

Globalization Strategies

In CORA's listening sessions, the people we talked to recommended strategies to be used in dealing with globalization and its effects on Appalachian communities.

There is a growing awareness that globalization is not just another issue, one of many. Session participants seemed to feel the need to stretch, to grasp this phenomenon in all of its complexity. There seemed to be a real understanding that the undemocratic, unchecked globalization now being pushed upon the masses by big business is not really going to be good for anyone in the long run.

The strategies recommended in the workshops reflect this growing awareness. What follows are the strategies discussed during our listening sessions.



EDUCATION

What can we do to educate ourselves and others about economic globalization? is the question that is central to the concerns of the people who attended CORA's listening sessions.

As CORA and its allies begin to develop and share tools for educating ourselves and others about globalization, we need to make sure that we use understandable, “real people” language. This was a strongly held sentiment expressed during the sessions. Our job is to *demystify* the global economy, to present it in ways that spread awareness to as many people as we can reach. In line with this, we need to remember that we need to start “where people are”—that is, in their homes and communities. We need to present our subject matter—and our questions—in ways that are *specific* to the region, and relevant to people's *local* concerns.

To do this, we need to use educational processes which are more democratic and participatory. We need to honor and welcome the experiences of the people of Appalachia as they struggle to connect their issues to economic globalization. We need to “educate” with humility and openness in order to bring forth the gems of wisdom that come from some of the most oppressed and isolated people in our region. People are already bombarded with the offerings of pundits and politicians and various other “experts.” What they need is “a good listening to.”

One specific suggestion we heard during our sessions is that CORA create a “resource bank” for use in churches and communities. This resource bank is to include videos, written materials, internet resources, speakers, and so forth. Another suggestion heard at the listening sessions is that we create a “kit” of educational resources.

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In our discussions centering around education, the corporate name WalMart came up again. It was felt that we need to develop public messages about how WalMart directly affects people. How are jobs lost? Where do they go? What happened to the downtown businesses? How are tax revenues affected by low-wage jobs? People suggested that we develop some trainings to address these questions.

Adapting trainings to be used in youth ministry work was suggested as a way to reach out to younger people and bring them into the struggle. Getting into schools to speak to students about the effects of globalization was seen as another way to prepare young people for the struggle. This will, of course, take some organizing—and perhaps some attitude adjustment on the part of some education officials.

ORGANIZING

Organizing was seen as a necessary first step in addressing the problems associated with globalization. Building a power base among citizens directly affected by the impacts of globalization is crucial to building a regional movement and joining our efforts with the global justice movement that is gaining strength around the world. Listening group participants reflected this need when they suggested:

- expanding the base of local organizations
- building stronger non-profit and community networks
- looking for common ground on issues
- working across divisions (i.e., migrants and long-time locals)
- developing strategies that people from diverse walks of life can plug into
- tapping into existing organizations for expertise on moving issue work; tapping into local grassroots groups, such as “citizenship” schools where local members do research and organize around community issues.

In other words, people saw the importance of strengthening existing organizing, encouraging new organizing, and organizing across constituency and issue lines. Linking this work to the global justice movement can actually help us learn new strategies, gain new allies and cut down on the sense of isolation and powerlessness that we feel too often in our work.

POLITICAL ACTION

VOTING

The most obvious “political” action—and the one that we heard about most often in our listening sessions—is that we “encourage voting.” It seems to be very popular advice every time an election comes around. We are aware however, that many people in our society have chosen not to vote, not because they are lazy or not “good citizens,” but because they don’t see how their vote can possibly make a difference. And, with respect to globalization and its discontents, who can blame them? Most leaders of both the Republican and Democratic parties are enthusiastically riding the “free trade” bandwagon, often in return for campaign contributions.

Add those voluntarily disenfranchised folks to the numbers who are disenfranchised in other ways—either by incarceration or absentee ballots lost in the mail (or never mailed) or, as in the recent Florida experience, by police roadblocks or malfunctioning voting machines—and we have a real problem! While it is good to “encourage voting,” we may need to participate in campaigns for electoral reform, support our own candidates, and find ways to reach out to those who are *not* voting. A particular group we might want to work with is those eighteen to twenty-four year-olds—reportedly a very big group of potential voters *who are not voting*.

Another suggestion which people made at the listening sessions is that we find ways to influence public officials about policy issues. An obvious immediate occasion is the current negotiations around the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA). Campaigns against the FTAA are already under way in the region and we can tap into them immediately. (See *Resources Section*.) Another example is the Living Wage campaigns which have been organized in several communities in the region. Living Wage ordinances are good ways to begin to level a playing field which has been bulldozed by economic globalization. But it is just as important to be active on the whole range of policy initiatives surrounding the effects of globalization, as discussed in this document—including tax policy, health and welfare legislation, environmental policy, immigration reform, agricultural and consumer issues, and so on.

PARTNERSHIPS

Our listening sessions revealed a feeling that we need to build and strengthen CORA's partnerships. Social ministry committees and councils of churches were noted specifically, and there was much concern expressed that we emphasize ecumenism and be intentional about our spiritual approach.

COALITION BUILDING

The necessity to build coalitions across geographic, constituency and issue lines was also noted with regularity in our meetings. Openness to inclusiveness and to the rich diversity of race, ethnicity and culture present in Appalachia was seen as essential to expanding our work for justice into more communities. Perhaps an awareness of the growing numbers of new immigrants moving into our midst prompted one of our observers to suggest that we begin looking for common ground on issues and work across community divisions such as “locals” and “migrants.” The necessity to develop strategies that everyone can “plug into” was also seen as essential to our partnership building.

Connecting with organizations already involved with globalization was seen as another necessary step in our efforts to reach out. Learning about and connecting with other communities around the world, working on the same issues together, using our growing networks to pressure leaders to change bad practices, and supporting the work of non-profits that are working on globalization issues were all seen as ways in which CORA people can help build the movement to democratize globalization.

CROSS-BORDER WORK

Cross-border work is another vital piece of work people thought we must do in order to work on economic globalization and its discontents. In addition to the already excellent work we can tap into—such as the

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worker exchanges*—we can build alliances with church groups and grassroots organizations already involved in Latin America and elsewhere. (See *Resources Section*.) We can also use our contacts to help support and build solidarity with farmers, peasants and workers all over the world who are suffering the ill effects of the brand of globalization being forced upon them by presidents, parliaments and trade ministers.

** Worker exchanges involve the organizing of visits by workers of one country to the workers of another country. To learn more about the process and purpose of worker exchanges, contact the Tennessee Economic Renewal Network (TERN), which is listed in the Resources Section.*

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Perhaps the most difficult strategic question facing Appalachia is how to create jobs in a global economic environment. Participants had a whole range of ideas to offer—and people all over the region are already hard at work every day, implementing these ideas.

COMMUNITY BASED ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

Many suggestions centered around community involvement in the development of local economies. Suggested strategies included supporting local entrepreneurship and cooperatives; encouraging people to buy from local vendors, instead of WalMart and other big multinational chains; urban community gardens; web-based strategies, such as an artisan coalition working together on new marketing schemes; cultural collectives and craft cooperatives. These were all suggested as ways to keep an economy locally based and controlled. In Murphy, North Carolina, it was noted that several women whose jobs were lost in a Levi-Strauss shutdown have started a craft cooperative—a venture that puts from \$45,000 to \$60,000 annually back into the community.

Another approach to sustainable economic development is to build jobs around local assets. Appalachia is still a region of scenic beauty and the promotion of “eco-tourism” seems to come naturally to the residents of many communities. Forest products and the industries associated with them continue to be seen as important bases for economic development. Here, we were informed that the emphasis should be on “value added”—making sure that the finished product is produced locally and that profits stay in the community.

A similar alternative was identified as a kind of “needs-based” approach. Communities, it was said, should build around community needs—needs such as housing, transportation, health care, and education. Communities would then decide on what kind of economic development they want to promote in order to meet those needs.

HIGH TECH, FARMING, AND CORPORATE ACCOUNTABILITY

In the high tech world of the 21st century, technological skills seem to many a necessary item on any list of things to do to develop a productive workforce. It was suggested that we encourage the teaching of technical skills, appropriate technology, and the innovative use of available resources in schools.

Farming has been another important economic base in rural Appalachia. As crops such as tobacco prove unsuitable for competition in the world farm economy, some farmers have turned from growing

tobacco to growing ginseng, organic vegetables, specialty shrubs, even freshwater shrimp. Mushrooms are being grown in old mine shafts and wineries are springing up all over the region.

The talk of economic development alternatives does not end with personal or community responsibility. Some people told us that they want to hold incoming industries accountable for job creation. They are tired of large corporations coming into their communities, getting huge tax breaks and other incentives to build their infrastructure, then leaving the community high and dry a few years later. Clearly, these people believe that corporate responsibility can be encouraged from the grassroots.

CULTURE AND DIVERSITY

Several contributors to our discussions believe that building the power necessary to confront such a global challenge as globalization means that CORA needs to continue its work to build understanding and cooperation among racial and ethnic groups.

CORA's Multicultural Committee (MCC) and its Anti-Racism Transformation Team (ARTT) are already working to break down racial barriers. Incorporating a global perspective on race and economics into the work of MCC/ARTT would be helpful and a natural fit. Other organizations CORA is associated with—such as Project Change in Knoxville, Tennessee, the Virginia Organizing Project and the Appalachian Women's Alliance in Virginia—have a wealth of experience in anti-racism work. In Cincinnati, immigrants work through the Urban Appalachian Council to identify issues and advocate for change.

Support of cultural work was seen as another way to break down barriers between people. The formation of cultural collectives was encouraged, as was the adoption of “sister” communities in other countries or right here at home. It was also suggested that we create space where new immigrants and long time community residents can learn from and socialize with each other.

A number of participants pointed to the special impact that globalization is having on women. Job loss, poverty, the loss of educational opportunities, cutbacks in health care, the declining safety net and structural adjustment programs throughout the developing world — all of these factors and more are disproportionately impacting women, leading one participant to propose that we work to “empower women all over the world.”

We were urged to value local communities above “bigness.” We were asked to be more conscious of our role as consumers: to be aware of how we consume, what we consume, how it is produced, by whom. Further, we were urged to make discussions about our responsibilities as consumers part of our church conversations and to use public service announcements, letters to the editor, and so on, to bring the issue of consumption into public debate.

THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE AND CHURCH ACTION

Participants in the sessions urged CORA to include a theological perspective in all of our educational work around economic globalization. The notion was expressed that this perspective should involve a transformation of values from “competition” to “community.”



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Many ideas were expressed about actions that could be taken within our churches. Several participants thought churches need to have workshops that talk about the “negative” impacts of globalization. Others recommended that these workshops be designed to encourage the participation of all members of the church community, ensuring an openness to a variety of attitudes about globalization. Creating a model witness service for economic globalization and making use of *Labor in the Pulpit* opportunities was also suggested. (Anyone interested in *Labor in the Pulpit* can contact the nearest AFL/CIO Central Labor Council for information.)

It was suggested that CORA build a resource bank on the issues, providing the spiritual/theological underpinnings of the issues associated with economic globalization. The creation of a speaker’s bureau was offered as another means for getting the word out in our churches.

THE CHURCH’S ALTERNATIVE VIEW

David C. Korten, PhD, in his essay “The Mythic Victory of Market Capitalism” defines the following assumptions upon which the doctrine of economic liberalism (free market capitalism) rests:

- Humans are motivated by self-interest, expressed primarily through the quest for financial gain.
- The action that yields the greatest financial return to the individual or firm is the one that is most beneficial to society.
- Competitive behavior is more rational for the individual and the firm and more beneficial to society than cooperative behavior.
- Human progress is best measured by increases in the value of what the members of society consume, and those who consume the most contribute the most to that progress. (1)

This is “moral perversity,” according to Korten, in “a world in which more than a billion people live in absolute deprivation.” It is also a challenge to the churches of the world, most of whose expressed values are so adamantly opposed to the “rational” assumptions expressed above. In the words of one of our listening session participants “our challenge is to move from ‘head’ to ‘heart,’ supporting our underlying spiritual values.”

MAKING USE OF CORA NETWORKS

Finally, participants in the listening sessions—along with members of the Working Group on Globalization—believe it is important that these strategies be integrated into the ongoing life of CORA. As globalization is clearly a reality impacting Appalachia, the efforts of CORA’s several program units would benefit by considering ways to address these impacts.

What follows is not a set of mandates, nor is it meant to suggest that program units drop the important things they are doing now to do nothing but globalization work. It is rather a set of strategic ideas, developed by CORA members and friends in this year of listening and learning, that we urge program units to consider as they develop their work in the future.

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Any of the ideas may be appropriate for any program unit or governing unit of CORA. When we suggest that particular groups consider particular strategies it is because those strategies seem to fit within their sphere of concern or because they may take the lead in developing those ideas for the whole of CORA.



In the area of EDUCATION, we would encourage program units, and especially Project EAR (Economics in the Appalachian Region) and the Appalachian Development Projects Coalition (ADPC), to consider:

- Developing *popular education tools* in understandable language, framing issues that groups are already working on in the context of globalization, and making these tools available to local community organizations across Appalachia
- Developing a *resource bank* of videos, popular education materials, internet resources, speakers, etc. for use by local community organizations
- Encouraging and sponsoring CORA member participation in *global justice actions and conferences* (e.g., around the FTAA and WTO, the World Social Forum, etc.)



In the area of ORGANIZING, we encourage program units, and especially Public Policy Strategy, Project EAR and ADPC to consider:

- Developing *regional strategy sessions* on issues like water privatization, prison reform, job creation, immigration, etc.
- Supporting the development of *regional organizing networks* on these and other issues



In the area of POLITICAL ACTION, we encourage program units, and especially Public Policy Strategy, Project EAR and ADPC to consider:

- Encouraging greater *voter participation* by supporting electoral reform and campaign finance reform efforts in the region and nationally
- Including important global justice issues (e.g. FTAA, immigration reform, etc.) in CORA's *public policy work*, along with current concerns like tax policy, health care, the environment, worker rights, education and consumer issues



In the area of PARTNERSHIPS, we encourage all program units and governing units to:

- Encourage the involvement of CORA members in important *local coalitional activities*, e.g. on tax reform, living wages, immigration, health care, welfare rights, workers rights, environmental defense, and global issues such as the FTAA
- Participate in *organizations already involved in social justice issues* on a state, national and international level
- Encourage, facilitate and sponsor *international exchanges* involving grassroots organization members from Appalachia



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In the area of ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, we encourage program units, and especially ADPC and Project EAR, to consider:

- Sponsoring *strategy forums on particular economic development strategies*, e.g., around small farms, computer-based job creation, timber and wood products, small manufacturing networks, etc.
- Sponsoring *international consultations* on community and economic development strategies



In the area of CULTURE AND DIVERSITY, we encourage program units, and especially the Multicultural Committee, the Anti-Racism Transformation Team, Project EAR, ADPC, Tools for Ministry (TFM) and the Volunteer Program to consider:

- Exploring trainings on *the impact of globalization on communities of color* both in the U.S. and abroad
- Integrating a *global analysis* into CORA's dismantling racism work
- Sharing strategies among communities wanting to create space for dialogue and understanding between *new immigrants and long time community residents*



In the area of THEOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE AND CHURCH ACTION, we encourage program and governing units, and especially TFM and the Volunteer Program, to consider:

- Developing a *kit of educational resources* on globalization for use by local churches, judicatories, state councils of churches and seminaries, and promoting their use by CORA member communions
- Developing a *model witness service* on global justice
- Developing a *resource bank* that includes videos, educational materials, speakers, theological and worship materials on globalization for use in church settings

NOTE:

1. "The Mythic Victory of Market Capitalism," by Edward C. Korten, PhD, in *The Case Against the Global Economy and for a Turn Toward the Local*. Editors J. Mander, E. Goldsmith. Sierra Club Books, 1996.

A Theological Reflection

*He judges the world with justice;
He governs the world with equity.
The Lord is a stronghold for the oppressed,
A stronghold in times of distress.
They trust in you who cherish your name,
For you forsake not those who seek you, O Lord.
Sing praise to the Lord enthroned in Zion;
Proclaim among the nations his deeds;
For the avenger of blood has remembered;
He has not forgotten the cry of the afflicted.*

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Globalization and the Bible's True and Living God

What does the God of the Bible make of economic globalization? How does the God of the Bible view the impact of globalization on Appalachia?

Before trying to answer these questions, let us recall what the Bible teaches us about God's view of economic life. In particular, let us remember what the Bible teaches us about God's view of the poor who suffer exploitation and oppression, and about God's view of the whole natural world, which is also exploited and oppressed. Then let us offer our interpretation of how the authentic Biblical view speaks to the impact of globalization in Appalachia today.

GOD'S BEAUTIFUL BUT WOUNDED CREATION

The Book of Genesis tells us that, according to God's plan, the world was to be a beautiful garden, where everything was good. From the beginning we humans were called to live in this garden in loving harmony with nature, with each other and with our Creator. The Book of Genesis also tells us that the tragedy of human sin wounded God's beloved creation and brought disharmony to all human relationships within it. Disharmony entered into our relationship with each other, with the rest of our natural world, and thereby with God.

Our disharmony with each other took two main forms, namely the tensions of gender between men and women and the tensions among

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different social groups, especially groups based on class or ethnicity. In the tensions of gender, men and women became emotionally separated from each other and men came to dominate women, a process that we know today as patriarchy. The Bible teaches us that such domination of men over women is not God's will but rather the result of sin. For example, the fact that the vast majority of poor adults today are women is the direct result of sinful patriarchy which flows from humanity's original wounding of God's beautiful creation. Healing patriarchy means healing women and men so that both can be true and equal partners in a just and ecological world.

In the tensions of social groups, the first division that arose was between Cain, the builder of the first urban city, and Abel, the rural shepherd. Cain murdered his brother Abel, and exploitation and murder have ravaged human history ever since. In response to this on-going tragedy, defending the poor and oppressed against unscrupulous individuals amongst the rich and powerful stands out as one of the most prophetic messages in the Bible. Both in the Old and New Testaments, this message teaches us about God's healing love. According to the Bible, the poor are God's special ones, and the rich can be saved by loving and helping the poor.

Our disharmony with the natural world meant that humanity's consciousness of its oneness with God's beautiful creation was also weakened. As a result, some humans began to see the Earth only as a place to exploit, with no regard for ecological or social consequences. As the Hebrew Torah makes clear, exploitation by some humans of

other humans and exploitation of the rest of the natural world go hand in hand. The ecological crisis that we experience in Appalachia today is closely linked to social crisis in the region. Both are the result of the human sin of treating the world not as God's beloved garden, but rather as a place to rape in the name of greed and power.

Lastly, when some humans fail to act as brothers and sisters, instead turning to the exploitation and oppression of others, and when some humans fail to be loving toward the earth and its wondrous creatures, such humans become deeply alienated from the living and true God. Instead, they turn to the false gods of money and power. Their idolatry then produces the social and ecological injustice so despised by God.

GOD'S COVENANTS OF HEALING LOVE

Yet God remains the God of love, and so seeks to bring healing to our wounded world and to all humans, rich and poor. God's healing begins with the Covenant with Noah, which stands as an ecological covenant with all of creation. As an ecological covenant, it teaches us that all spiritual healing begins with protecting and restoring our relationship with the natural world.

Another covenant that stands out in the Hebrew Scriptures is God's covenant with the enslaved children of Israel in Egypt. The story begins with the liberation of the Hebrew slaves in Egypt (the "Exodus"), and it climaxes at Mount Sinai with the Ten Commandments. In this covenant, the living and true God hears the cry of the Hebrew slaves who are economically exploited and oppressed, and chooses to liberate them. In that

choice, the living and true God triumphs over the rich and powerful lord of Egypt, the great Pharaoh.

Another covenant, the Covenant of Sinai, finds its fulfillment in the Promised Land. This great covenant is about both human justice and ecological integrity. It is a three-way covenant amongst the people, the land, and God. Hence we see that God's battle against the consequences of human sin in the world is a battle to make both the Earth and the people flourish together. It is also a battle against the pride of great international forces of domination, like the Egyptian Empire, and thereby against history's countless other empires which regularly rise in arrogance and then crash in humiliation. The Bible's loving God is not the false god of arrogant empires but rather the true God of ordinary people and their land.

THE TRAGIC RETURN OF SOCIAL & ECOLOGICAL EXPLOITATION

As we know from the later books of the Hebrew Scriptures, although God rescued the children of Israel from economic oppression, the liberated nation of Israel eventually found itself dominated by oppressive rulers from within its own ranks. These oppressive rulers tried to dominate other peoples as well, just as they tried to exploit their own poor and their own land. Wicked kings thus arose, stealing land from the poor and exploiting the rural peoples to make the rich cities flourish.

In response, the living God raised up prophets such as Isaiah, Ezechiel, Jeremiah and Amos, to speak again of justice for the poor and the integrity of the land. But the wicked kings had their own false prophets, who claimed to speak in the name of the living and true God. Using God's name in vain, they spoke in the name of human arrogance, greed, and domination. The wicked kings in turn regularly tried to have God's prophets imprisoned and even killed.

In response to the great social and ecological sins of the wicked kings and the rich and powerful of Israel, God allowed the nation to be driven into exile. God broke the back of arrogance, domination, and greed, promising to bring the people back from exile, and to send a Messiah who would restore justice and integrity to the land.

THE HEALING GIFT OF JESUS' WALKING AMONG US

Christians believe that the Messiah whom God promised is Jesus of Nazareth, and that he is indeed the Son of God. Jesus was born poor, for his birth occurred in a simple stable close to the other creatures of the natural world. Jesus loved nature and the poor. He kept close to them by spending much of his time in the countryside, often praying and sleeping outside.

As with the earlier prophets of Israel, many of the rich and powerful of Jesus' time came to hate him. Some among them, in collaboration with the great Roman imperial power, plotted to have him killed. So it was with God's prophets of old, who spoke on behalf of the poor and of nature. And so it would be with Jesus and with his disciples throughout history.

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When Jesus delivered his first sermon, he quoted the words of the prophet Isaiah, proclaiming that he had come to liberate the poor and to free those in prison. Later, when he portrayed himself as the new Moses by delivering the New Law on a mountainside, he said that the poor and the homeless and those in prison were blessed, but that the rich and the comfortable were cursed—unless they were converted to the poor. Still later he warned that we cannot serve both God and money. Money, he said, needs to be used to help the poor; otherwise it becomes a new idol. Jesus even preached that on the last day we would all be judged worthy or unworthy of entry into the Kingdom of God by how we treated the poor and those in prison. Finally, like many of the prophets before him, Jesus was killed by leaders among the rich and powerful of his time.

THE SPIRIT-FILLED GIFT OF JESUS' COMMUNITY OF FOLLOWERS

After his Resurrection, Jesus poured out his Holy Spirit upon those who would follow him. From the beginning, his young church committed itself to sharing with the poor. Many sold their possessions or held them in common. When Annias and Sapphira tried to hide their wealth so as not to share it with the poor, they were terrifyingly struck dead.

Since that time, the community of Jesus' disciples has struggled to remain faithful to Jesus' message of love for the poor and for the Earth. There are, of course, still false prophets among us who try to defend the arrogant among the rich and powerful as they oppress the poor and the land, attempting to replace the true Gospel with a gospel of greed and self-interest. But the living God continues to raise up true prophets who speak of God's love for the poor and for the Earth, and these prophets, like so many before them and like Jesus himself, continue to suffer persecution and sometimes even murder.



WHAT WE HAVE HEARD FROM ORDINARY PEOPLE IN APPALACHIA

Given the biblical preference for the poor, a global economy can be a good thing if it truly serves the poor of the Earth and the Earth itself. But it is not good if the rich and powerful across the planet use the global economy to marginalize the poor and to plunder the Earth in a non-sustainable way.

Let us recall what we have heard about this issue from the testimonies of ordinary people in Appalachia.



■ We heard about a great loss of jobs and declining wages and benefits—particularly in the manufacturing of textiles, furniture, shoes, and electronics—as well as in agriculture and mining. We also heard that the wages supplied by many remaining jobs cannot support a family. As we said, Appalachia seems to be in a “race to the bottom.” As a result, many families suffer extreme economic hardship and the growth of family violence.

■ We also heard that, as good jobs decline, the prison population dramatically increases, particularly for young African-Americans. In relation to this phenomenon, we have discovered that prisons are now a big business, acting as an incentive to imprison more and more of the poor! Even worse, the fastest growing prison population is women, 80% being mothers. And many of these mothers are imprisoned hundreds of miles from their children. How shocking that the prison growth is promoted as economic “development.”

■ We heard much about the new immigrant labor working in tenant-farming-like situations. We heard about companies bringing in workers from other countries, and laying off local workers.

■ We heard much about the “downsizing” of government, looming state budget crises, abandoned safety nets, increasingly regressive tax systems, decline in Medicaid payments, declining support for education, the private buying up of water rights, government allowing mountain top removal and clear cutting of national forests, and the removal of mountains and streams from the protections of the Clean Water Act. Yet, while all this is happening, incentives are given to businesses to encourage them to bring in low-paying, non-union jobs.

■ We heard warnings about the loss of civil liberties, reminiscent of the days of the mine police and vigilantes enforcing the rules of coal bosses.

■ We heard much about the decline of the family farm, the promotion of anti-ecological models of industrial farming using dangerous antibiotics and genetically modified crops, about the pollution of streams and wells by destructive forms of mining, and about the privatization of water, forcing poor people to pay high prices for declining amounts of non-polluted water.

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*What do we make of all this,
in light of our Biblical worldview?*

**A CULTURE OF LIFE
VERSUS A CULTURE OF DEATH**

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a culture of life?
How can we cherish
the Earth and defend it
— its rivers and streams,
its glens and forests,
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How can we protect
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build just communities?*

When the Lord's great prophet Moses looked over the Jordan River, even though he knew that he would never live to cross it to enter the Promised Land, he delivered his most inspiring sermon to the Children of Israel. He told them that there were but two choices: to choose life or to choose death. Today, in the deepest Christian thought around the world, many church leaders have begun to speak of the danger of a global "culture of death" and of the need to heal it with a global "culture of life."

Faced with the harsh and frightening realities of the negative economic transformation of contemporary Appalachia, we cannot help but ask: are we being drawn into a culture of death? Are we being drawn into an economic culture that abandons the poor and even condemns the poor as victims of human sacrifice to the false idols of elite greed, power and arrogance? Are we being drawn into a culture of death that rapes our beautiful natural world of hills and hollers, and poisons our pristine streams and wells?

How can we promote a culture of life? How can we cherish the Earth and defend it—its rivers and streams, its glens and forests, its animals and people? How can we protect and work with poor people as we build just communities?

Faced with these questions, we come before Appalachian church communities, sharing with our sisters and brothers a deep concern that a culture of death is invading the Appalachian region. In the name of the living and true God, we ask the Holy Spirit to teach us how to challenge this culture of death so that we may promote a culture of life, in which poor people will be protected and the Earth cherished.