

A Sustainable Food System for Coalfield Communities

WHEREAS, healthy food and clean water are the essentials of life, and necessary for the flourishing of life as God intends.

WHEREAS, food insecurity, coupled with the lack of access to clean water, is an existential threat to the future of southern coalfield communities.

WHEREAS, the West Virginia Conference of the United Methodist Church already fully supports Dig Deep's Appalachian Water Project expansion to continue bringing clean water to southern coalfield communities.

WHEREAS, McDowell County, where over a third of all children do not receive enough food on a daily basis, is designated a "food desert." and consistently is ranked among the most impoverished and unhealthy counties in America.

WHEREAS, the United Methodist Church has made food justice an urgent priority and supports practices that ensure access to healthy nourishment, particularly within communities that have suffered environmental degradation and lack the resources to produce or purchase their own food.

WHEREAS, McDowell County and the southern coalfields at large have been environmentally degraded for generations, and lack the adequate resources, including land, to produce its own food.

WHEREAS, our Social Principles inform us that a sustainable agricultural system is a prerequisite for meeting the nutritional needs of any community.

WHEREAS, local non-profits such as Economic Development Greater East (EDGE), are engaging in restorative conversations with landholding companies concerning the return of portions of privately-owned land to local communities in McDowell County, so that the returned land may be used for innovative, locally-owned and operated agricultural projects that will create a self-sustaining, independent food network to harness the power of the land for the creation of sustainable, thriving communities.

WHEREAS, supporting such efforts can lead to healing and wholeness for the region's land, people, and communities - a communal resurrection through the power of local initiative.

WHEREAS, because the Conference Justice & Advocacy Team understands that lack of access to fresh food is a justice issue, we support establishing a sustainable food system for our southern coalfields.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we as United Methodists in the West Virginia Conference encourage all our congregations to give generously to the fund established by the United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia to support EDGE's work in the creation of a local, sustainable food system in the southern coalfields, with the oversight of distribution of said funds being provided by the Southern District Superintendent and chair of the Conference Justice & Advocacy Team.

Be it further resolved, that we encourage other faith-based organizations, churches, and individuals across the state of West Virginia to lend their support such restorative land-return initiatives for communal wholeness and to give to the fund established by the United Methodist Foundation of West Virginia for the creation of a local, sustainable food system in the southern coalfields.

Rev. Bradley G. Davis and
the WVUMC Justice & Advocacy Team