The 2nd annual "State of Appalachia" conference took place March 31 - April 1, 2017 at Pipestem State Park in Pipestem, West Virginia. The ecumenical conference gathers faith leaders and activists in the spirit of the Commission on Religion in Appalachia which was active from 1965-2006. State of Appalachia is sponsored by CCA, Creation Justice Ministries, the West Virginia Council of Churches, Christian Appalachian Ministries, and more.

Speakers and panelists this year included Rev. Dr. Jennifer Copeland, Jessica Lilly, Pastor Harold Jacobson, Rev. Dr. Gilson Waldkoenig, Loretta Young, Nick Mullins, Lyndon Harris, and Todd Nesbitt. Speakers explored topics such as "the state of the soul of Appalachia," just economic transitions, racism, climate change, water justice, the opioid epidemic, and Appalachian theology. Participants also shared prayer, a hike, and entertainment.

For more information on State of Appalachia, and to see pictures from the event, see [www.stateofappalachia.org](http://www.stateofappalachia.org) or the State of Appalachia Facebook page. ▲

## CCA RAISES ITS VOICE ON WEST VIRGINIA BISHOP PICK

*In February 2018, CCA wrote to Archbishop Christophe Pierre, Apostolic Nuncio for the United States, to request a discussion about the appointment of the next bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. Pierre replied that "Members of the faithful are always welcome to write expressing their views. You can be sure that these comments are carefully reviewed and the concerns are given serious consideration." What follows are excerpts from CCA's letter to Pierre, Pope Francis, and three American members of the Congregation for Bishops, Cardinals Marc Ouellet, Blaise Cupich, and Donald Wuerl.*

Dear Brothers,

In September 2018, Bishop Michael J. Bransfield of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston (DWC) will submit his request for retirement in accordance with Canon Law. Having led a large diocese that encompasses the entire state of West Virginia since 2004, Bishop Bransfield deserves to retire at this time.

It is in anticipation of this coming retirement that we, the Catholic Committee of Appalachia (CCA), write to you. The USCCB states that when a bishop retires, "[b]road consultation within the diocese is encouraged with regard to the needs of the diocese." As a grassroots network of people of faith that has been committed to the work of justice in the Appalachian mountain region of the United States, CCA believes we are well-positioned to offer a view from below regarding the ministerial needs of our state and of our region. We respectfully offer these requests for your consideration as you work to discern a successor to Bishop Bransfield to lead the DWC.

The DWC has a rich history of deep listening to and engagement with people struggling for a better life in the Appalachian region. It is, however, an unusually wealthy diocese within a poor state and a poor region. Over time, we believe this has had an effect on the priorities and allegiances of church leadership as well as the laity, sometimes compromising the church's willingness and ability to live its calling as Prophet in our region and in our world. Yet, time and time again we are given the opportunity to recommit to the Spirit of Justice. As the bishops of Appalachia wrote in their 1975 pastoral letter "This Land is Home to Me": *"Through the ages, the church tries to be faithful to this message. At times it begins to stray from it, but always the Spirit is alive within it, stirring up new voices to call it back to its mission for Justice."*

CCA sees the ministry of Pope Francis as an example of the Spirit alive in the church, and of this "stirring" of new voices. Indeed, when Francis issued *Laudato Si'*, CCA published a statement outlining some specific ways our bishops could implement

the encyclical in the region. Then, in late 2015, we published a "people's pastoral letter" which presents the voices of Appalachian people, and the Earth itself, and calls the church to respond in action for justice and the healing of creation. We include copies of these documents along with this letter.

In light of the three pastoral letters and the priorities of Pope Francis, we offer these points for consideration as you work to select a new bishop. The people of West Virginia need a bishop who:

- is committed to the ongoing reform begun by the Second Vatican Council
- strives to be pastor rather than an administrator
- consults and dialogues with laity, especially those who are not wealthy or part of industry elites
- respects the experience, insights, and knowledge of women religious and clergy in the diocese
- has, or is willing to develop, experience in rural ministry
- lives simply rather than princely, and seeks to serve rather than to be served
- follows Pope Francis' commitment to social, economic, and ecological justice in word and action
- prophetically proclaims the fullness of the church's social teaching on local, regional, national, and global issues of concern and encourages priests and deacons to preach the same
- continues the tradition and message of the Appalachian pastoral letters
- partners with groups at the grassroots to expose and work to rectify the root causes of the region's poverty, unemployment, and ecological destruction
- encourages economic transition for a new Appalachia rather than maintenance of the status quo
- and continually examines the sources of our dioceses' funding, will divest from fossil fuels if necessary, and reinvest in renewable energy and other life-giving projects.

Whether potential candidates come from within the diocese, or without, we urge the selection of a bishop who will embody the freshness, compassion, and commitment to justice we see so clearly in Pope Francis. We pray that the Spirit will guide your work as you choose a new bishop for the DWC.

In the Spirit of Justice,  
Jeannie Kirkhope and Michael Iafrate,  
Catholic Committee of Appalachia ▲

## News

### COALFIELD DEVELOPMENT ACQUIRES SUSTAINABLE CLOTHING MANUFACTURER, SUSTAINU

In June, Coalfield Development announced acquiring Morgantown-based SustainU sustainable clothing manufacturer, incorporating it into its family of social enterprises. Based in Wayne County, WV, Coalfield Development is a nonprofit organization that operates social enterprises designed to diversify the Appalachian economy. SustainU, founded in 2009 by entrepreneur Chris Yura, sustainably manufactures 100% recycled knitwear in the United States.

"We are excited to bring SustainU under the Coalfield Development umbrella," said Brandon Dennison, the organization's Founder and CEO. Coalfield and SustainU have an alignment of values, and share a commitment to social enterprise as a development strategy to rebuild the economy from the ground up. "We know that in order for new markets to emerge out of central Appalachia, we need to get local products exported to bigger areas. This acquisition helps advance such a strategy," Dennison said.

SustainU, which sources and creates products from recycled cotton and recycled plastics, has developed a local production workforce including people recovering from drug and alcohol abuse. The printing and shipping operations will be moving into Coalfield's West Edge Factory in Huntington later this year.

Since 2009, SustainU has worked with industry leaders in creating more sustainable apparel in the United States. Custom apparel clients include as D'Addario Strings, Ben and Jerry's, The America's Cup, The College Football National Championship, and Bonnaroo and Lollapalooza productions. In 2016, SustainU became a licensee of Major League Baseball® and has introduced USA made, 100% recycled apparel to fans and stadiums across the country.

For the past few years, CCA has worked with SustainU to create and print our most recent shirts, available in our CCA web-store and at events like the Annual Gathering. ▲

*New SUSTAINU t-shirts will be sold for \$20 starting at September's Annual Gathering, and then in our online store with Dandelion "Be the Church" logo on Heathered Grey or Pastel-Yellow in S, M, L, XL, XXL*

### RECLAIM ACT *(from page 2)*

an estimated \$1.5 billion worth of abandoned mine clean-up work. The people and the lands of Appalachia have made sacrifices to provide energy for this country. It is a moral responsibility for our country to re-invest in our region for new economic opportunities and to heal God's creation."

Likewise, Bishop John Stowe of the Diocese of Lexington, KY, who serves also as CCA's Bishop Liaison, wrote in support of the RECLAIM Act in an editorial in the Lexington Herald-Leader. Stowe said,

As a community of faith, we look for these kinds of opportunities which protect and restore the wonders of creation and offer possibilities for meaningful employment. The time is short for the passage of the RECLAIM Act. Let's make sure our representatives are in support and ready to act.

The letter called on House leadership to bring the RECLAIM Act of 2017 to the House floor for a vote as soon as possible.

The letter of support from religious leaders was spearheaded by Creation Justice Ministries, who represents the creation care policies of 38 Christian communions, including Baptists, mainline Protestants, Historically Black Churches, Peace Churches, and Orthodox communions. Learn more at [www.creationjustice.org](http://www.creationjustice.org). ▲



Be the church you want to see in the world.

Catholic Committee of Appalachia

## CCA RELEASES STATEMENT ON WEST VIRGINIA TEACHER STRIKE

*The following statement was released March 1, 2018.*

The Catholic Committee of Appalachia expresses its admiration and support for the teachers and service personnel in all 55 counties of West Virginia currently on strike. Students and others who have joined them in the work of organizing pickets, rallies, and conversations with legislators inspire us. Indeed, the Catholic tradition has long recognized the rights of workers to form unions and to organize strikes.<sup>1</sup> Currently, West Virginia ranks 48th in the United States for teacher salaries. We believe that we can do better and justice demands it. In accordance with the Catholic tradition, we join teachers and service workers in their call for “a permanent fix to healthcare through the Public Employees Insurance Agency [PEIA] and a stop to legislation on what they call attacks on seniority. They are also hoping lawmakers will walk away from a bill known as ‘paycheck protection’ that would make union members opt-in yearly to have dues withdrawn from paychecks.”<sup>2</sup>

Further, we join teachers and service personnel in their frustration over current proposals<sup>3</sup> suggested by West Virginia Governor, Jim Justice. As events continue to unfold, we support the need for a long-term fix to PEIA and a 5% pay raise for teachers and service personnel alike. We recognize the complexity of creating budgets and allocating funds; however, we must be conscious of the manner in which these demands are met. They must also advance the good of wider human and more-than-human communities. Indeed, this is an opportunity for us as a state to reflect on the ways in which we seek to fund programs that support the common good. Our social and economic life ought

to reflect our values. We strongly oppose proposals such as co-tenancy<sup>4</sup> and urge that any increase in natural gas severance taxes, as a means to fund and meet teacher and service personnel demands, should not be tied to co-tenancy. Further, we must work to create new streams of revenue for our state, which are not tied to resource extraction.

In keeping with the Catholic tradition and the emphatic call by the Catholic bishops of the world for a faith that does justice<sup>5</sup> rooted in Jesus’s own prophetic ministry (Luke 4: 16-9), we encourage the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, and all West Virginia Catholic schools in particular, to actively support teachers and service personnel. This can be done in a number of ways. We can use this as an opportunity to discuss the history of labor organizing in West Virginia and Catholic Social Teaching’s affirmation of the rights of workers to form a union and to strike. We can also actively encourage and support teachers and students in discerning a call to walk out and join pickets in an expression of solidarity, a core principle of Catholic Social Teaching. Parishes and youth ministries can join in providing child-care and meals to support working families. This is also an opportunity for Catholic schools to review the justness of their own wages and insurance policies. In West Virginia, across Appalachia, and in all places we continue to affirm that “the voice of the poor [and the Earth] are to be in some sense our first teachers.”<sup>6</sup> ▲

*For references, see:*

*<https://ccappal.org/publications/statements-resolutions/statement-on-strike-of-west-virginia-state-employees>*

## CO-COORDINATORS *(from page 1)*

In addition to financial contributions, we have had a bumper crop of members helping us get the word out about CCA and the justice issues Appalachia faces. We are grateful to all those who represent our organization at conferences and events, and through their own works. For instance, we thank Vice Chair of the Board, *Ed Sloane*, for contributing two pieces to this newsletter, the statement on the WV teacher strike and the article on divestment. We wish him all the best, but not farewell, as he heads off to Villanova to be the coordinator of Appalachian immersion experiences for college students there. Another example is *Alyssa Pasternak-Post* having included CCA in her

inspiring preaching as part of the Catholic Women Preach project. You can find her video at <http://catholicwomenpreach.org/preaching/06172018>. Alyssa remains a primary role model, especially for women, in how to be the church we want to see in the world.

With the challenges CCA has faced in recent years with low numbers in the bank, on the board, and on the members list, we were concerned over whether or not our organization was relevant in anymore. But all that has been changing and, since the country began feeling the effects of the current presidential administration, folks have come out in droves to share their concern and abundance, and to do the necessary compensatory work along with us. We can’t thank you enough. ▲

## Statements

### CCA STATEMENT ON CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN THE CHURCH

*The following statement was released November 20, 2017.*

The Catholic Committee of Appalachia (CCA) prides itself on raising a prophetic voice of justice. Yet it has taken us this long to tackle the topic of child abuse, particularly sexual abuse by clerics and religious in the Roman Catholic Church and its cover up by their bishops and superiors. For most people, the mere thought of the scandal conjures such a wave of upsetting emotions that it becomes difficult to discuss. For those who are accused, and for the hierarchy grappling with the scandal, there are even more emotions. For survivors, there are many more, and they are exponentially intensified. In addition, we can all be reduced to silence by the fear the church elicits with its global patriarchal power structure. We are intimidated by its clericalism, historical authority, spiritual influence, and real or perceived threats of the loss of financial support, or expulsion from the community, if we dare to speak hard truths. But, by remembering who we are, the People of God together can change that.

As Christians, we are called to protect the most vulnerable. Thus, we take on the responsibility never to expect them to have to speak up for themselves or to seek justice on their own. It is against our morals and best interests as one Church to leave those who have been so crushed to defend and heal themselves and each other, if they have the wherewithal to do so at all.

Therefore, CCA joins survivors of sex abuse all over the world in mourning the recent loss of their fearless champion, Barbara Blaine, an unrelenting advocate as the founder and past president of Survivors' Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and a victim of abuse herself. Having unexpectedly lost this giant voice in the movement, CCA celebrates Barbara's life and heroic works, and we are reminded once again that silence crucifies as much as abuse does. It is in Barbara's memory that we pick up her torch and finally speak.

Just as we recognize the importance of annually remembering the gruesome details of Jesus' Passion, the same is true of listening to the stories of those who have been sexually abused. Their personal accounts utterly stun us back into the reality of their brutal suffering. We must continue to go through the cycle of grief and pain with them until it brings all of us to healing. More often, though, we Catholics tend to avoid the disturbing details of the single most heinous ongoing issue of injustice in our faith tradition. Doing so allows us to numb our distress over the topic and rationalize our identification with a faith tradition that perpetuates abuse. It

is also a literal turning of our backs to the crucified. There is nothing more broken in the body of Christ than a sexually violated child, shattered by the hands of a highly respected and implicitly trusted religious figure. Therefore, we listen to their experiences no matter how sickened we may be by their stark tellings.

The number of crucified bodies is staggering. As many as 100,000 children have been abused by priests in the U.S. alone.<sup>1</sup> Ordained men have raped our altar boys face down in the confessional, and in the sacristy before Mass. They have fondled our little girls in their own beds as they tucked them in at night. They have sodomized our high school teens after getting them drunk. They have impregnated divorcees who came to them seeking spiritual healing, and they have pressured seminarians into non-consensual oral sex in the back of the classroom. Similar examples exist among deacons, brothers and nuns who have abused, too.<sup>2</sup>

Many victims who have not killed themselves due to the shame, loss of faith, depression or post-traumatic stress disorder are no longer truly living either, but merely surviving, attempting to cope and heal any way they can. As Ms. Blaine said in interviews, she underestimated the length of the healing process, expecting SNAP would be necessary no more than a year. "Now I understand it's a lifelong process. I thought it was something you heal from like a broken leg. I never realized it would take so long."<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, the stamping out of clerical sexual misdeeds well known by the public and secular law enforcement has been a disturbing and nearly lifelong process for our 2,000 year old Church. Records show that, throughout history, church leaders have regularly written disciplinary legislation against clerical abuse beginning with the Council of Elvira in Spain in 306 A.D. They have also tried abusers in church tribunals and, at times, allowed secular authorities to punish the accused. Yet, clear attempts to hide these actions only began in 1922 through papal laws with strict confidentiality codes, which were compounded in 1962 by Pope John XXIII's decree to maintain "Pontifical Secrecy" — total and perpetual secrecy.<sup>4</sup>

Thus, the silence remained throughout contemporary history until the first major civil case of sexual abuse by a priest was reported by the secular media in 1985.<sup>5</sup> And news of the rampant abuse and routine cover up by bishops worldwide only began to break again once the Boston Globe revealed its

*(Continued on next page)*



city's pervasive scandal in 2002.<sup>6</sup> Up to that point, it was common for bishops to deny allegations, intimidate, lie to, or pay off victims, and send abusive priests to counseling.<sup>7</sup> Today, psychologists and psychiatrists use a combination of methods to treat clients who have abused, but until the early 1980s they understood cognitive behavior therapy alone to be rehabilitative.<sup>8</sup> Prior to adding relapse prevention treatment, which was just emerging at that time, once priests were cleared by their counselors, it was accepted practice for bishops to reappoint them, and authorities were not notified.<sup>9</sup> In the two decades since the *Globe's* article exposed the bishops' criminal endangerment, our leadership has rarely publicly apologized or begged forgiveness. Regardless, their sincerity is in doubt when they still prioritize the protection of the church's assets and power base over admitting clerical abuse and the bishops' failure to report it. Sadly, the same can be said for men's and women's religious communities.

Eradicating the propensity some clerics have to sexually abuse may be impossible given that a small percentage of the world's population has had the trait seemingly for time immemorial, but breaking the code of Pontifical Secrecy from the last 55 years should not be as difficult. Yet, despite the hundreds of millions of dollars the church spends annually offering treatment for abusive priests, counseling for survivors, and Safe Environment trainings in parishes, and no matter how successful these programs may be,<sup>10</sup> we fail to address the root issue if our bishops do not hold themselves and their priests accountable. It is simply astounding that the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops felt it necessary to allow vigorous debate against a "zero tolerance" policy for bishops neglecting to respond to allegations, before it was finally adopted into the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People (the "Dallas Charter").<sup>11</sup> Now, after 15 years, in the midst of allegations around Cardinal George Pell, the Australian Royal Commission "recommended that the failure to report sexual abuse, even in religious confessions, be made a 'criminal offense.' The suggestion was met with harsh opposition by church leaders, who called the decision a 'government intrusion' into the spiritual realm, which until now has been respected and upheld."<sup>12</sup>

It is unacceptable that our church leaders still cannot be trusted to provide safety for our children. Yet, we simply do not have faith that bishops or the leadership of religious communities will alert law enforcement officials, nor can we assume that "zero tolerance" policies will be enforced. And when church leaders point to secular institutions for having just as serious an abuse epidemic as the Roman Catholic Church,<sup>13</sup> they engage in an immature, in-

effective shifting of blame. We share the frustration of survivors who insist over and over that the Church's attempts to rectify matters are not enough and dangerously too slow due to constant obstruction. Marie Collins, an Irish laywoman and abuse survivor, resigned last year from the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors for these very reasons.<sup>14</sup> It is unconscionable that it took the Vatican until 2016 to realize, at the Commission's recommendation, that it should be a priority to train new bishops on how to prevent sexual abuse. And since training has been mandated for everyone else working with children or vulnerable adults since 2002, it is an insult. "In terms of implementation [for bishops], it remains to be seen," commission member Krysten Winter-Green said in an interview.<sup>15</sup> Likewise, Collins said recently that the Pell case has shown "how little reliance we can put on assurances from the Catholic Church that bishops and religious superiors will face sanctions if they mishandle abuse cases."<sup>16</sup>

We are appalled that 34 bishops have been accused of sexual misconduct in the United States.<sup>17</sup> Renowned psychotherapist Richard Sipe<sup>18</sup> estimates that 9% of all U.S. priests have offended. This is almost 10,000 priests.<sup>19</sup> According to a breakdown of all diocesan cases in the U.S., within the Appalachian region, 450 priests and religious, and two bishops, have been accused of sexual misconduct. Of the priests and religious, only a handful of them were found not-guilty or to have unsubstantiated cases. The list of end results for the majority of alleged perpetrators includes transfer or removal from ministry, resignation, retirement, or suicide. Those convicted who have not died awaiting trial have been laicized and have served or are currently serving time,<sup>20</sup> while most cases settled out of court add to the Church's nearly \$4 billion of total payouts and court costs to date.<sup>21</sup> As for Appalachian bishops, the Diocese of Lexington's Bishop James Williams resigned at the age of 65 after allegations in 2002.<sup>22</sup> Many questions remain in the case of current Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Bishop Michael Bransfield, with a reopened 2012 investigation seemingly still pending or derailed.<sup>23</sup> Despite Bransfield's denial of ever having abused anyone,<sup>24</sup> with a rate as low as 1.5% of allegations in the U.S. appearing to be false,<sup>25</sup> the people need definitive answers and closure to this case by civil authorities, or public transparency for why it has been left hanging so long.<sup>26</sup>

Nationally, it is estimated that 25% of girls and 16% of boys experience sexual abuse before they are 18 years old. Over 90,000 cases are reported annually but the actual number is much higher,<sup>27</sup> since it is understood that about two-thirds of incidences go unreported.<sup>28</sup> Certain home environment factors

## Statements

contribute significantly to children being at a greater risk of sexual abuse. In Appalachia, we have high numbers of children who receive foster care, who live in poverty, and who live with unemployed parents, single parents, or with the partners of single parents. These situations make our children up to twenty times more vulnerable.<sup>29</sup> In a recent study of child sexual abuse in rural areas, it was found that two-thirds of the alleged abusers were family members. Drugs or alcohol were used by the majority of abusers unrelated to their victims. And recanting took place most often when the accused was a boyfriend/girlfriend of the victim's caregiver, or a prominent person in the small community.<sup>30</sup> As only 6% of Appalachians identify as Catholic, with the church so embroiled in its own sex abuse scandal, it is unlikely that our faith tradition will be any kind of beacon in the darkness for Appalachia on this issue.

Regrettably, this scandal is only one of many serious, intersecting issues we face with church leadership. A complex combination of causes has left the Catholic hierarchy in a deeply troubling state with a damaged reputation, a lack of moral authority, fewer priests in circulation, and a primary concern with protecting their own interests. Despite the church's desperate need for healing and Pope Francis' valiant efforts to change clerical culture, we cannot expect any lasting systemic changes to come from the top so long as Francis chooses to reiterate previous popes' declarations that the Church will not reform its clerical structure in any meaningful way.

We must wake up to the dark realities of sexual abuse and clericalism in our church as they have been revealed throughout history. Beyond perpetrating, ignoring, and denying child sexual abuse, our clerics can often malign those on the margins of society in other ways, as well. The power of the Roman collar in the Catholic Church has enabled and reinforced patterns of misogyny, white supremacy, discrimination, condescension, homophobia, pastoral negligence, and the maintenance of silence on any of these and other issues. However, the violation and exploitation of defenseless children as an expression of sexual and spiritual domination is the most intimate, raw, and vile example of the abuse of sacred trust and priestly powers.

All this stands in direct opposition to the teachings of our faith tradition. For the single largest religious group in the United States, and the 1.2 billion Catholics in the world, these behaviors from our leaders should be intolerable. Feigning contentedness is giving our approval. We can struggle with perhaps unanswerable questions as to why atrocities like these happen. We can analyze and theorize how our Church got to be in such a state, or we can leave our beloved community in search of another

faith tradition. Instead, as Barbara Blaine did, we choose to remember who we are as People of God and make changes that begin with ourselves. We call on our fellow Catholics, now, to do likewise. The duty to force real transformation is a God-given opportunity which remains in the hands of each of us at the grassroots. Our Church's hierarchical system only has as much power as we give it. To avoid giving away our power, we must end the tendency to indiscriminately hold ordained and avowed religious in high or infallible esteem, and limit our expectations of them in the realm of pastoral services. Otherwise, we are not recognizing the broken humanity they share with the rest of us. We must minister more intentionally to each other, and practice mutual aid with our religious leaders. Keeping our power would cause a colossal paradigm shift in church structure since we would finally be fully embracing our baptismal authority and leading the way in becoming the Church we want to see in the world.

We must continue to mercifully hospice out the old clerical structure and usher in the new. When we do not resist and start to change systemic injustice in our church, we perpetuate it with our silence. It is not enough to simply say in response to the stories of people who struggle, "I believe you; I'm sorry." Each one of us must be willing to amplify their voices, or speak for them when they cannot, using whatever privilege we have—be it gender, race, social or economic status, or health—to liberate them. We are the only ones who can begin loosening the bonds of injustice for each other; only we can untie our wounded siblings and children in Christ.

There are those good and faithful priests and bishops who admit to being entrenched in a corrupt system, but who remain publicly silent, likely for many of the same reasons and fears experienced by the laity. We call them now to join their voices with ours. They must speak out explicitly—from the pulpit, with their public presence in the streets, in their accompaniment of the abused and oppressed, and through their own personal conduct and any policies they can affect—and be assured they have of our full support. We are proud and grateful for the few who call the church and society to task, because they resist complicity in a culture of secrecy with a code of silence, and refuse to be part of concentrated abusive power.

Although our women's religious communities and the Leadership of Catholic Women Religious (LCWR) as a whole have recently gone through devastating trials with investigation by the Vatican, we pray they can muster the same courage and grace they have shown, to open themselves to the  
(Continued on page 13)

## EMMAUS FARM CONTINUES TRADITION OF SERVICE IN LEWIS COUNTY, KY

### Emmaus Farm

My name is Sarah George, and I am the founder and Executive Director of Emmaus Farm in Vanceburg, Kentucky. Emmaus Farm was founded in 2015 to carry on the work started by the Glenmary Home Missioners in Lewis County, Kentucky in the 1970s. Glenmary bought a 45-acre farm in 1971 to use for vocational discernment and mission work, and from there, the Glenmary Farm evolved into an active volunteer program hosting more than 400 high school and college volunteers each year. I volunteered as a staff Farm Manager at the Glenmary Farm in 2014, the year Glenmary announced they would be discontinuing their mission work in Lewis County. However, the program was still viable, and Lewis County is still in great need of service. That summer I decided I wanted to try to take on the dream that the Farm could continue service in Lewis County and host volunteers to experience a radical way of living the Gospel here in Appalachia.

For about two years, the dream of Emmaus Farm was my passion project while I lived in Maryland and worked for my father's business. After that time of research, planning, and fundraising, Emmaus Farm purchased the "Farm" retreat center from Glenmary in September 2016, and we began the work of renovating and refurbishing to get the property group-ready for our first volunteers in March 2017. In the last year, we have hosted over 100 volunteers from as far as Michigan, Missouri, and Massachusetts and have served with our community

partners in Lewis County including a nonprofit construction company, food pantry, nursing home, senior center, as well as home visits and Farm maintenance and improvement projects. Our volunteers join us in living the cornerstones of service, simplicity, community, and prayer, participating in our volunteer program and spiritual retreat with an emphasis on Catholic Social Teaching, all while having an immersive experience of Appalachian culture during their retreat week.

Our name, Emmaus Farm, comes from the Appearance on the Road to Emmaus. This narrative takes place in the Gospel of Luke after the Resurrection of Jesus. While "two of them" were walking to Emmaus, a man appeared to them asking them to recount the events of the Resurrection of this man called Jesus Christ—the man who appeared to them was Jesus, but their eyes were prevented from recognizing him. Our Lord appears to us in many forms, often forms we wouldn't expect or don't immediately recognize. This is the nature of our work at the Farm: to serve the Lord as he appears to us in all forms while walking together on our journey to our own "Emmaus." This passage of scripture encapsulates the most important focus of our ministry, the presence of the risen Lord in all that we do.

Check out our website for more information about our mission and volunteer program, videos about us, and how to keep up in touch: [www.EmmausFarm.org](http://www.EmmausFarm.org). I'll leave you with a motto we inherited from a song sung at the Glenmary Farm, a song we still sing and a motto we continue to believe at Emmaus Farm: Love is the only way. ▲



## CCA AND VIRGINIA CHAPTER WELCOME BISHOP BARRY KNESTOUT TO RICHMOND DIOCESE

Catholic Committee of Appalachia congratulates Bishop Barry Knestout on his appointment as Bishop of the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia. Knestout, who was installed as Bishop in January, succeeds Bishop Francis DiLorenzo who passed away in August 2017.

Representatives from CCA and its Virginia Chapter will meet with Bishop Knestout in the coming months to introduce our work and to get to know one another. We pray that the Spirit will bless and guide Knestout's ministry in service to God's people in the Richmond diocese. ▲

## State Chapters

# WEST VIRGINIA CATHOLIC WORKER HOUSE ALLOWED TO STAY OPEN

*Maria Benevento (Reprinted from National Catholic Reporter)*

The Gospel sometimes calls us to be out of step with the rest of society, said Catholic Worker Kate Marshall. Faced with complaints from her neighbors that threatened her ability to operate House of Hagar Catholic Worker in Wheeling, West Virginia, Marshall took it as an affirmation that she was “on the right track” and a chance to start a conversation about tolerance and inclusion.

“We opted to go the route of bearing wrongs patiently and using it as an opportunity to really open up a conversation and a dialogue about who we are, how we live out our faith, what Catholic Workers are, and ultimately what as Christians that we’re called to do in our faith, in our treatment of other people,” said Marshall.

Marshall started House of Hagar in 2012, running it out of the home she shares with her children, both biological and adopted, and with other workers who join the community for a few months or years. She offers hospitality to her neighbors in East Wheeling, who include residents of a nearby homeless shelter and people who live in tents and under bridges, by hosting a Sunday meal and fellowship, collecting and distributing donations, allowing people to use her shower and responding to other needs as they arise.

“I think what’s at the root of all of that is people knowing that they’re loved and wanted,” said Marshall. “When they come to House of Hagar they know that not only are they wanted but we actually feel like they are a needed and valued part of our community and we can’t be that without them.”

Marshall’s ability to continue this work was jeopardized in 2016 when some of her neighbors complained to the city about House of Hagar. The city Planning Commission responded by asking Marshall to apply for a permit. According to City Solicitor Rosemary Humway-Warmuth, who advised the commission, Marshall’s multiple weekly ministries “took [House of Hagar] out of the realm of a single residential house.” While this was permissible in her zoning district, the city’s Planning Commission wanted to impose some conditions.

Marshall sought help from the American Civil Liberties Union of West Virginia (ACLU-WV). Despite believing she would have a strong freedom of religion case in federal court, she chose to cooperate with the permit process and “enter into a much more vulnerable place of conversation and dialogue to be an example of how problems can be addressed and maybe worked through outside of a judicial system.” “Going to court was not the first answer

for us,” Marshall added. “Actually that would have been the last answer. And even if we’d won we would still always have this feeling of loss because we were in conflict with the community or the city that we dearly love.”

Marshall successfully applied for a permit, but called on the ACLU-WV for help with the permit’s annual review when she learned that the city was not recommending renewal.

“I don’t know that really under federal law Kate should be required to have a permit at all; and the city was never really able to answer the question of what they would try to stop her from doing if the permit was not granted or was rescinded,” said Jaime Crofts, legal director of the ACLU-WV, who represented Marshall. “As a Catholic Worker, Kate really truly lives out her faith, and part of her faith is opening her home for fellowship or for people to stay with her,” said Crofts. “These are a part of Kate’s daily life and how she lives her faith, and that’s not something that the ACLU feels that a city or any government should be able to stop her from doing.”

Humway-Warmuth insisted that the Planning Commission did have the right to impose some conditions on House of Hagar, such as requiring it to have ancillary parking for large events. “[The law] protects both the neighborhood interest and the concerns of the general comprehensive plan and the land use zoning and it also protects people like Kate and persons that want to live out their faith,” she said. “I don’t think you wave a flag that says ‘we’re under religious land use and therefore we can have no restrictions.’”

However, Humway-Warmuth also said some complaints were unfounded or should be addressed by other city agencies, if necessary. After investigating the complaints, and before the Planning Commission voted on the permit, the city reversed its recommendation. Marshall was able to disprove many of the complaints by showing the house had never been in trouble with the police or health department, and using her own security cameras to demonstrate they kept reasonable hours.

Other “evidence” against the house included a photo of a woman of color sitting on the curb by House of Hagar. “She wasn’t doing anything illegal or wrong,” said Marshall. “Maybe she didn’t have enough money in her pocket or she was the wrong color, to the complainer.”

The city’s investigation of the allegations also included two public hearings. *(Continued on page 23)*

## CCA'S ALLYSON HOCH WELCOMED AS NAZARETH FARM EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

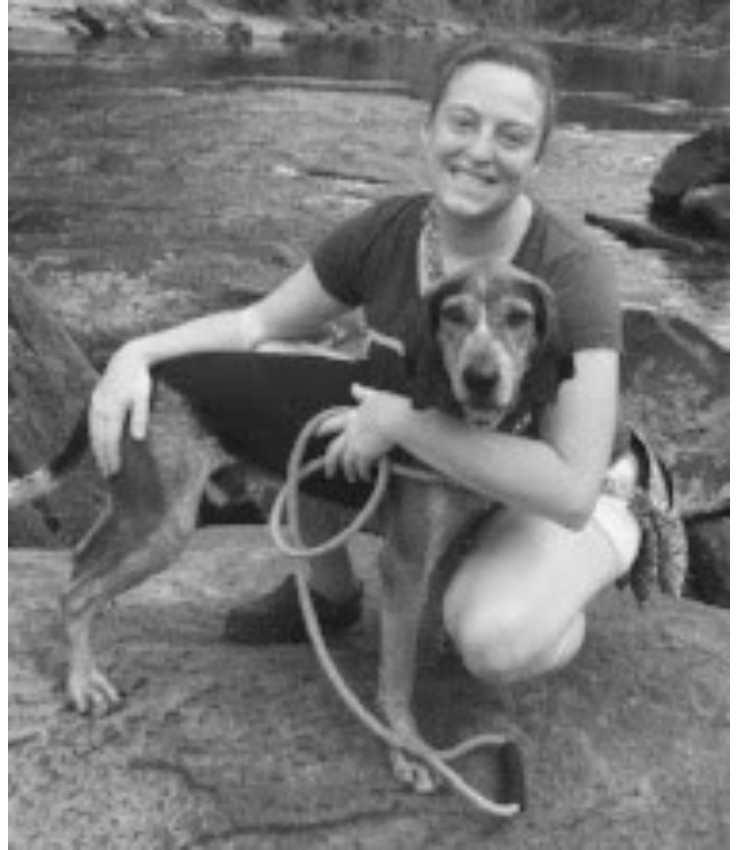
The Board of Directors of Nazareth Farm in Salem, West Virginia named CCA member Allyson Hoch as Executive Director this Spring. Hoch began her tenure in April.

Nazareth Farm is a Catholic intentional community in rural West Virginia that transforms lives through a service-retreat experience. They are devoted to living out the Gospel message through the cornerstones of community, simplicity, prayer, and service, serving alongside their neighbors to address substandard housing by providing home repair.

Allyson first visited Nazareth Farm in 2009, while in college. She joined staff in 2011 and served as Project Coordinator from July 2012 through November 2014. In May 2017, Allyson completed her Masters of Social Work and earned a Non-profit Management Certificate from West Virginia University and recently served as Grants Manager for Milan Puskar Health Right, a free and charitable health clinic.

Allyson hopes to have a positive impact on Nazareth Farm by fostering staff community, developing best practices, increasing community connections, and procuring support for the future.

CCA congratulates Allyson in her new role at Nazareth Farm. Welcome Home, Allyson! See the Nazareth Farm website at [www.nazarethfarm.org](http://www.nazarethfarm.org) ▲



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### WELCOME HOME, SISTER ANN MARIE

Sister Ann Marie Quinn, OSF, of the Oldenburg community, was a pastoral associate at Good Shepherd with Sister Amy Kistner in Campton, KY and worked for Grow Appalachia while she served a term and a half with CCA, helping to guide us through major transitions. In 2016, her community asked that she trade her cherished Appalachian mountains for those in the Rockies of Montana.

Although we didn't know when or if we would see Ann Marie again, she continued to keep in touch through her time at the Prayer Lodge, a place of prayer and retreat for women of varying religious backgrounds, including those from Native American tribes and nations.

When the board of the Prayer Lodge made the decision to turn leadership over to native women, Ann Marie returned to her community and went on sabbatical as she discerned next steps.

We are happy to announce Ann Marie is now back "home" in Appalachia (albeit on the edge, in Cincinnati) working as the Client Service Coordinator at St. Francis Seraph Ministries. We wish you well in your new work, Ann Marie, and look forward to the possibility of more of those famous hugs very soon! ▲

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## See, Judge, Act

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# THE END OF THE WORLD AS WE KNOW IT: DIVESTING FROM INJUSTICE AND REINVESTING IN ANOTHER POSSIBLE WORLD

Edward Sloane

Once upon a time, the conservative political commentator Francis Fukuyama said that with the collapse of the Soviet Union we had reached the end of history. Others joined the chorus; globalization had made the world flat and capitalism was here to stay.<sup>1</sup> Today the confident and triumphalist mood of the 80s and 90s has been severely shaken as the reality of climate change sinks in and promises to usher in a very different historical epoch. Indeed, we are conscious of reaching an end, but as we look around the fear is that it might be the end not of history but of humanity. At the same time, activists are showing us that another world is possible, encouraging institutions to divest from fossil fuels, severing their financial ties to the fossil fuel industry by “getting rid of stocks, bonds, or investment funds that are unethical or morally ambiguous.”<sup>2</sup> At the same time, this movement has been controversial particularly among Catholic institutions, the majority of which have been reluctant to make this move despite strong pressure from students and other activists. These institutions often cite the ability to advance institutional mission.<sup>3</sup>

In a 2017 article published in *America Magazine*, Jim McDermott, takes this latter position, suggesting that shareholder advocacy is the more ‘Catholic’ option. McDermott, tellingly cites Francis G. Coleman, the executive vice president of Christian Brothers Investment Services, “which manages nearly \$7 billion in assets for Catholic groups around the world.” McDermott notes CBIS’s skepticism toward divestment as a strategy, “at the same time, at C.B.I.S., the question of writing a group off speaks to a challenge of our faith. ‘When do you stop talking to the sinner?’ asks Mr. Coleman. ‘It’s a fundamental faith question. And our faith teaches us you don’t stop talking to the sinner. Our belief is that if you keep talking there’s always the possibility for faith and evangelization.’”<sup>4</sup> In the article, McDermott fails to engage the voices and reasons of activists or the voice of Earth itself. He also fails to take divestment seriously as a Catholic option. His perspective remains firmly within a top-down, status quo model that privileges the voices of elite managers as authorities.

Indeed, this has been the dominant model within Catholic Social Teaching. In the encyclical on socioeconomic development, *Populorum Progressio*, Paul VI’s proposed program for development places agency with managerial elites and experts. Privilege is given to “public authorities,” “industry,” and

“international agencies,” which are viewed together as “the primary agents of development.”<sup>5</sup> Something new is happening with Pope Francis and greater attention is being given to the preferential option for the poor and Earth. It is the thinking of those who are most marginalized that ought to inform our institutional practices and structures. The Catholic Committee of Appalachia in the recent People’s Pastoral, *The Telling Takes Us Home*, refers to this as “the magisterium of the poor and of Earth.”<sup>6</sup>

While some remain skeptical the movement for institutional divestment from fossil fuels is growing, including among Catholic institutions. As I prepared this article, 40 Catholic institutions issued a joint commitment to divestment through the grassroots efforts of the Global Catholic Climate Movement, citing the influence of *Laudato Si*, Pope Francis’s encyclical on the environment.<sup>7</sup>

Indeed, in *Laudato Si* Pope Francis offers a strongly worded critique of both consumer capitalism and the fossil fuel industry. Francis accepts the scientific consensus on climate change, asserting that climate change is happening at an alarming rate, its primary causes are anthropogenic (human-caused), and the first world and the elites of the two-thirds world share the primary responsibility while also being shielded from its worst effects.<sup>8</sup>

Given Pope Francis’s strong words in *Laudato Si*, I think it is necessary to name shareholder advocacy as an insufficient strategy for addressing the enormity and seriousness of the climatic crisis. In conversation with Pope Francis and the divestment movement, I would like to explore four reasons that Catholic institutions should move away from shareholder advocacy and focus on building power and alliances within the divestment movement. I claim that divestment is more consistent with a Catholic ethic.

**First, divestment builds power at the grassroots.** It is an effort to put *public* pressure on industries. This makes it fundamentally different from shareholder advocacy, which is fundamentally a top down strategy. Fossil fuel divestment is part of a larger cultural and political shift that aims to restore democracy and lift up the voice of the voiceless. To this extent it is similar to the Occupy Movement, Black Lives Matter, #MeToo, and NoDAPL. The divestment movement began at the grassroots among poor people in the world’s sacrifice zones, and the work of groups like 350.org brought these disparate

movements to public attention, connecting these many local movements in a global network—a movement of movements.

Pope Francis has been quite clear that fundamental social change in the struggle for justice will only come from the grassroots. It was to this end that he initiated the World Meeting of Popular Movements. He addressed this movement when it gathered in Bolivia saying, “the future of humanity does not lie solely in the hands of great leaders, the great powers and the elites. It is fundamentally in the hands of peoples and in their ability to organize. It is in their hands, which can guide with humility and conviction this process of change. I am with you. Keep up your struggle and, please, take great care of Mother Earth.”<sup>9</sup>

**Second, divestment aims to erode the social and moral capital of the fossil fuel industry.** Critics of the divestment movement often claim that it is unlikely divestment will financially bankrupt the fossil fuel industry. Though this wouldn't necessarily be a bad thing, I think this is a common misconception of the aims and purposes of the movement. Although, there is some evidence that it is impacting the finances of some fossil fuel companies.<sup>10</sup> Critics suggest that shareholder advocacy is a better strategy. However, the shareholder advocacy approach has been equally ineffective on this front and industry influence, spending, and resources outstrip any impact investors might hope to exert, which is one of the reasons that divestment has gained such momentum in recent years.<sup>11</sup>

However, to focus on the financial argument misses the point. Divestment is a moral, and I would say spiritual, argument. When the fossil fuel industry loses any moral high ground it becomes difficult for them to enjoy the influence in our society that they currently enjoy. If supporting the fossil fuel industry becomes akin to supporting apartheid or big tobacco or abortion (I'll say more about this below) then politicians hoping to be re-elected will begin to distance themselves from the industry as they watch their base get organized in opposition. The subsidies this industry enjoys will dry up as they shift to the renewable energy sector. This requires a revolution in values.

Pope Francis, in *Laudato Si*, is highly critical of the consumer society which treats the beings of Earth as mere resources and which has turned the planet into a “pile of filth.”<sup>12</sup> Pope Francis clearly states that more-than-human beings and the earth system have a dignity and worth of their own apart from usefulness to humans.<sup>13</sup> Too often we take pleasure in the purchase of consumer goods rather than in the ability of another being to thrive. We delight in having more things rather than enjoying re-

lationships with one another and with other beings and allowing these other beings the same. On the scale of values the weight is always tipped toward Western, white, male, cis, upper-middle class humanity, and share holder advocacy generally fails to question this set of cultural, economic, and ecological structures and ways of thinking. Divestment aims to change the way we think about the impact that fossil fuels have on human and more-than-human enjoyment, what it is that we enjoy and value, and, perhaps most profoundly, what we understand our human vocation before Creator to be.

**Third, divestment is part of a wider strategy of reinvestment.** Divestment is an unfortunate choice of words, because it speaks in the negative. Like all coins, divestment has two sides, and the other side is about *re-investment*. For institutions, such as a religious order, a Catholic university, or the church as a whole, divestment-as-reinvestment means thinking positively and imaginatively about the world we hope to create. It is, in this sense, related to the spiritual work to which our Christian vocation calls us, the building the Kingdom of God or, as I prefer, the Peaceable kin-dom of God. Rather than asking those with power to change, we can give active support to those whose social vision aligns with our own—investing in community-based economic institutions such as co-ops, credit unions, renewables, public services, and so forth. There are many organizations whose mission is to help institutions make these transitions in a way that is financially responsible and does not threaten the ability of the institute to continue advancing its mission.

The community-based institutions and renewable energy technologies cited above are often lacking capital and this slows the ability of these institutions to develop and build power. While divestment might not bankrupt ExxonMobile if it is coupled with reinvestment it will provide those working on solutions at the grassroots the financial capital to make their visions reality and increase their influence. It is about being proactive.

Of course, lifestyle changes and engaging in political and frontline advocacy are important too. Simple things like taking public transit, going vegetarian or vegan, growing some of our own food, buying local dairy and produce, and finding ways to reduce our water use are wonderful practices that can constitute a spirituality of divestment. Likewise, attending protests, engaging in civil disobedience, and using our influence at the polls can translate personal spiritual practices into public spiritual witness.

We are all (at least in the Western world) complicit in a system that has so far relied on fossil

*(continued on next page)*

## See, Judge, Act

(continued from previous page) fuels—this includes shareholder advocates I might add. Indeed, there are many websites that allow us to chart our global footprints. Everyday, I awake to the fact that even my own relatively low impact lifestyle is unsustainable. If everyone lived my lifestyle it would take roughly 2.5 Earths to sustain it. On May 22nd of this year, I will ‘overshoot’ the ability of Earth to sustain my lifestyle.<sup>14</sup> The average U. S. American uses 4 Earths.<sup>15</sup> Shareholder advocates I would argue are more complicit. They give their money to extractive industries when they could give it to those who are working on solutions. Again, divestment frees us for proactive investing.

**Finally, the USCCB includes divestment as a reasonable investor strategy.**<sup>16</sup> USCCB includes three principles to guide investment. These are: do not harm (non-cooperation with evil); active corporate participation; and positive strategies. Shareholder advocacy fits with number 2 and is the one most commonly recommended by the USCCB. Indeed, it is the one they recommend for care of creation. Divestment-reinvestment, as an integrated approach, falls under 1 and 3. The USCCB *instructs* divestment from corporations that actively support the procurement of abortion, racism, or gender discrimination, among other things. In no case does the USCCB *instruct against* divestment but leaves this an open question. I argue that with the publication of *Laudato Si* we need to revise the church's position on divestment as it relates to fossil fuels.

Pope Francis is clear that the industrial scale burning of fossil fuels must cease without delay: “there is an urgent need to develop policies so that, in the next few years, the emission of carbon dioxide and other highly polluting gases can be drastically reduced, for example, substituting for fossil fuels and developing renewable sources of energy...We know that technology based on the use of highly polluting fossil fuels—especially coal, but also oil and, to a lesser degree, gas—needs to be progressively replaced without delay.”<sup>17</sup> Pope Francis also makes care for creation a right to life issue, invoking care for creation and anti-abortion as growing from the same consistent ethic.<sup>18</sup> We have entered into what biologists call “the 6th great extinction.” We are hemorrhaging species life due to anthropogenic climate change caused in large part by the industrial burning of fossil fuels. These losses are sinful as they are not necessary and can be prevented. The Catholic Catechism states, “it is contrary to human dignity to cause animals to suffer or die needlessly.”<sup>19</sup>

Given the moral weight of an encyclical, the urgency of the encyclical's tone, and the link to right to life issues, I would argue that the USCCB should

update their guidelines to *instruct* divestment from fossil fuels. Some Catholic institutions, many protestant institutions, and institutions representing many other faith traditions, have already taken this step. The truth is Catholic theology and practice is far behind that of our Protestant brothers and sisters.<sup>20</sup>

Much has changed regarding the ecological crisis, and as I watch the Trump administration roll back environmental regulations<sup>21</sup> on extractive industry I can't help but worry about the impact across Appalachia; I can't help but think the time for shareholder advocacy is over. Despite the elegiac mood that surrounds us in this age of extinction, climatic change, and economic injustice fueled by extractive economies, I have no interest in writing elegies—without apology to J. D. Vance. I continue to believe another world is possible, but it requires that we divest ourselves from the extractive mindset that encloses other possibilities—literally putting up barriers and walls to protect the status quo and keep out other voices.

Ultimately, I push for divestment because of its effort to shift power and instantiate a revolution in values. We need to work toward re-investing in local economies, examine our sociocultural values and the place of Earth within our social, political, and moral imaginations, and we need to rebuild the political ecology of grassroots democracies, privileging the authority and power of those effected directly by an issue. I think divestment and reinvestment alongside lifestyle changes, political advocacy, and direct action is the best way to do this. We could call it an integral political ecology, echoing Pope Francis's language of “integral ecology.”<sup>22</sup> Because divestment is principally a moral argument, I think faith-based institutions must take the lead.

I do not mean to criticize the important work of those Catholic institutions that have effectively utilized shareholder advocacy in the past. Indeed, those who have taken this strategy seriously are witnesses for all of us who seek a more just way of living in relationship with Earth. The successes that have been had with this strategy should be celebrated and entered into the dangerous memory of our collective witness to a faith that does justice. However, as climate change worsens and the divestment movement builds power, I would invite all Catholic institutions, especially those living in industrial sacrifice zones like Appalachia, to more seriously consider divestment as a future strategy for living into the vision of Pope Francis.

For references, see:

<https://ccappal.org/the-end-of-the-world-as-we-know-it-divesting-from-injustice-and-reinvesting-in-another-possible-world>



## SOLASTALGIA IN APPALACHIA

*Jeannie Kirkhope (Reprinted from Sojourners Online)*

Timbering has begun on the 200 acres of pristine forest behind our farm, out where I've been walking the dogs for 10 years. On the first day, they said they would bulldoze the road to clear a landing where the trees would be dragged, sized, cut, and loaded onto the trucks. On our way back that evening to see how far they'd gotten, I became disoriented on the 14-foot-wide dirt trail. I barely recognized the landmarks I had come to know so well when it was an overgrown footpath. Some were no longer there at all.

What was once a majestic stand of towering sycamores, so densely canopying the understory only a meadow of shade-loving wildflowers could grow beneath it, is now a sun-flooded machine-tracked dirt plain, half the size of a football field with wide open sky above it. On the edge of a smothered stream, those mighty sycamores laid stiff on their sides in a haphazard pile, an enormous mass grave of dead bodies, each one scuffed, scraped, and missing hunks of bark. Still stunned, I hopped the muddy creek with the dogs and disappeared into the remaining woods. We followed the abandoned deer trail to the back, where all is still untouched, to take pictures and say goodbye before it was all gone.

The cutting continues. After the guys finish work each day, I head back again to count the latest stacked corpses, to mentally note the variety of species, and to take whatever new trails have been made or extended farther up into the hills. What's left in the wake of dozers are sad slouching stumps, arched, splintered, cracked, and damaged younger trees, tossed crowns in a sea of light green, the undersides of millions of leaves. A few giants on the steepest hillsides have toppled over at their bases, leaving entire root systems sticking straight up with massive cavities beneath them. It's as if they've collapsed in grief from the loss of loved ones. The solastalgia brings me down, too.

There is an eerie silence in these freshly cut parts. The dogs sniff for any sign of critters. If I sit long enough, I might see one tiny songbird, maybe two, but they're not singing. They just hop from branch to branch in the scrawny leftover trees, seemingly lost and confused, looking for home. The sounds of their neighboring choir members echo from beyond the destruction, and invite us deeper into the forest where life is going on as usual, at least for now.

As we move on, I run my hand over the different textures of bark, tree after tree, like spinning prayer wheels in a Tibetan temple, and — yes — I stop to hug the biggest ones. Each has its own ecosystem, soon to be gone, too. I gently grasp the shattered

ends of roots sticking out from the road etched into the hillside, and hope my touch will cauterize and communicate my apologetic remorse through the underground network.

This week, I led a group of local high school students on a hike through the wildest section we call "Coyote Country," ending at the mouth of the loggers' landing. I didn't have to say much. Being raised in West Virginia, they already knew plenty about the industry, but, being city kids and "townies," none of them had ever seen it firsthand. They immediately noticed the change of smell in the air. One said it was "like poop." Another responded, "That's death." Their collective mood quickly became as heavy as the humidity.

We watched a while, then they started the discussion themselves, telling me first that Appalachia has one of the most bio-diverse temperate forests in the world, and how watersheds, particularly, are affected when it's logged. One spoke of EPA regulations. Another gave the example that, with so much mud flowing downstream, fish can't lay their eggs. Others acknowledged how important timbering is to West Virginia's economy — how it is its #1 export, how it provides many needed jobs, how it is more dangerous than coal mining. All true. Then they listed reasons for it, and debated degrees of legitimacy: for health of the forest, new housing developments, market demand for wood products, or, in this case, for the out-of-state landowner to cash in on his investment. They also made the global connection to deforestation in the Amazon, to pasture beef for fast-food restaurants. These are highly controversial topics here in our region, but they dove right in.

These teens know forests are a renewable resource, too, and they knew this one will heal itself over time. I agreed, pointing out that, 100 years ago, it was a clear-cut homestead. Hearing that, though, dampened their solace. Considering climate change and the heartache at hand, that seemed too long to have to wait. What they were looking at was nature's Aleppo: a devastating loss of life on an unfathomable scale; total disruption of an entire community we don't think about often enough; annihilation of an awe-inspiring natural cathedral, unmatched by human hands; a sad, systematic dismantling of a century of history that they will not see again in their lifetimes.

And all this is only one of three jobs going on in our holler right now.

By the end, students had gained renewed appreciation for their home state. *(Continued on page 21)*

## Reflections

### RE-WILD YOUR FAITH: WILD CHURCH WV HITS ONE-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Edward Sloane

What is it to be a disciple of Jesus? Following the execution of Jesus by the Roman Empire, I imagine members of the movement that Jesus inspired asked this question often. Scripture tells us that many were scared. They went into hiding. They stayed safe behind walls, out of sight from suspicious eyes. Hidden away, I imagine them telling stories about Jesus and his public witness, which was experienced as “good news” to the poor and excluded. These memories and their telling were dangerous. It filled the disciples with fire, as the story of Pentecost illuminates (Acts 2: 3). In this story we are told that Jesus’s friends began to “speak in other languages,” presumably languages previously unknown to them. They left the confines of the room and a crowd gathered around them and “each one heard them speaking in the native language of each” (Acts 2:4-8). What strikes me about this story is that it is a story of boundary crossing. It demonstrates an unwillingness to be defined by the walls that separate us.

Unfortunately, today, we still build walls. In fact, it seems like we are building them higher, more often, and with more fortifications. Most disturbing is that churches are often places where these walls are the sturdiest and strongest. Walls not only keep ‘others’ out, but they keep ‘us’ hidden. They obscure, or limit, our vision and make impossible what Pope Francis describes as “a culture of encounter.” When we go outside, we risk encounter with people and more-than-human beings whose lives and ways of thinking and being are quite different but nevertheless connected to our own. If we approach these encounters with respect, we learn to listen more carefully, see things differently, and, ultimately, we allow ourselves to be changed.

Nearly one year ago, on Pentecost, my friend, colleague, and fellow Catholic Committee of Appalachia member Michael Iafrate and I began a liturgical experiment we called Wild Church West Virginia. Michael had been sharing his frustrations with Catholic liturgies that too often failed to speak prophetically about social justice. Likewise, I longed for liturgical experiences that were more engaged with ecological justice. How could we step outside the confining, domesticating, colonizing aspects of our tradition? Together, we began to cultivate a vision of church that did those things. We quickly discovered that we weren’t alone. Many Christian communities in the U. S. and Canada had joined together through the Wild Church Network ([www.wildchurchnetwork.com](http://www.wildchurchnetwork.com)). Together, and

through CCA, we discerned what it might mean to be a “wild church” here in our little corner of the Southern Highland bioregion, more commonly known as ‘Appalachia,’ that is the Upper Ohio River South Watershed, traditional home of the Mingwe People. How might we show respect to, and better come to know, this place?

Initially, we had hoped to have a monthly outdoor Mass. However, we couldn’t find priests to commit. Following the Spirit, we decided we would conduct a monthly outdoor Agape service, which is similar in form to a Mass but is led by laypersons and includes a symbolic meal. Taking this approach gave us the freedom to nurture in our imaginations a new expression of liturgy. We found that many of those who joined us were similarly seeking a different way of being church. Some folks were firmly grounded in their own tradition, but, like Michael and I, they were seeking a more open and inclusive experience of worship, others had little experience of church and might describe themselves as seekers, some had firm roots in more-than-Christian traditions, but desired interspiritual worship and friendship.

So, what does it mean to be a “wild” church? Because they are rooted in the specificities of a place and life there, each wild church is unique. For us, we see the “wild” as all marginal places, untouched forests, mountain top removal sites, and urban street corners. We go to these places and worship there.

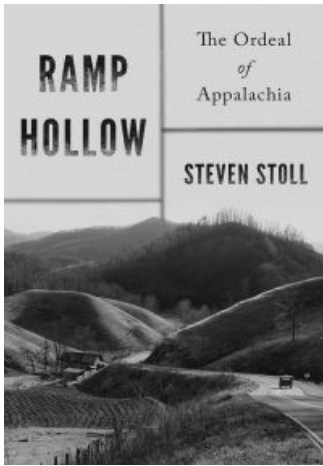
The Appalachian pastoral *At Home in the Web of Life* (1995) says it best: “the mountains and forests... with their trees and plants and animals” constitute “one of God’s awesome cathedrals... misty mountain haze is holy incense, tall tree trunks are temple pillars, sun-splashed leaves are stained glass, and song birds are angelic choirs.” Wild Church West Virginia also seeks a deeper encounter with self and one another across religious traditions. Sins of racism, sexism, and classism can be connected to our exploitation of Earth. Restoring wholeness to our own spirit and our communities begins with restoring our connection to creation. We also aspire to be an “interspiritual” community. We cultivate the belief that God’s many names are holy. While our roots are in the Catholic Christian tradition, we nurture wildly inclusive, communally guided liturgical experiences that drink from many wells and we invite those from all religious traditions to the table.

The way we choose to live into these beliefs

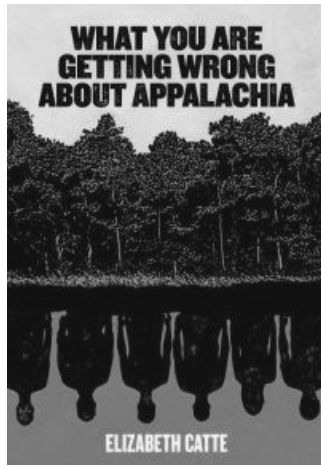
(Continued on page 21)

## GETTING APPALACHIA LESS WRONG: BOOK REVIEW ESSAY

Michael Iafrate (Reprinted with permission of National Catholic Reporter)



*Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia*  
By Steven Stoll (Hill and Wang, \$30.00)



*What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia*  
By Elizabeth Catte (Belt Publishing, \$14.00)

Appalachia is back. No, I don't mean the trends like the latest Old Crow Medicine Show album or Whole Foods stocking wild ramps on their shelves. I mean another wave of media fixation with interpreting Appalachia and its "issues": the rural roots of the opioid epidemic, President Donald Trump's consistently strong regional popularity, continuing rhetoric about a perceived "war on coal" and so on. Concerns like these continue to gnaw at our national consciousness, and people crave convincing explanations for "why Appalachia is the way it is."

*Hillbilly Elegy*, a 2016 memoir by J.D. Vance, soon to hit movie screens in an adaptation by Ron Howard, has provided some people with the explanation they seek. Vance's explicitly apolitical story of his self-driven uplift from a life of poverty and abuse in Appalachian Ohio to the ranks of a Yale-educated attorney remains on the bestseller list while Vance makes the interview and lecture circuit. In my own church activist work, based in West Virginia but connecting with folks around the country, people of faith often ask about *Hillbilly Elegy*, wondering if its insights have any credibility.

Vance's *fervorino* encourages his fellow "hillbillies" to "wake the hell up" and realize that Appalachia's problems "were not created by governments or corporations or anyone else. We created them, and only we can fix them." In this, *Elegy* recalls the perspective sociologist Rupert Vance, who wrote in the introduction to the 1960s Appalachian primer *Yesterday's People*, "To change

the mountains is to change the mountain personality." The phrase is a crystallization of the kind of blame-the-victim moralism popular at the time, even among church workers, and which lives on in bestselling mountain memoirs.

Two recent books "talk back" to the current revival of Appalachian culture of poverty story peddled by Vance and his ilk. Steven Stoll's *Ramp Hollow: The Ordeal of Appalachia* and Elizabeth Catte's *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* each in their own way refocus the discussion on the causes of Appalachia's problems and raise new questions about the stories we tell about them.

Stoll, a Fordham University historian, argues in *Ramp Hollow* that the classic portrayal of Appalachia, revived by Vance, as a preserve of "yesterday's people" won't do. Appalachia is not an isolated, inherently poor region, nor is it a degenerate culture badly in need of a change of values. Rather, its problems have historically traceable causes that bear similarity to those of other regions suffering from the "slow violence" of dispossession, namely the loss of control over land and resources, and with that the ability to have a say in their lives. The story is well-known in Appalachian studies circles, but Stoll's telling is wider in scope, viewing the region as one among many global victims of a widely held assumption: "the idea that historical progress require[s] taking land away from agrarians and giving it to others."

This idea convinces us that history progresses through universal stages in which subsistence economies — agrarian communities who "make their livings by hunting, foraging, farming, gardening, and exchanging for the things they cannot grow or fashion themselves" — give way to the more "advanced" and "civilized" stage of capitalist modernity. Accordingly, agrarians are seen as barbaric obstacles to development requiring intervention through dispossession, which integrates agrarians into "civilization."

Stoll argues that pre- and post-Revolutionary War European settlers in the Appalachian mountains were an example of an agrarian peasant culture, many of whom fled the poverty of countries like Great Britain where lords took control of land through enclosure, barring peasant access to the commons that provided the ecological base for a subsistence way of life.

Settlers were able to escape dispossession and continue an agrarian way of life by becoming the

(Continued on next page)

## Book Reviews

(From previous page) violent dispossessors of indigenous lands. Enclosure continued on this continent as the claims of elite land speculators came into conflict with those of agrarian settlers. So began another stage of dispossession and the gradual stripping away of access to the ecological base, which made a subsistence way of life increasingly untenable and the integration of the mountains into a national money system possible.

By the Civil War, elites scrambled to gain control over previously overlooked resources. The central villains will be familiar to those who have come to view Appalachia as a “sacrifice zone”: colonial elites, politicians and coal barons who facilitate the exploitation of a region's resources and people. Extraction companies exploited the new economic vulnerability through manipulation, allowing desperate farmers to retain surface land rights and save their households if they would sell rights to the minerals below.

In Stoll's words, “The confluence of money, private property, and political power accomplished what no invading army could have. It delivered an ax to the neck of the peasant economy within half a century.” Soon enough, what was once supplemental income from wages became the source of subsistence as farmers mined coal to survive, with wages now supplemented by the yield from their home gardens. The coal town system furthered debt and control through company-owned services, stores and currency (“scrip”), while dispossessed African-American farmers were forced into sharecropping, producing an indebtedness that paralleled slavery.

Stoll describes current regional realities — mountaintop removal mining, chemical spills and political corruption — as the fulfillment of this story of economic vulnerability brought on by a coal-dominated regional economy. But he also rightly reads the story of Appalachia as connected to similar forms of “development through dispossession” throughout the world and offers some interesting, if perhaps far-fetched, solutions for communities to reclaim the commons.

If *Ramp Hollow* is a deep history that touches on contemporary issues, Elizabeth Catte's *What You Are Getting Wrong About Appalachia* is a detailed critique of recent discourse about Appalachia that skillfully draws on history. Catte, too, is a historian, but her book is less a history of Appalachia and more of a history of the stories told about Appalachia that demonstrates how these long-held myths have always obscured more than they reveal. Catte sets out to challenge the predominant view of Appalachia as culturally, ethnically and politically homogenous, largely in response to *Hillbilly Elegy*, but also to recent media coverage of the region. Though not a memoir, Catte writes from her own experience of

Appalachia. The book not only debunks Appalachian stereotypes, but provides deeper and more insightful analysis — and a stronger call to action — than most Appalachian writers.

Part 1 examines media portrayals of Appalachia over the last decade, such as the Sago mine disaster and the labeling of West Virginia as “Trump Country” during the 2016 presidential campaign. Catte shows how Appalachian voices are either missing from these accounts or, if they are present, are shaped by the agenda of the writers. Such narratives, she argues, are merely the latest in a long history of the “invention” of Appalachia by writers for different purposes.

Part 2 takes on *Hillbilly Elegy* directly, critiquing both the book and Vance's status as the region's new spokesperson. Catte demonstrates how his analysis is skewed by personal experience, riddled with damaging stereotypes and misguided in its emphasis on individual and family behaviors rather than economics. But she goes further than most regional critics by revealing Vance's implicit and often overlooked racism as he gives new legs to the long-held regional myth of Scots-Irish racial purity (a myth that progressives in the region often likewise embrace) by citing the work of Charles Murray and Razib Khan.

The book's final part refutes the myth of Appalachian fatalism through a celebration of Appalachian movements against injustice. Catte cites early examples of mountain resistance to industrialization as well as later community action initiatives like the Highlander Center and the Appalachian Volunteers who made an ethical commitment to listen to the voices of the region's poor and were radicalized in the process. She points to current organizations and movements (such as Appalshop, the movement against mountaintop removal mining, and religious groups like the Catholic Committee of Appalachia) as the descendants of early mountain radicalism who continue to shape a new Appalachian story and embody a new Appalachian politics.

These books come at just the right time as Appalachia continues to play a role in national debates around race, poverty, labor, energy and diversity, and as new regional movements seem to be strengthening. Each gives deep historical context and summarizes the issues at stake for people on the ground working for justice, but finds its central purpose in helping to dismantle the harmful stories that still get in the way. Each is accessible and will find audiences far beyond insular Appalachian scholar and activist circles, while making contributions to scholarly debates, pushing beyond and even challenging some familiar tropes within the discourse.

Both books romanticize their Appalachias to a degree. *Ramp Hollow* tends to romanticize Appalachia's

agrarian past, falling into some familiar traps. Although Stoll's narrative contains some nuance, when it comes down to it, "Agrarian Appalachians" are the "good guys" and "industrial outsiders" are the "bad guys." This is made possible, in part, by lumping together varying experiences as "agrarian dispossession," which are said to "bear resemblance" or "rhyme." The similarities between white settlers, Natives and campesinos are at times overstated, alluding to white settler violence against Native people, but not addressing the ways that dispossessed white Appalachians continue to benefit from colonization. Catte deals with this issue in a more direct way, arguing that "colonization" explanations of Appalachia can promote a regional myth of racial innocence that ignores the fact that dispossessed Appalachians were themselves violent dispossessors.

If Stoll romanticizes Appalachia's past, Catte tends to romanticize the Appalachia of the present. In lifting up voices otherwise ignored by the media, politicians and other "experts," Catte perhaps overstates the region's diversity and the degree to which radical politics "thrives" here. As a West Virginian myself, Catte's dismissal of "Trump Country" narratives as mere projections leaves me unsatisfied. Catte is right to highlight an overlooked presence of Appalachian radicalism, but ingrained conservatism, racism and sexism in the region are realities to be engaged instead of dismissed as the fantasy of outsiders.

Yet despite this tendency, Catte is careful not to proclaim that she has discovered the "real" Appalachia, and her insight that "many things about Appalachia may be true simultaneously" is perhaps the most refreshing point in the book. A common strength of both books is their desire to move past outdated ideas of Appalachian exceptionalism, progressive versions included.

Twenty years ago, Helen Lewis wrote, "It's time to be creative, dream new dreams, and develop new models. Let us plan for resurrection, not designate the region as a further sacrifice area." Today, that choice is still before us. As I write this review, former Massey Energy Co. coal baron Don Blankenship, fresh out of prison for his role in systemic, deadly mine safety violations, is touring West Virginia in a Senate bid, just as a statewide teacher strike sparked a movement for serious change on a number of political fronts.

"Appalachia" is invented and reinvented in history with every political choice that is made. Stoll's and Catte's contributions help us see the issues more clearly by unveiling their long histories. We are telling and living into a new Appalachian story. As we say in West Virginia, something's rising. ▲

## **DOPESICK: DEALERS, DOCTORS AND THE DRUG COMPANY THAT ADDICTED AMERICA**

By Beth Macy (Little, Brown & Company, \$18.00)

In this masterful work, Beth Macy takes us into the epicenter of America's twenty-plus year struggle with opioid addiction. From distressed small communities in Central Appalachia to wealthy suburbs; from disparate cities to once-idyllic farm towns; it's a heartbreaking trajectory that illustrates how this national crisis has persisted for so long and become so firmly entrenched.

Beginning with a single dealer who lands in a small Virginia town and sets about turning high school football stars into heroin overdose statistics, Macy endeavors to answer a grieving mother's question-why her only son died-and comes away with a harrowing story of greed and need. From the introduction of OxyContin in 1996, Macy parses how America embraced a medical culture where overtreatment with painkillers became the norm. The unemployed use painkillers both to numb the pain of joblessness and pay their bills, while privileged teens trade pills in cul-de-sacs, and even high school standouts fall prey to prostitution, jail, and death.

In a country unable to provide basic healthcare for all, Macy still finds reason to hope and signs of the spirit and tenacity necessary in those facing addition to build a better future for themselves and their families. ▲

## **WILD CHURCH** (from page 18)

has much to do with the character of our own place, but this fundamental openness to encounters with the wild has given us a way to be present to this place and those we encounter in it. We learn much by encounters with the many different places in our watershed; we worship in ways that cross faith traditions and denominations; we include more-than-human beings in our services; and we have spoken and witnessed in public ways against sins of social exclusion. These practices have become integral to cultivating a wild spirituality and becoming the church we wish to see in the world. If you are in the Wheeling area, please consider joining us for worship. Our worship schedule is available at [www.facebook.com/WildChurchWV](http://www.facebook.com/WildChurchWV).

Better yet, start a Wild Church in your own watershed! ▲

## *Et cetera*

### **CHEROKEE** *(Continued from page 3)*

religions had been melded together to form the Living Waters Lutheran Church. Pastor Jack taught us a beautiful Cherokee blessing song, and as we stood at the church altar with voices raised, a large gold cross looking down over us, I thought to myself how beautiful! The joining of these two very sacred spiritual traditions, both embraced and respected in one church, created an even greater sense of holiness in God's house.

A visit to the New Kituwah Language Immersion School and the presentation given by Garfield Long was as touching as it was inspiring. Garfield shared with us the history of the Cherokee language, at one point describing how Sequoyah, a Cherokee silversmith, began creating the Cherokee Syllabary in 1810. Sequoyah was inspired by the English alphabet and by the books he had read, and was determined to create for his people their own means of written communication. By 1820 he had successfully created the Syllabary. Garfield went on to explain that, due to the last several generations of native children being raised in US boarding schools where the Cherokee language was not permitted to be spoken, only a few elders left are still fluent in the language. The Kituwah School's mission is to teach Cherokee children their native language. It's estimated that without this direct intervention, in only a few more generations the Cherokee language will be lost forever. What a tragedy that would be! We came away from Garfield's talk with enormous respect for the work he is doing to preserve the Cherokee language, one of the most difficult to learn. At the end of our morning, Garfield spoke to us in Cherokee, and I can tell you that it is one of the most beautiful and melodic-sounding languages I have ever heard. Hauntingly beautiful when you recognize that it might not survive.

Saturday morning in the drizzling rain, we gathered with Elder Freeman Owle at Kituwah. Kituwah, the "mother town", is the site of the very first Cherokee village. As we stood looking out over this sacred and historic site, which dates back almost 10,000 years, Elder Owle began to share his childhood memories and the history of things that had happened on this land. I don't know how to explain it, but as we stood listening to his stories on that misty gray morning, somehow the passion with which he spoke seemed to invoke the spirits of his ancestors. Standing in the damp green field, looking out over the mountains rising in the distance, a profound emotion washed over me. If I didn't know better I'd say that the ancestors of the land had come to join our rain-soaked gathering. Whether or not that really happened I can't say, but it was a powerful feeling.

In closing, I would encourage anyone who wants to have both their mind and heart opened in a very special way to come share in this truly inspiring spiritual retreat. One thing is for sure, you will leave with a much greater understanding than when you arrived and I think you will be grateful for it! ▲

### **CATHOLIC WORKER** *(from page 12)*

While some of Marshall's neighbors spoke against House of Hagar, others spoke in its favor, as did members of local religious groups. On Nov. 13, 2017, the planning commission unanimously voted to let the permit stand.

Humway-Warmuth expressed satisfaction with the resolution. The decision will "hopefully make some peaceful use within that neighborhood and allow [Marshall] to carry out her mission and the neighbors to continue being comfortable within their neighborhood," she said.

Marshall was also hopeful, but said it will be necessary to address the root of the conflict: "fear of the other." She explained that House of Hagar is located in a low-income community that is becoming gentrified.

"It's a real test for Wheeling," said Marshall. "I really do feel if people go into it intentionally and being inclusive-minded there's room for all of us, but if there's a part of society that is going to be pushed out or not be included, unfortunately it usually tends to be the poor."

"A lot of those complaints, while they might have felt very real to the person stating them," were unfounded, said Marshall, "but that doesn't mean that we also can disregard the fact that there's people feeling this way. ... We need to discuss prejudice. We need to discuss the criminalization of homelessness. We need to find a way to come together as common humanity." ▲

### **SOLASTALGIA** *(from page 17)*

They expressed frustration over the abuse of its natural resources and workforce, and felt an urgency to see things change. They were quick to point fingers and proudly rattled off what they do in their personal lifestyles to mitigate environmental damage. But we also brainstormed, and they left with a list of covenants aimed at raising awareness and challenging themselves to live and consume even more conscientiously, all in an effort to "re-member" the forest body.

Perhaps the most poignant lessons were realizing how much easier it is to rationalize than admit our complicity. And that resurrection will not happen until we open ourselves enough to feel and go through the pain. ▲

***Least Engaged  
or  
Most Enraged?:***



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Join us for CCA's 48th Annual Gathering!

**Sept. 21-23, 2018**

Southwest VA 4-H Educational Center  
Abingdon, Virginia

Facilitated by

**Jill and Ron Carson**

Co-Founders of the African American Cultural Center  
in Pennington Gap, Virginia.

**KEYNOTES BY:**

**Dr. William Turner**

scholar of African American and Appalachian Studies  
and co-editor of the groundbreaking books "Blacks in Appalachia."

**Dr. Shannen Dee Williams**

assistant professor at the University of Tennessee Knoxville  
and author of "Subversive Habits: Black Nuns and the Long Struggle  
to Desegregate Catholic America."

Plus workshops, prayer, entertainment, and friendship.

**For more information and  
to get a copy of the mail-in registration form,  
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**SEX ABUSE STATEMENT** *(from page 11)*

painful stories of those who have survived sexual abuse by sisters. We stand with those survivors who, for the past 15 years, have been calling women religious to be more proactive in ending abuse by sisters and nuns, and revealing instances where abuse has been covered up by superiors.<sup>31</sup> We envision a time when survivors will enjoy as much overwhelming global support as the sisters have, so their journeys of healing can begin and no future abuse by sisters will occur.

Finally, we pray for the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual healing of all children and vulnerable adults who have been abused or oppressed by the Church in any way, particularly in Appalachia. We recommit to strengthened efforts to ensure their security, heightened vigilance for signs of violation, and a communal pledge to report any

findings to proper authorities. Rather than demonize and ostracize those among us who have been accused and convicted, especially for crimes of sexual misconduct, we commit to practices of mercy, forgiveness, and inclusion. We vow to protect their dignity in ways that simultaneously promote their healing and the safety of survivors and potential victims. We pray for the longevity and wisdom needed for the Holy Father to resolve the abuse of clerical power and to bring unity and diversity to our leadership. And we call those bishops and cardinals who continue to conceal knowledge of sexual abuse to come to justice, rather than to have to be brought to it. We work to widen our circle of compassion to include the hierarchy, for the oneness of the People of God is not complete without them. ▲

*For references, see:*  
[https://ccappal.org/publications/statements-resolutions/  
statement-on-child-sex-abuse-in-the-church](https://ccappal.org/publications/statements-resolutions/statement-on-child-sex-abuse-in-the-church)

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We're happy to send a copy of *PatchQuilt* to your friends, coworkers and fellow parishioners. Send us their address and we will gladly do so. Help spread the word about CCA to people you work with and members of your parish!

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