

Christians For The Mountains
Rt. 1 Box 119-B
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*"The Earth Belongs to God...
and Everything in it."
(Psalm 24:1)*

The Mountain Vision

The Quarterly Publication of *Christians For The Mountains*

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“IT IS GOOD,” SAYS GOD, REFERRING TO ALL CREATION AND, YES, GOD EXPECTS US TO KEEP IT GOOD

The Bible opens up with the story of God creating the heavens and the earth, and then creating all the plants and animals upon the earth. God blesses this creation, and sees that it is good. God creates humans, male and female in God's image, and blesses humankind, too. God then gives humanity a special privilege to exercise responsibility toward creation to bring out its full created potential. As humanity serves creation, creation will reciprocally serve humanity. God then places a limitation to warn humanity that presuming god-like status will result in ruin, destruction, and death. (Genesis 1-3)

We know how the story is playing out. We humans have grasped for god-like power, and that will to power has made humanity the dominant force upon earth. For many of us, that power has provided us levels of security, comfort, and accessibility undreamed of in previous centuries of human existence. Yet most of you reading *The Mountain Vision* know that natural ecosystems are breaking down, that climate is increasingly chaotic, that this planet's ability to serve humanity will exhaust itself unless humanity gives it replenishment and "Sabbath-like" rest. The creation order God established, and the task God has given humanity to nurture and protect the creation cannot be abrogated forever. God is not mocked!

Christians For The Mountains is about folks like you who are concerned about how we humans are wrecking God's creation in central Appalachia and indeed over the whole earth. We along with others like-minded, are trying to turn this around. Indeed, things must turn around. And while we need to do everything we can, ultimately we must trust that God will accept our prayers and faithful actions, and make for a good outcome. This Christian "Hope" is what sustains us in our lives and joins with you in your Christian Hope.

This is the first issue of *The Mountain Vision*. We at *Christians For The Mountains* (CFTM) have issued several small newsletters in past years. At those times, our capacity as an organization was limited by sparse funds and precious volunteer time. Yet since our founding in May, 2005, our organizational capacity has grown to the point where we have significant leadership in the circle of Christian and religious environmental advocates. Doors are opening to us, doors we ask you to join with us in entering.



Larry Gibson (1946-2012)
At Peace on God's Holy Mountain

CFTM began in large part due to the inspiration and goading of Larry Gibson. His recent, untimely death is having a deep impact upon us. Larry Gibson's life will continue to inspire us in our God-given covenant to live rightly upon the earth. This issue is therefore dedicated to Larry Gibson.

We are sending *The Mountain Vision* to many people who may not have heard of the ministry of CFTM. We invite you to take time to look through this issue, and to share it with others.

We welcome your comments. Importantly, we join with you in prayers for the in-breaking of "God's Kingdom come, God's will to be done, here on earth as in heaven" (Matthew 6:10). And may we, empowered by The Holy Spirit, live out in faith the heart-cry of our prayers.

What's inside:

Casualties in the "War on Coal" (Editorial)	2	The ACHE ACT (HR 5959)	8	Work of LEAF in Tennessee (by Pat Hudson)	13
CFTM's Steering Committee and Staff	2	Support the ACHE Campaign	9	Gospel for Appalachia (by Robert Sage Russo)	13
Join CFTM as a Member	3	American Clean Energy Agenda (ACEA)	10	National Religious Coalition on Creation Care	14
Tribute to Larry Gibson (by Allen Johnson)	4	Strategy and Principles of ACEA	11	Prayer	15
Remembering Larry (by BJ Gudmundsson)	6	Unhealthy Communities & Ecosystems	12	Biblical Considerations in Marcellus Fracking	15
Larry Gibson: Prophet, Friend (by Robert Russo)	7	Christian Students Do Health Surveys	12	Quotes, Scriptures, Songs, and Poems	16

Casualties in the War on Coal by Allen Johnson, Editor

"Stop the war on coal!" I'm traveling in Appalachia coal country. Billboards along main highways and yard signs along the byways shout the same message in so many ways. "Stop the War on Coal!"

"War! That's strong language," I think to myself as my mind conjures up battlefield sounds of explosive blasts, sights of wounded bodies and stiffening corpses, vistas of moonscaped land and hollowed out homes, along with the "collateral damage" of innocent civilians caught in the crossfire, even as opposing sides fight to the bitter end. "Yes," I mourn, "Indeed a war is going on, and yes, coal is smack dab in the middle of it."

On the one side stands the Goliath-giant coal industry and its friends. Coal's nemeses include President Obama, EPA head Lisa Jackson, and—absurdly, according to at least one campaign billboard—inveterate coal boosters Senator Joe Manchin and UMWA head Cecil Roberts. It seems that along the coal-seam campaign trail, candidates vie to convince voters that they love the "black rock" more passionately than do their opponents. Yet the coal army's most ferocious scowl is for *treehuggers*, their sneering moniker for those subhuman beings who happen to believe that the earth should not be polluted by the *black rock*.

On the other side stand those *treehuggers* who really would like President Obama and the EPA to do a lot more than they are doing to protect the earth and its inhabitants from pollution and irreparable harm. The *treehuggers* have the peculiarity of loving human life and health, community vitality, and ecosystem integrity rather than the *black rock*.

The coal industry and its friends bitterly charge that their enemies are making war on them through pollution-curbing regulations that diminish their profits. This they say, translates into fewer jobs, less state tax revenue, and threatens national energy security.

"The first casualty of war is Truth," goes a saying. The truth, as stated by economics experts, is that Appalachian coal employment is actually steady or even rising in recent years. Profit margins have thinned due to the combined factors of power plants shifting more to natural gas with its low market price due to the fracking glut, the availability of much cheaper, low sulfur western coal, and the diminishing of easier-mined Appalachian coal reserves. Certainly lawsuits and increased regulatory enforcements have had significant throttle-down impact on the coal industry, but not nearly to the level that the coal industry blames upon the "treehugging" crowd and government officials.

This "War on Coal" has a certain one-sidedness to it. The explosive blasts are all set by the coal industry, 5.5 million pounds of explosives are used each day, six days per week, to level mountains and bury streams in central Appalachia, resulting in moonscapes and abandoned communities. Collateral damage, a euphemism for the suffering and death of innocent civilians, is once again one-sided in this "war on coal." Research is finding significantly higher rates of diseases, premature deaths, and birth defects in populations living in proximity to mountaintop removal operations [see page 8]. Such areas also happen to have high levels of dust that contain ammonium nitrate, Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbons (PAH), and silica. Streams and well-water are too often contaminated with a witch's brew of toxins. Meanwhile on the other side of the battle lines, the *treehuggers* are notoriously nonviolent.

There is a phenomenon called *war profiteerism*. President Lincoln denounced those companies and their heads who were accumulating large profits from the Civil War as "worse than traitors." Presidents Franklin Roosevelt, Harry Truman, and Dwight Eisenhower also warned against war profiteering. In the "War on Coal," it is quite likely that coal company executives and investors are reaping much larger financial gains from the "War on Coal" than the mostly volunteer *treehuggers*. Moreover, studies coming out of Harvard, the Mountain Association for Community Economic Development (MACED) and Downstream Strategies indicate that the negative impacts of coal mining cost the economies of Kentucky and West Virginia more than the revenues produced by coal production. In short, coal appears to make these states poorer!

A war really comes home when a casualty strikes close and dear. I write this column a few hours after receiving an email from a dear friend and colleague. That person's spouse has just received a doctor's report finding an 8 cm-sized tumor in the right lung. The couple lives in a lovely home, but one situated directly below the "war zone" of a mountaintop removal operation. I read the email. I stare at the screen stunned, breathless, emotionally twisted up inside. I show the email to a neighbor of our mutual friend. Her eyes well up in tears. She cries. Between her sobs, she gasps, "So many of my neighbors, too many... sick. This is so hard."

Casualties in the War On Coal. Please, let's end this war!

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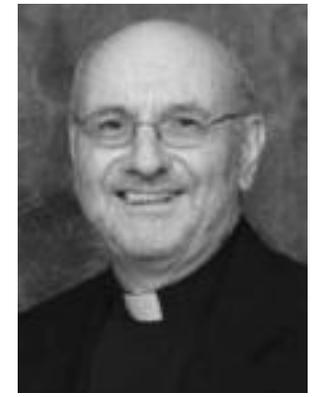
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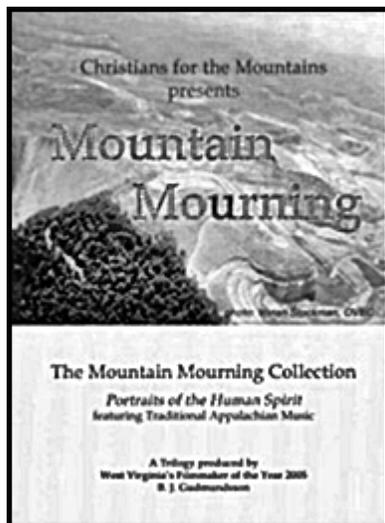
Robert Sage Russo, Laura Dagley, Allen Johnson (Kayford, 9-2-2012)

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CFTM has 501(c)3 nonprofit tax exempt status through a partnership with World Stewardship Institute. 887 Sebastopol Rd Ste A, Santa Rosa, California 95407-6828. Contact Person is Fred Krueger. Telephone 707-573-3161.		<p>Mountain Mourning DVD \$10 (Special member rate. Includes postage and handling) Note: Associate, Patron, and Sponsor levels will receive a free copy. Patron and Sponsor levels will receive an extra 40% discount on multiple orders.</p>			
		<p>Your donations are tax deductible. Thank you for prayer support.</p>			

Mountain Mourning Collection DVD



Film is a very powerful medium in which to share with others the devastating impacts that Mountaintop Removal Mining has on the people, culture, and mountains of Appalachia. BJ Gudmundsson of Patchwork Films produced our Mountain Morning Collection for Christians for the Mountains several years ago, yet these films continue to teach and inspire. This collection of films is applauded by Appalachian mountain people since it uses their own voices and music to tell their stories in the context of mountaintop removal.

This DVD consists of three films of about 20 minutes each, along with a couple of shorter clips.

Mountain Mourning is our title film. Traditional music, local voices, and a biblical framework tell the nuts and bolts of Mountaintop Removal.

In **Look What They've Done**, Maria Gunnoe weaves a thread around our hearts as she surveys the aftermath of Mountaintop Removal near her backyard. Her family's gospel music spills forth as the foundation for her courage and strength.

Keeper of the Mountains is an emotionally-charged film. We recommend seeing this last. Larry Gibson, whose ancestral home is being destroyed by Mountaintop Removal, brings out the pathos and tragedy of this practice. Larry Gibson takes a band of friends through what he calls "Hell's Gate, and in one breathtaking moment, they come across "the end of the world.

This resource is a very valuable tool for education and advocacy as well as a portrait of what is taking place in God's Appalachian Mountains. Several thousand copies have been distributed and shown in homes, churches, environmental meetings, and on television. For more information on the DVD or to order a copy please visit www.patchworkfilms.com or through our website www.christiansforthemountains.org/ Also see membership options.

Partnering with Christians For The Mountains

CFTM invites you to be a member partner in the service of this ministry. This is our first official membership drive. Become a first-rounder!

Since its founding in 2005, an "informal membership" has been open and welcoming to anyone who aligns with the principles and goals of CFTM, without any membership fee. However, with so many opportunities open to us, our Steering Committee believes that developing a clear and unambiguous membership will enable us to better disseminate information, invite action, and incorporate the skills and abilities of our supporters.

CFTM has no ambition or sense of calling to be a mega-organization. CFTM networks with existing religious groups and environmental justice organizations to bolster their own good efforts. Indeed, at a minimum, CFTM "tithes" its income and provides staff time to projects driven by other organizations. Our "gifting" will continue and expand. CFTM is now well-positioned to increasingly influence constructive religious dialogue and action, public opinion, and public policy. Developing a core body of members will increase our organizational capacity toward this.

To join, please send us information such as on the above coupon, or sign up online. If you are joining us, we know that you care very much about justice, protection, and restoration for God's creation. We invite any additional information you feel comfortable sharing that will help us to help you as a productive member, such as your employment, skills, religious affiliation and roles, environmental and social justice roles, personal involvements, volunteerism, special interests, and how you might think CFTM and you can help each other out. Please understand that we do not share personal information.

You will receive a quarterly newsletter, twice-monthly emails (that you can opt out of), and an occasional special deal if it falls our way. Most important, we will work together for biblical justice and "peace in the valley."

CFTM has 501(c)3 nonprofit tax status through a partnership with World Stewardship Institute. 887 Sebastopol Road Suite A, Santa Rosa, California 95407-6828. Financial reports are available upon request.

FAITH TO “KEEP” MOUNTAINS: A TRIBUTE TO LARRY GIBSON

by Allen Johnson (September 12, 2012)

Matthew 21:21

Jesus said, “In truth I tell you, if you have faith and do not doubt at all...even if you say to this mountain, ‘Be removed and thrown into the sea,’ it will be done. And if you have faith, everything you ask in prayer, you will receive.”



Larry Gibson 1946-2012

I remember vividly the last conversation I had with Larry Gibson. It was late Sunday afternoon September 2, exactly one week before his death. His weekend Labor Day Gospel Festival was over, and the sparse but appreciative crowd had left for home. Larry was talking to Sage Russo, BJ Gudmundsson, and me about the festival, and what steps we might do to make it more successful. The event itself had gone well, but the attendance had been disappointingly small. “Maybe Labor Day is not the best time, it being a holiday,” one of us ventured. “Perhaps we need publicity,” another of us said. Larry turned to us with his piercing eyes, and implored, “I’m really glad this event was a gospel festival. It brought in new people, local church people. Whatever it takes, help me to bring in more people.” As always, Larry’s challenge struck us to the bone. “Yes, will do,” we said, and meant it.

Larry Gibson often reminded me of our first encounter in May 2005. He was in a sour mood, and seeing our “church folks” delegation ticked him off. “Why are you so late?” he had whined at us. Meaning, where have the church people been all these years while the mountains are being hewed down? Larry proceeded to rant at our group with stories of local churches who took coal money for picnic shelters,

and of a preacher who told him, “Be a good citizen. Our nation needs electricity, and you have coal.” Larry did not seem to care much for the church and its people. Hearing him, I understood. “If you aren’t going to do something to save the mountains, then you wasted my time!” he shouted to us. Our group returned to Charleston that evening and founded “Christians For The Mountains,” an advocacy organization to implore churches and their people to work for the abolishment of mountaintop removal as a desecration of God’s creation. Larry Gibson had a knack for changing people’s lives.

Indeed. I thought of something Larry had told us during that last conversation, a statement he puzzled over. “Ken Hechler told me I changed his life.” Ken Hechler, a Ph.D. professor, a Major in the Army during WW 11, an interrogator of Nazi war criminals, a major speech writer for President Truman, a congressman for many terms, a WV Secretary of State, a prolific scholarly author. Larry Gibson—a man with a fifth grade education, a custodial worker who pushed a mop at a General Motors factory in Ohio—this Larry Gibson changed Ken Hechler’s life? Oh yes, and thousands more of us, including top intellectuals and people in high positions. Larry gave lectures at Yale and many other prestigious universities. Why is it that Larry Gibson changes lives, including my own? Why does he have such a profound impact on people?

My mind flashes back to that last Sunday morning September 2. Larry is talking to some students from Antioch College who had come up that festival weekend and camped out. Over the years, Larry had given thousands of such talks. How were we to know this would be his last? Larry talked maybe 90 minutes, the students’ eyes, ears, minds, and hearts fully absorbed. I had heard the presentation in various permutations on many occasions, but once again I was absorbed in the talk. Larry told stories from the wellspring of his very being. At times he shouted and cajoled. And then he would mist up, eyes watering with tears, pause, look down and away, swipe his hand across his cheek, jut his chin forward, and launch again the stories of the mountains—The people who had lived a hard, rugged life there;

The nature he had enjoyed as a boy; The boom to bust of conventional coal mining and the resultant demise of the once thriving Kayford community; then invasion of bulldozers and explosives to tear down the mountains.

Then Larry would ask his searing questions. “What in your life is so precious that no amount of money can buy it? What in your life is not for sale?” And of course for Larry the answer was Kayford Mountain, and any other mountain for that matter, should not be for sale at any price. “The earth gives us life.” As I watched those young people who will face tremendous challenges on this beleaguered planet over the next 60 or 70 years, I hoped that Larry’s talk would “change their lives, too.”

Jesus told his disciples to take up their crosses and follow him (Mt. 16:24; Lk. 9:23). Larry Gibson took up a cross of suffering and persecution for his outspoken, audacious stand against mountaintop removal (MTR). His pickup truck was covered in anti-MTR bumper stickers, a target for rowdy coal supporters to harass him. His dog was shot, his house shot at and vandalized, and his truck crowded off the road. “I’ve come to realize I might be killed fighting for the mountains,” Larry would sometimes soberly reflect. Far too often prophets of truth and change are killed or exiled (Lk. 13:34). Martin Luther King, Jr. Gandhi. John the Baptist, and even Larry’s friend, Ken Hechler, who is treated as a pariah in his own state’s Democratic Party.

A week earlier, August 25, Larry had scheduled a workday on Kayford to prepare the grounds for the festival scheduled for that following weekend. John Murdock, a lawyer and Christian writer from Washington, DC, and I came over to Kayford to help. When we arrived, Larry was across the road from the stone sign that welcomes visitors to Stanley Heirs Park, cutting brush on the overgrown site of the long-gone Kayford church. Larry pointed to the top of the hill, where two white crosses could be made out. “Today we will



Ken Hechler sings at Gospel Fest Sept. 1, 2012



Larry gives “the Talk” to Antioch College students 9-2-2012



John Murdock and Larry Gibson 8-25-2012

clear the brush so that all three crosses can be seen from the road." Larry seemed satisfied that this was a paramount task, to make these crosses visible and the site decently groomed. John and I got out our chain saw and brush cutter and joined Larry in clearing the hillside. The day was hot and muggy, the work tiresome. At the end of the day, we sat up on the hill by the concrete crosses, now visible from the road, and reasonably accessible with a short walk. Larry pointed and spoke wistfully, "A long time ago, when the church building was down there, people would walk up the hill after church to these crosses. There were benches here to sit on. The people would pray." For Larry, those people who had lived on this mountain with their sweat, blood, tears, and hard lives were not to be forgotten. I looked over the site and thought of the long ago prayers prayed, the songs sung, the funerals and weddings, the eyes lifted up in hope.

Now, decades later, our prayers that day mingled with theirs of long ago.

As we sat by the crosses, tired but satisfied with our day's accomplishment, Larry told John and me that he was to see a doctor the next week. "I'm tired of seeing doctors. This is the last time I'm seeing doctors, no matter what they tell me." We felt Larry knew something serious he wasn't sharing. For several years Larry had struggled against illnesses. Then a few days later Larry called me. "Allen, the doctor says I need to have a heart catheterization on Thursday. I told him I have a festival this weekend, and then am taking Ken Hechler to Washington in a couple of weeks. I asked him to wait until then, but he says it must be done now. I'm not sure about getting to the festival, but I will try." Amazingly, Larry was worrying about the festival coming up in a couple of days. I told him the best thing he could do for himself and all his friends was to take care of himself. The festival would be fine, we'd take care of it. Later, I talked with him Thursday night following the heart catheterization. "They are putting in some stents tomorrow. I still think I can make it Sunday." We had talked several times that week, Larry fretting about the

festival, and I assuring him that everything was fine, for him to stay home. I was not worried about the festival; but I was concerned for Larry.

About 1 pm Saturday, September 1, when the festival was about to start, I saw Larry and his wife, Carol, pull into the parking lot. Larry had just been released from the hospital following surgery the previous day. "Stubborn," I thought to myself, half upset and half glad to see him. Larry told us he was not to lift anything over 8 pounds, and he seemed to follow that order well. "He probably would have worried and stressed himself not coming," I thought to myself. By the end of the day, Larry was tired, retreating to the cabin with his beloved Carol. The following day, Larry seemed recharged, back to his usual form. He enjoyed the music, the speakers, and the folks who came up that day. By early evening

folks had left for home. A few of us talked with Larry as he shared his heart for Kayford, his love for people, his hope. We prayed. I got in my car to leave, saying something like, "Larry, see you in Washington in a couple of weeks. Now take it easy, get well, Ok? We love you, brother."



Larry & Carol Gibson at Gospel Festival 9-2-2012



Kayford Mountain looking out at Coal River Mountain September 1, 2012

Psalm 24:1-5

The earth and everything it contains belongs to the Lord.
The world and all who live in it are His.

The Lord laid its foundation on the seas and set it firmly on the rivers.

Who may ascend the Lord's mountain? Who may stand in His holy place?

The one who has clean hands and a pure heart and does not long for what is false or lie when he is under oath.

This person will receive a blessing from the Lord and righteousness from God, his savior.

Epilogue

Larry, enjoy the "Lord's mountain" in eternity. It must be splendid. Maybe it reminds you some of Kayford before it was blasted and desecrated and plundered. But such destruction will never happen to "the Lord's mountain."

I look to see you on "the Lord's mountain" when my time here on earth is completed. But until then, I and your friends will be about the task of "keeping" the mountains here, for they, too, are the Lord's mountains. For "the earth and everything it contains are the Lord's."

For those of you who are puzzled by the introductory scripture, please understand that Jesus used a metaphor for faith when describing "removing a mountain." Larry exercised faith by "keeping mountains."

Remembering Larry Gibson

by BJ Gudmundsson (written September 15, 2012)



It was exactly two weeks ago, Labor Day Weekend on Kayford Mountain. The crowd had gone, the trash was bagged, equipment put away, gear stowed in the car - we were ready to roll out, back to Pocahontas County. Larry marched down the hill from the cabin, a determined stride for sure. We waited—Allen Johnson, Sage Russo and I. Larry stopped in front of us. Court was in session!

The words rolled off his tongue like they were shot off a shovel. "I've got to talk to you guys! We gotta do better. We need a bigger crowd in October. What can we do? Are you with me here? Do you hear what I'm sayin'?"

We paced, we planned, we seemed to carve it in stone. It was like Moses had come down from the mountain. Larry Gibson was like I had never seen him before. Oh sure, I knew the rant. But this time it was different. I felt like I was in the presence of a man who had just heard the word of God. "Take off your shoes, Moses! Take off your shoes. For the ground on which you are standing is Holy Ground!" We knew what he wanted us to do and, by golly, we were ready!

Back flash. 2006. I had been sent to Kayford by *Christians for the Mountains* to interview Larry. We had never met. He knew I was coming and he waited for me to wire him up and start the camera before he said much. He looked me square in the eyes and said, "What took you so long?" I knew he was talking about the churches. I said, "I don't know, but we're here now."



"What in your life is so precious that it isn't for sale?"
---Larry Gibson (moonscape on Kayford Mountain, 2006)

He picked up the miner's lamp, fumbled around a bit, and told its story—hesitated a time or two, and teared up more than once. He said he was taking us on a walk. "Don't point your camera at me," he said. "Point it at the faces of these people here when they see what I'm about to show you." We headed up the mountain, plodding along to the tune of stories about coal barons, politicians, fires and such. Up to Hell's Gate, and then we stopped.

"Now we're gonna walk right up there and what you're gonna see is what I call The End of the World." Silence. We walked ever so slowly. I ran ahead. Got to get the faces. Whoa! What the hell is this? I started crying, shaking, couldn't breathe. Give the camera to my husband. I can't do this! And then, everything stopped. Time stood still. The faces, I saw the faces. Their tears, through my tears. Oh God. Oh GOD!!! Then, Larry's voice. "Well... here it is."

I don't need to banter about mountaintop removal. You've all seen it. Those of you who live with it, near it, under it know more about this beast than I ever will. I lost my grounding that day on Kayford Mountain, but I gained the best friend a person could ever ask for. And I found my voice.

I made many trips to Kayford and beyond after that. Larry would call and I would go. Or I would call and he would go. And with each trip I was more deeply touched and firmly committed to the cause. Because, you see, Larry and I were kindred spirits, West Virginia flowed through our veins. Its destruction overwhelmed our hearts. I sometimes found myself speechless. He didn't. When the coal thugs invaded a 4th of July gathering Larry kept yelling "keep that camera on!" They yelled, I ducked. Larry screamed "get under the table!" I wanted to run! A week later "Invasion of the Coal Thugs" had 56,000 views on YouTube. We called it a victory!

Then I sort of dropped out for a while. Things just get in the way sometimes. When Allen Johnson asked me to sing on Labor Day I was more than ready to see my old friend. We talked about where I'd been and he wasn't the least bit surprised. Nothing about this ugly mess ever surprised him. When the singing was over he said, "What are you doing behind a camera? You should be traveling with me and singing!" Okay, we can do that.

So, we made the plans and drove home. Inspired, excited, ready to be back on the ground. A week rolls by, another Sunday comes and "R.I.P. Larry Gibson" comes flying across my Facebook. Suddenly my heart is back on Kayford, crying, shaking, can't breathe. I see the faces - Carol, Ken, Maria, Chuck, so many more, looking out into the abyss.

I believe that God always has a plan. He's just not always operating on our timetable. And so, even though we weren't ready, God called Larry Gibson home. God surely knows that we are capable of carrying on.



Gudmundsson at Gospelfest on Kayford Sept. 1, 2012

Therefore, let us be steadfast in our resolve to end this horrible practice of mountaintop removal once and for all. And let us be there for Carol. Larry would want that.

*Let the stormy breezes blow, their cry cannot alarm me;
I am safely sheltered here, protected by God's hand;
Here the sun is always shining, here there's naught can harm me;
I am safe forever in Beulah Land.*

Sleep well, my friend. I love you.

Editor's Comment: BJ Gudmundsson works on historic records preservation in Pocahontas County, WV, and is an award-winning filmmaker addressing Appalachian issues and persons. She produced our *Mountain Mourning Collection* in 2006, followed by our wilderness film, *God's Gift of a Wild and Wonderful Land*. Then in 2007 BJ produced the powerful, edgy anti-mountaintop removal film, *Rise Up! West Virginia.* Gudmundsson is a native of Marlinton, WV, a musician in her own right, and a passionate supporter of traditional Appalachian people and their culture, themes always reflected in her films. Readers may contact BJ and purchase her films at patchworkfilms.com



Janet Keating says about Larry Gibson...

"A hero who seemed to be at every rally, protest, public hearing or other event calling for peace and justice in our southern mountain communities, we are so going to miss his smiling face, familiar laugh, and fierce love. Larry can finally rest, while the rest of us keep on working together for environmental justice and an end to mountaintop removal."

Larry Gibson: Prophet, Friend by Robert Sage Phillips Russo (November 2012)

I met Larry Gibson in the autumn of 2004 at his home place on Kayford Mtn. He showed us around the land we walked on and told us the stories about the land that was no longer there. As I looked over the giant surface mine site from the edge of his family cemetery, I prayed, and as I prayed I knew my life was changed that moment. I walked into that call for the health of Appalachia, and with that I found a wonderful friend.

Larry was a regular guy who had the same questions about life and emotional wrestles as anyone else. We would go on road trips together, and just walk around the mountain talking about music, women, today's youth, the mountains, Dollywood, God, etc.

But there was the uniqueness of Larry that made him a legend. While his body was weak, his spirit was strong. He had a life of hardship and pain coupled with a deep love of the land and the people of not only Appalachia but all places, though Appalachia ran deep in his blood and heart. This

combination kept lit a fire in his belly for justice. Inexcusable was the way the people of Appalachia have generationally been taken advantage of and abused. The destruction of the mountains through surface mining was the last straw. He fought hard so that others may live in justice and thus have a sense of peace to enjoy life with their families for generations.

Once, Larry was stopped by three surface miners on the way to his house. Getting out of their trucks, Larry purposefully left his gun, letting them see he was unarmed. As they yelled and threatened

him, short Larry poked the biggest guy in the belly saying, "I'm doing this for you, too, man. When I was a boy it was expected I'd follow my dad into the mines. Tell me, can your son expect to follow you into the mines, into a job?" The man paused and softened with sadness. Larry continued, "You know this type of mining doesn't leave anything left. Listen buddy, I'm doing this for all of us, and our grandkids and more; for the future of Appalachia."

"Coal kills – surface mining and deep mining." Larry knew all this personally - he buried much of his family from coal related deaths. He also said it was our responsibility to help get people new jobs.

Never afraid to speak his mind, and humble enough to ask questions, he sought

out truth, and stood by it. Larry, a man of courage, faced regular attempts on his life, yet stood his ground in the pursuit of justice for Appalachia for he knew this work was much bigger than him.

He found the biggest blessing of his life in his wife Carol. I remember when he realized he needed to marry her. Nervous as he was then, he says it was the best decision he made, for they were truly in love, and it was obvious. While God revealed Himself to Larry on the mountain, Carol helped him and healing in the church. God did a mighty work in Larry Gibson throughout his life, and in the last year,

He went even deeper. Larry repainted the white rock on Kayford to remember the church once there and restored the three white crosses standing on the hill. We talked about the God that doesn't dwell in buildings made by human hands, but who Larry walks and talks with in the woods and everywhere he goes. He wrestled like most of us, but Larry came out to accept God's free gift of grace and love in Jesus Christ. So Larry, buddy, you are a legend, a short giant, an inspiration and very close friend.

Thank you for all you have done for the mountains, for me, for all the people. Hey Patriot Coal is stopping surface mining! May you rest now, brother, in peace and deepest joy walking face-to-face with Jesus, in the land of everlasting beauty and life. We love you.

Larry Gibson with CFTM's sta Robert Sage Russo and Rebekah Epling at July 4th Festival on Kayford

Russo preaching at Kayford Festival at Sunday worship.

Editors Note: Russo has been on CFTM's sta for several years. He is living in the mountains of North Carolina serving an internship at a church.

"The Keepers of the Mountains Foundation" Please Support Larry Gibson's legacy and hope!

The Keepers of the Mountain Foundations to educate and inspire people to work for healthier, more sustainable mountain communities and to end Mountaintop Removal. Led by everyday West Virginians, the organization looks beyond an extraction-based economy to an economy that values people, land, and mountain heritage.

Founded by Larry Gibson, the 501-c-3 nonprofit educational organization comprises a Board of Directors, staff, and an "On the Road" speakers bureau.

The Stanley Heirs Park on Kayford Mountain is Larry Gibson's beloved home place and is the best "on the ground" place for visitors to see mountaintop removal first hand. Keeping this park maintained and accessible is an important project that will take both money and volunteer help. Please contribute.

Over the years Christians For The Mountains (CFTM) has gifted Larry Gibson and the Keepers of the Mountains Foundation with many hundreds of our Mountain Mourning Collection DVDs, and helped out with volunteer maintenance projects. CFTM has taken a number of church, college, and other groups to Stanley Heirs Park, experiencing wrenching, life-changing impact.

Your financial and/or volunteer help is needed. Please visit www. <http://mountainkeeper.blogspot.com/>

Larry Gibson (1946-2012)
The above photo by Mark Schmerling was taken on Earth Day, Sunday April 22, 2012, at the National Cathedral in Washington, DC.
Video archives, photos, and tributes of Larry Gibson are gathering on the Mountainkeeper website.

The Appalachian Community Health Emergency (ACHE) Act (HR 5959) was introduced in Congress on June 19, 2012 with 14 co-sponsors [the bill has 27 co-sponsors at present]. The ACHE Act responsibly addresses serious community health issues linked to mountaintop removal. Twenty recent peer-reviewed studies point to significantly higher rates of morbidity, cancer, heart disease, respiratory illnesses, and birth defects, when compared with communities adjacent to prolonged mountaintop removal operations, in contrast to communities without mountaintop removal but otherwise similar socio-economic and cultural demographics. Furthermore, people living in these affected communities know too-well their many relatives and neighbors sick or dead. The ACHE Act is straightforward, with the following points:

- x Calls for a moratorium on issuance of any new mountaintop removal permits, or expansions of existing permits;
- x Calls for continuous air, water, and noise pollution quality monitoring of existing mountaintop removal operations;
- x Calls for the National Institute of Environmental Health Studies to conduct or support comprehensive studies to determine health impacts of mountaintop removal, and to report to the Secretary of Health and Human Services whether mountaintop removal presents a health risk to individuals in the surrounding communities.
- x Calls for a one-time assessment on mountaintop removal operations to cover the federal expense of this study.

A serious health crisis exists in areas of high concentrations of mountaintop removal.

- x Babies born to mothers who smoke during pregnancy HAVE AN 18% HIGHER RISK OF BIRTH DEFECTS; however, babies born to mothers who live in areas with mountaintop removal mining HAVE A 26 % HIGHER RATE OF BIRTH DEFECTS. Additionally, it was found that this risk is 42% HIGHER OVER THE COURSE OF THE STUDY PERIOD FROM YEARS 2000-2003 and 181% higher during more recent years, specifically for a heart or lung defect* (Ahern, MM, et al, Environ. Res., (2011), DOI: 10.1016/j.envres.2011.05.19)
- x Babies born to mothers who live in areas with high levels of coal mining HAVE A 16% HIGHER CHANCE OF BEING BORN UNDER WEIGHT* (Ahern, et al, Maternal

and Child Health J, DOI: 10.1007/s10995-009-0555-1)

xPeople who live in areas with mountain top removal mining HAVE HIGHER DEATH RATES compared to people who do not live near MTR mining*. (Hendryx, Journal of Health Disparities Research and Practice Volume 4, Number 3, Spring 2011, pp. 44-53)

xPeople who live in areas where there is mountain top removal mining HAVE HIGHER RATES OF DEATH FROM CARDIOVASCULAR DISEASE, (HEART DISEASE) Esch & Hendryx; The Journal of Rural Health; 00; 2011; 1-8)

xPeople who live in areas with high rates of coal production HAVE HIGHER RATES OF DEATH FROM CERTAIN CANCERS, (BREAST, LUNG, DIGESTIVE, URINARY) (Hendryx & Hitt; Ecohealth; 2011, DOI: 10.1007/s10393-101-0297-y)

x People who live in counties with mountaintop removal mining report significantly MORE DAYS OF POOR PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH AND LIMITATIONS OF THEIR ACTIVITY (Am J Public Health. 2011;101:848-853. DOI: 10.2105/AJPH.2010.300073)

*These health risks are significantly higher even when accounting for race, gender, poverty, smoking and other factors.

Links for the full text of these studies are at our website at <http://www.christiansforthemountains.org/site/Topics/Issues/MTR/appalachianHealthCrisis.html>

What is Special and Unique about the ACHE Act?

- t The first and only federal legislation that specifically addresses mountaintop removal.
- t Focuses solely on community health in mountaintop removal communities.
- t Does not deal with aesthetic, ecological, economic, or sociological matters of MTR.
- t Will not end miner's jobs on current permitted MTR operations.
- t Should unite conscientious Republicans and Democrats, conservatives and liberals...
- t Should have the support of the environmentalist community, but just as important...
- t Should have advocates of health, family values, pro-life, and fiscal responsibility.
- t Exercises the "Precautionary Principle" with a moratorium on new MTR permits.
- t It is a response to concerted citizens exercising their fundamental obligations.
- t Asserts that community health holds a higher moral value than industry interests.

"I was sick, and you visited me" Jesus (Matthew 25:36; 45)

A mother who lives in the southern coal fields of West Virginia holds the multiple prescriptions that aid with her 10-year old son's breathing.

Support the Appalachian Community Health Emergency (ACHE) Campaign!!!

The Appalachian Community Health Emergency Campaign organized in February 2012 in Fayetteville, West Virginia with a vision to end the health crisis facing communities linked to mountaintop removal. The campaign strategy aimed to gain remedial federal legislation through concentrated education and advocacy in Washington, DC.

Starting out with only a handful of persons, sparse funding, and long travel distance, the ACHE Campaign launched forth. By the end of April the ACHE Campaign had secured an affordable, attractive, functional office/apartment in the

lower level of the National Council of Churches, prime location adjacent to the Capitol. Through intensive and persuasive advocacy in congressional offices along with brilliant logistical help from Earthjustice, HR 5959 was introduced in the House with 14 co-sponsors (see previous page). Another 13 co-sponsors have since signed on. Progress on increasing co-sponsors slowed down with the election campaign season, but groundwork is being laid to accelerate the momentum when the new Congress opens in January.

Christians For The Mountains (CFTM) through its coordinator, Allen Johnson, has been involved with the ACHE Campaign since its inception. Johnson located the ACHE office in the National Council of Churches headquarters lower level, and has made several jaunts to Washington to meet with congressional offices, religious leaders, and health advocacy organizations. CFTM's Laura Dagley has played a major role in setting up a massive press database, and she helps in arranging congressional office appointments and related ACHE campaign support roles.

Over the past 15 years or so, increasing numbers of individuals and organizations have stepped up valiantly to end mountaintop removal. For most of those years, mountaintop removal was essentially unknown in the nation and even in our Appalachian region. This is much less the case now due to tireless

and effective publicity efforts by our friends. A number of lawsuits have been initiated with some successes, and some permits have been modified or delayed. Recently, Patriot Coal announced an end to its mountaintop removal operations.

Nonetheless, mountaintop removal continues with an average of 5.5 million pounds of explosives detonated every day. The cumulative effect of the air and water pollution is linked to high levels of an array of serious health problems affecting too many unborn babies, asthmatic children, and adults. The state governments of West Virginia, Kentucky, Virginia, and Tennessee are beholden to the coal industry, therefore significant regulatory redress from them seems unlikely. Therefore, national legislation seems to be our most promising route to protect people's health from the ravages of mountaintop removal.

The ACHE Campaign strategy is laser-focused on the ACHE Act. That is, other issues are not dealt with in this campaign, such as the ecological effects of mountaintop removal, or the overall issue of coal as contributive to climate change and other health problems in its combustion and in disposal of coal ash. These are important issues to be dealt with in other venues, but not while acting in behalf of the ACHE Team. The ACHE campaign focus on the negative health effects of mountaintop removal should broaden the base of support including Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, liberals, along with advocacy organizations in health, family values, and government fiscal responsibility. The high rate of birth defects in itself is extremely costly to society, let alone the challenges that families face in helping special needs children.

The ACHE Campaign engages in dialogue with private and public sectors such as, but not limited to, the Environmental Protection Agency, the United States Department of Justice, the United States Department of Health and Human Services, the American Cancer Society, the American Lung Association, and the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

- Please support the ACHE campaign.
- Financially contribute (very much needed!)
- Outreach to your congressional offices.
- Publicize the ACHE Act in your circles.
- Ask your organizations to endorse ACHE.
- Volunteer in our campaign.
- Thank supporters of ACHE!

Concerned Citizens Speak on ACHE

Wendell Berry "As certain people of the Eastern Kentucky coal fields helped me to understand nearly 50 years ago, the fate of the land and the fate of the people are inseparable. Whatever affects the health of the land must affect the health of the people. From that understanding, it is clear that the measures called for in the ACHE Act should have been enacted many years ago. Granted even a minimal concern for the health of the land and of science, the need for this bill now is obvious."

Fr. John Rausch "I've heard direct testimony from a woman who unknowingly bathed her 3-year old daughter in arsenic laced water from mountaintop removal. I've also heard numerous stories about children developing asthma living near mountaintop removal sites and teens getting tumors and gallstones from mountaintop removal-contaminated water. Is it a coincidence that people close to mountaintop removal suffer these sicknesses more frequently? Prudence, a cardinal virtue, tells us to stop and check the process. The Appalachian Communities Health Emergency Act puts health and safety first. Ultimately, it is immoral to sacrifice the health of our children for cheap electricity!"

Ginger Danz "As a mother, this [ACHE Campaign] is the best news I've heard in a while. My daughter's health is the reason I got interested in learning more about mountaintop removal in West Virginia, and the research I have done scares me. A 42 percent higher risk of birth defects in mountaintop removal communities is beyond unacceptable; not to mention elevated rates of cancer and heart disease related to this particular type of mining. I am very relieved that someone is finally listening to the people of Appalachia and getting the word out about the dangers to our health."

Bo Webb "All around me, family and neighbors in my community are dying of cancer. While the silica dust and blasting residue coat our homes, our supposed leaders actively promote the very activity linked to our health crisis. Such disregard for citizens' lives is unacceptable."

Maria Gunnoe "The only question should be how can we get this bill passed right away with the urgency it requires? This is the way that we support the science and END MTR once and for all! The ACHE Act is a good bill and we should all be behind this."

In his essay, "Coal Must Embrace the Future," the late West Virginia Senator Robert C. Byrd wrote: "Most members of Congress, like most Americans, oppose the practice, and we may not yet fully understand the effects of mountaintop removal mining on the health of our citizens." In 2010 he added, "If blasting and digging and relocating streams unearths harmful elements and releases them into the environment, illness and death, that process should be halted and the resulting hazards to the community abated."

American Clean Energy Agenda: It is Possible, Affordable, and Necessary, So Let's Do It!

The most important public policy the United States can resolve to make and keep is for clean, affordable, sustainable energy. Land, water, air, species, and human health all suffer under present "Business As Usual" (BAU) energy extraction and use. The most egregious and risky forms of extraction, including mountaintop removal, tar sands, gas fracking, and uranium mining, primarily result from the demand for conventional energy. Arguably much of the vast U.S. military budget justifies itself on the basis of controlling access to conventional energy supplies. Global climate change is driven in large part by fossil fuel use.

Decisions made now directly affect whether future generations will have the opportunity for quality of life. Jesus commands His followers to love God and then to love all humanity (Matthew 22:36-40). Our present generation can continue on its selfish "drill, baby, drill" course, or can repent and push for covenantal justice for future generations.

The American Clean Energy Agenda (ACEA) is a strong, viable, affordable proposal for clean electric power. The technology is available, the economic analysis is solid. Initiated by the Civil Society Institute and the Environmental Working Group, and endorsed by 110 grassroots organizations around the country representing over 1.7 million Americans, the American Clean Energy Agenda calls for a number of bold steps to move the United States toward a clean, safe energy future.

These steps include: phasing out nuclear power, natural gas, coal and industrial biomass in favor of organizing and coming together around efficient use of renewable, non-polluting resources; opposition to a "clean energy standard" that puts the public welfare above politics and corporate influence; retooling federal "loan guarantees" to make smarter investments in renewable energy; greater emphasis on renewable energy and energy efficiency programs; and avoiding a future in which Americans suffer the consequences of mountaintop mining for coal and fracking of shale gas that is then exported for use in other nations.

The Agenda is guided by the Precautionary Principle, which dictates that lawmakers' priority must be protecting public health and natural resources. This principle should guide future policy toward a safe and sustainable energy future. We know there are alternatives with energy efficiency and

of the shelf, sustainable energy wind and solar. A critical move away from the political power of the industry-driven 'business as usual' and 'all of the above' approach will only happen with grassroots organizations to push clean energy public policy. Please join with us!

Christians For The Mountains was invited by one of our major supporters, the Civil Society Institute, to participate at a meeting last April to begin the process of crafting a clean energy agenda. OVEC, Coal River Mountain Watch, Appalachian Citizens Law Center, and Kentuckians For The Commonwealth joined us among the 36 convening grassroots organizations from across the nation. Christians For The Mountains is inviting organizations that we partner with to endorse the ACEA. Those who have accepted our invitation include the National Religious Coalition For Creation Care, the World Stewardship Institute, and Christians Caring For Creation. We need massive advocacy by grassroots organizations to push clean energy public policy. Please join with us!

"American citizens' health must come first in any decisions about national energy policy," said Coal River Mountain Watch Executive Director Vern Haltom. "When that happens, renewables and efficiency stand out as the clear choices. Why would anyone choose to endanger the public's health with methods such as mountaintop removal coal mining when truly clean, affordable options are available to us?"

Allen Johnson, with Christians For e Mountains, said, "Whoever is president these next four years must exert compelling leadership to establish water and energy policies that ensure efficiency, reliability, and affordability while protecting public health and environmental quality. The technology is available. The public is willing. Only powerful vested interests stand in the way. The next President needs to exert moral courage and steadfast persistence to launch a bright, clean energy future."

Civil Society Institute President Pam Solos said: "In poll after poll that we've conducted, it's clear the public supports a truly clean energy future. The public favors energy sources that are not water intensive and which not pose health risks or require unending subsidies from public funds. They understand that it cannot happen overnight and that it will only happen when serious policy making replaces public posturing. The American Clean Energy Agenda is a call for decisive leadership toward a truly clean energy future."

"Energy efficiency and green energy are the key to the future of our country," said Dan Taylor, energy efficiency coordinator for OVEC. "We need policies that create new jobs, protect our ecosystem and save not only our valuable resources for the future, but also that save people and businesses money. The green economy must be brought to all of America, especially those areas hardest hit by the economic downturn like Appalachia. The president for the next four years must make sure that we transition to this new clean economy and that we conserve our energy to keep us on a sustainable track for the future."

Beyond Business As Usual: Realizing an American Renewable Energy Future by 2030

by the Committee for an American Clean Energy Agenda

An Effective Energy Strategy

The “all of the above” approach to America’s energy needs that is articulated in the White House-backed “Clean Energy Standard” is no road map to a clean, sustainable future. It keeps the nation on a path that is strewn with local hazards from fossil fuels and nuclear power and darkened by the global threat of climate change. The so-called Clean Energy Standard clings to the past and fails to take decisive action to protect public health, safety and energy security.

The case for new thinking is clear: The evidence for human-caused climate change continues to grow, and we are already witnesses to its effects on human health, agricultural production and sea levels. Citizen groups and experts around the country are cataloging the risks of natural gas fracking to health and water supplies. The catastrophe at Fukushima has reminded the world of nuclear energy’s persistent near- and long-term dangers. Carbon capture and storage and other speculative fixes for coal’s billowing emissions are a costly waste of public funds and divert attention and resources from the timely, fundamental change.

Moreover, “business as usual” will suck dry or foul the water that is essential to all living things. Coal, nuclear-, industrialized biomass-, and natural gas-fired power plants consume oceans of water, causing local and distant pollution and competing with agriculture, residential and other commercial interests. Carbon capture and storage will require up to 90 percent more water than coal plants use today. Natural gas fracking requires millions of gallons and produces contaminated wastewater that must be treated and/or discarded. Injection wells for disposing of drilling and fracking wastes have triggered earthquakes, government scientists have found.

Call to Action

The time is now for a new, grassroots-driven politics to bring about a renewable energy future. As Congress debates major new public investments in energy, we need to ensure that our taxpayer dollars support an energy system that protects public health, promotes energy independence and ensures the economic well being of all Americans.

The precautionary principle must be the lodestar for the effort to create a new energy future for America that goes “beyond business as usual.” In the energy sphere, the core of the precautionary principle is to prevent degradation of the environment, protect public health, preserve access to clean water, sustain the electric grid and combat global climate change, all while laying the basis for an adequate standard of living for today’s populations and future generations.

We Support these Shared Premises:

1. We must generate the political will to create a sustainable healthy energy future by 2030 by accelerating the phase-out of nuclear power, natural gas, coal and industrial biomass and driving a grand transition to efficient use of renewable, non-polluting resources.

2. Achieving a sustainable energy future hinges on grassroots organizing to mobilize and educate the public and to demand support from our community, business, and political leaders.

3. The entrenched dirty energy industry’s public relations machine and lobbyists block the path to healthy energy options and sources. We will expose their misleading tactics and promote a truly healthy and renewable energy system.

4. The renewable energy standard is a proven model for a sustainable future, and our goal is to see it implemented on a national basis – as it already is in many states and other nations. We oppose the so-called “clean energy standard” as a dishonest political ploy designed to protect polluting energy industries – coal, nuclear, oil, gas and unsustainable biomass – that have brought us to the crisis we are in today.

5. We urge our local, state and federal authorities with jurisdiction over energy generation, power distribution and rate-setting to ensure a level playing field for renewable energy and efficiency. It is essential to take fully into account the long-term risks and costs to health, environment and communities of all energy resources, and to adopt policies based on least cost to consumers and minimal risk. We urge specific policies that will ensure this full reckoning as well as strong energy efficiency standards that minimize the demand for resources and provide good jobs and clear benefits to consumers.

6. We hold that the overall use of taxpayer dollars for energy projects – whether called “subsidies,” “tax incentives” or “loan guarantees” – currently runs counter to the public interest. Government incentives must benefit public health, economic well-being and the environment. We will develop clear guidelines to direct smarter public investment in energy.

7. We will educate our fellow citizens about the negative impacts of water-intensive energy choices on human and environmental health. Families and communities deserve clean air, access to clean water, safe, sustainable food and good health.

8. We will demonstrate that renewable energy and energy efficiency programs can be flexibly configured and adapted across the country to accommodate regional differences in energy portfolios.

9. Exporting dirty energy harms public health and contaminates our water, with the result that Americans pay the environmental and health price of meeting the energy needs of other countries while gaining nothing in the way of energy independence. Exporting coal extracted by mountaintop removal and shale gas obtained by fracking are especially egregious examples. Forcing US industries to compete with other nations for domestic supplies is likely to drive up prices dramatically and may cause them to relocate overseas.

An Agenda for the First 100 Days

It is critically important that the next President embrace a true clean energy revolution for electric power generation. Our current reliance on fossil fuel-fired and nuclear power is exacting a heavy toll on human health, the economy and the environment. Coal, natural gas and nuclear power are water-intensive, highly polluting and ultimately expensive technologies, and they can, over time, be replaced by a new, sustainable electric grid design. A modern electric power system must rely primarily on low-risk, affordable, much less water-intensive and renewable technologies. Its feasibility has been extensively documented, and extensive polling data show the public supports it.

In his first 100 days, the next President must:

First, work to establish a much-needed national water policy in order to avert or mitigate the current and future water scarcity problems that face the nation if today’s electric generation mix remains unchanged or becomes even more dependent on fossil fuel-fired and nuclear power. Power generation in the U.S. currently accounts for 50 percent of all water withdrawals and 41 percent of all fresh water withdrawals.

Second, the President must establish sustainability criteria to guide the choice and deployment of new electricity generating technologies. Americans require and support a power system that is affordable and reliable, consumes modest volumes of water, substantially reduces public health impacts, improves environmental quality and addresses climate change. The incoming administration should work to eliminate all public support for energy technologies that do not meet these criteria.

Third, the next administration must begin to make energy efficiency and non-combustion-based renewable energy technologies the core of the electric power system and adopt policies and programs that lead to eventual replacement of fossil fuel-fired and nuclear power plants.

Fourth, and finally, the next President must make it a priority to ensure that the United States becomes the acknowledged global leader in job-creating clean energy technologies and in confronting the challenge of climate change.

The transition to a true clean energy future is doable, but not without the political will, vision and determination of political leaders willing to stand up to powerful economic interests invested in business as usual.

Unhealthy Communities, Unhealthy People, Unhealthy Ecosystem: A Legacy of Extraction & Economies?

Health! The blessings of health are often not fully appreciated unless one is sick, disabled, in pain, suffering, or has a loved one in poor health. The scriptures are clear that we should take care of our own bodies, as well as advocate for and help those who are sick, injured, or suffering (cf. Matthew 25:36; Luke 10:25 ; 1 Corinthians. 6:19-20).

Appalachian communities have some of the worst health in the United States. Reasons for this are varied, but certain common traits involve cultural conditioning, poverty, and pollution. The curse of community sickness, disability, mental illness, and addiction not only costs dearly economically but even more so in human suffering and lost potential.

CFTM advocates for healthy personal and community lifestyle as well as for policies and education that reduce harmful influences and pollutants.

Mountaintop Removal is killing people. Strong rhetoric, yes! But the studies bear this out. Link to CFTM's website to find the studies, references, essays, and campaigns to address this crisis at <http://www.christiansforthemountains.org/site/Topics/Issues/MTR/coalCosts.html>

The Gallup/Healthways "Well-being index" comprehensive study of various "quality of life" categories that encompass each state in the U.S., major cities, and every congressional district. The findings for Central Appalachia indicate bottom rankings. For congressional districts with high levels of mountaintop removal, the findings are rock bottom in Physical Health, Emotional Health (happiness), and Life Evaluation (hope). In overall rankings, West Virginia is ranked last at #50, and Kentucky at 49. Virginia as a state ranks # 15, but the heavily-coal mined congressional district 9 is in near the bottom.

CFTM strongly encourages our supporters to become familiar with the "Well-being Index" studies conducted by the highly reputable Gallup and Healthways organizations. Then use these studies to ask pointed questions to public policymakers such as state and federal representatives. The congressman from the 3rd District in WV and 5th District in Kentucky will start their 36th and 32nd years in Congress, a lot of time to have gotten things turned around. They are resolute champions of the coal industry including mountaintop removal. Studies abound that show similar abysmally-low rankings for states and regions locked in a dominating coal-based economy.

Appalachian regions with high coal production, especially mountaintop removal, show proportionately high incidents of cancer and cardiovascular and respiratory diseases, much higher rates of birth defects, and furthermore, massive population loss, grinding poverty, low education, and inadequate community infrastructure the list goes on. The epidemic of prescription drug addiction is a symptom of the hopelessness and unhappiness that polls point to.

"Friends of Coal" backers point to the importance of "jobs" and other economic benefits of the coal industry. Yet several studies point out low rankings in coal states' business climates, while other studies show that the net economic contribution of coal is a loss when external costs foisted upon the public are taken into consideration. Mountaintop Removal Roadshow trooper Dave Cooper describes externalized costs. With heavy metals because of mountaintop removal mining, the public pays to clean up the water so it's safe to drink - but they don't pay the cost on their

electric bill, they pay it on their water bill! attack or ear infection because of a coal-burning TVA power plant in Tennessee, the North Carolina family pays the cost of the child's medication - not TVA.

users from depreciated property values because a coal company is showering the town with coal dust, the homeowners pay the cost when they sell their homes and move away.

roads and bridges in the mountain towns, the taxpayers have to pay to fix the roads - not the trucking or coal companies."

None of these studies factors in present and future cost that might be associated with Climate Change. Other externalized costs such as mercury contamination or other toxic materials are NOT factored in. And important to note, the personal suffering of people whose lives are negatively impacted by the coal economy is NOT something that dollars can really cover.

Economic development in today's world is heavily dependent on populations strong on science and math. West Virginia is #49 according to Great Schools. And the fact is, the regions where mountaintop removal are most dominant, whether Kentucky, Virginia, or West Virginia, large populations continue to move out, especially talented young people. Yet the policymakers, beholden to King Coal, continue to cast a blind eye to the obvious... coal is bad for business, bad for the economy, bad for God's creatures, and bad for people.

It is past time for coal to retire!

Christian Students Conduct Health Surveys During Spring Break A CFTM & Restoring Eden Partnership

"You are the salt of the earth...you are the light of the world..."Jesus (Mt. 5:13-14)

Our greatest joy is working alongside people whose passion for God's justice breaks in loving service for others. And working with talented, moral, energetic youth in this work is especially inspiring!

For the past two years, CFTM has partnered with Restoring Eden to bring students from Christian Colleges during their March spring breaks into central Appalachia to conduct community health surveys in mountaintop removal counties and non-mountaintop removal control counties. Student groups rotated in for three weeks in 2011 to go door-to-door in Boone Co., WV and Pocahontas Co. WV, and for two weeks in 2012 in Floyd Co., KY, Rowan Co., KY, and Elliott Co., KY. After initial training, the volunteer students gathered almost 1000 surveys each of the two years.

The survey administered by the students is using questions used in past research by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and National Institute of Health (NIH). It was developed by Dr. Michael Hendryx of West Virginia University and was subsequently granted International Review Board (IRD) approval for confidentiality and impartiality which is required by law.

Another study is planned for March 2013. Contact peter_illyn@restoringeden.org or laura@christiansforthemountains.org for further details.

Student volunteers set for the day's work to conduct health surveys. CFTM's Laura Dagley (2nd on left); Restoring Eden's Peter Illyn (back)

THE STORY OF LEAF

the Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship
by Patricia L. Hudson – LEAF’s Executive Director

Kathy Lindquist’s middle name was Faith, both attention of Tennessee’s Christian congregations. “I think what’s made LEAF so remarkably successful literally and figuratively. She battled cancer for most of her adult life, yet lived to the fullest, armed with the unshakable belief that people, no matter their circumstances, have the power to make the world a better place. “My favorite quote,” Kathy wrote, “is from Margaret Mead. It says: ‘Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.’”

An active member of Church of the Savior, Knoxville, Tennessee, Kathy led the Senior High Youth group, working diligently to shape the church’s teens into the “thoughtful, committed citizens” she believed were the hope of the future. In addition to her love of young people, Kathy was also passionate about nature. For years she wrote an environmental column called Earth Corner for the church newsletter. Her column, printed the month before her death, was on mountain top removal. Kathy was deeply distressed to see this radical type of mining moving rapidly into east Tennessee. She wrote: “Where God put a mountain do we have the right to remove it?”

Just weeks after Kathy’s death in the fall of 2005 at the age of 45, members of Church of the Savior established LEAF (The Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship) as a testament to Kathy’s deep religious faith and her dedication to environmental stewardship. Led by Dawn Coppock and myself, LEAF’s mission is to bring the issue of mountain top removal to the

LEAF believes that once people of faith understand their part in the destruction of Appalachia’s mountains and the suffering it brings into families in the coal fields, they will add their voices to those already working across Appalachia to stop MTR. From the beginning, we have been adamant that concern for God’s Creation is not a matter of being liberal or conservative, a Republican or a Democrat. We believe people of faith can look beyond such distinctions and do the Lord’s work together.

In 2008, LEAF introduced legislation (the Tennessee Scenic Vistas Protection Act) into the Tennessee Legislature, calling for a ban on high elevation mountaintop mining in the state. Despite garnering bi-partisan support, the bill has been defeated each of the last five years, though the outpouring of public support for the bill has left lawmakers unwilling to openly vote against it. Instead, they’ve resorted to such tactics as abruptly closing committees to avoid a vote, or die there while assuring constituents that they need more information to make a decision. LEAF plans to reintroduce the bill in 2013. Dawn and

I remain determined to keep the issue in front of legislators because it is the right thing to do, and because we know Kathy wouldn’t want us to give up.

“I think what’s made LEAF so remarkably successful at rallying folks in Tennessee around this issue is that it’s an organization founded out of love -- Kathy’s love for the mountains, and our congregation’s love for Kathy,” says Reverend John Gill, pastor at Church of the Savior. “Love is the reason LEAF exists.”

In the end, I believe the invincible force that will end mountaintop removal forever is our collective love for these ancient mountains and the people that call them home.

Pat Hudson (L) and Dawn Coppock
Hudson joined CFTM’s Steering Committee in 2012.
Contact LEAF at www.tnleaf.org

Plug into LEAF’s 40 days of Prayer for the Mountains, going on November 30 - January 5. See website above for details.

the Gospel in the Work for a Healthy Appalachia (part 1) by Robert Sage Phillips Russo

Who are we?

The position of Christians for the Mountains is that we are Christians first and foremost, rather than environmentalists who happen to attend church. We follow the crucified and risen, Jesus Christ, Lord and Savior, grateful for His forgiveness of our sins and for our new life in the Holy Spirit. In following Christ we gratefully work for the restoration, beauty and health of the people, communities and mountains of Appalachia because the land and people belong to the Creator (Psalm 24:1).

Why is this an important distinction?

Our allegiance guides our actions. Our allegiance is not to environmental and political movements, even though we work alongside some for a sustainable and healthy Appalachia. Our allegiance is to Jesus and his Kingdom of Good News that is central in our lives, including our work.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ is very good news. God loves us even though we sin against other people, against creation and against God. God’s

grace liberates us to love all people in the region, including opponents of surface mining, coal miners, union members, even industry executives, for God’s grace openly extends to all.

The call for justice is a central tenet of the Bible. As we seek God’s kingdom on earth we work for biblical justice. To seek justice in Appalachia, we are working for an end to surface mining, for a transition to aordable, sustainable, clean energy, and for good jobs that minimize negative effects on community health.

We envision socially healthy, safe, neighborly communities. We accept this challenge of uniting through the love and grace of Christ. Whether you are an anti-coal activist, coal miner, union organizer, or company executive we move forward sharing God’s freely given love in our hearts towards you.

We recognize the tensions in the coal fields. Division is easy. There are neighbors who nd themselves as political enemies. Jesus, however,

tells us to and shows us how to love our enemies. Our hope is that we can understand the differences and the real anxieties people on all sides feel. We seek to work civilly together, as neighbors; humbly and truly caring for each other – the neighbor worried about losing their job to the neighbor who is getting medical attention due to the sulfuric and orange water coming through their tap into their tub. In following Christ, may we extend the grace and love of God to each other. May we work for a healthier Appalachia (economically, ecologically and socially) that glorifies God with integrity.

In all we do and say may we join together and sing All Praise to the King of kings, Jesus the Messiah, this Christmas Season and all year round.

Editor’s Note: This is the first in a quarterly series by Russo exploring how the gospel relates to other aspects of CFTM. Future topics will include the restoration of people’s health, care for the land, and biblical justice within the context of God’s Kingdom work through CFTM.

Earth Week with the National Religious Coalition on Creation Care (April 2012)

It was quite a week for creation care in our nation's capital surrounding Earth Day. First, influential essayist, poet, and farmer-philosopher Wendell Berry was the featured guest at an Earthday forum held between worship services at the National Cathedral on Sunday April 22. Matthew Sleeth of Blessed Earth interviewed Berry. Thousands attended.

A luncheon was later served to 250 religious leaders to honor Wendell Berry, co-sponsored by the National Religious Coalition on Creation Care (www.nrccc.org), Blessed Earth (www.blessedearth.org), and the Washington National Cathedral. The NRCCC awarded Wendell Berry its 2012 "Steward of Creation" award. CFTM's Fr. John Rausch joined Bill McKibben and others in presenting the award to Berry.

The following day, April 23, NRCCC co-sponsored a conference on the Scientific, Religious & Cultural Implications of Global Warming. Over two dozen workshops were held, as well as plenary talks by Bill McKibben, James Hansen, Lise Van Susteren, and others.

On Tuesday April 24, the Interfaith Moral Action on Climate (IMAC) sponsored a day long series of events, including an early morning vigil at the Martin Luther King, Jr. Memorial beginning at dawn, followed by a procession to the New York Avenue Presbyterian Church for an Interfaith service, then another march to an outside service near the Capitol. In the afternoon, members made visits to congressional offices to advocate for effective climate policy.

Larry Gibson, Wendell Berry, and Allen Johnson at National Cathedral on Earth Day 2012

Bill McKibben with CFTM's Laura Dagley at the Climate Conference for Religious Leaders (left picture)

Tuesday afternoon April 24, a NRCCC delegation met with officials of the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ) for 90 minutes, focusing especially on religious perspectives on climate. Most major religious organizations have statements on climate change that conclude that this is a most serious matter which government should address. During that meeting, NRCCC proposed the establishment of an advisory board of religious leaders for consultation on religious and ethical considerations on climate and other environmental issues.

Wes Jackson, Land Institute

Wednesday afternoon April 25, a NRCCC delegation met with the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) to discuss the need for religion to address the severe problems of ocean environmental degradation. This was the first meeting NOAA has had with religion. NRCCC will begin to explore the spiritual dimensions of the seas toward developing a religious ethical framework. NOAA will offer scientific knowledge.

On Thursday, April 26, the Evangelical Environmental Network held their Global Day of Prayer for Creation Care. Several from the NRCCC attended. The gathering began with a prayer breakfast attended by about 150 people. The program centered on worship, prayer, and scripture, with short talks interspersed. The attendees then divided into two groups for the afternoon, with one group led by Jim Ball focusing on public policy on climate followed by a meeting with the White House Council on Environmental Quality (CEQ), and the other group led by Nancy Sleeth working on developing education strategies for congregations and communities.

Interfaith Moral Action on Climate (IMAC) April 24 on Capitol Hill

Purpose of the NRCCC

The Earth is God's and all that is in it; Thou shall not destroy the earth nor despoil the life thereon.

This phrase accomplishes four key tasks of:

- t summarizing human responsibility to God to care for the land and all that is in it;
- t providing a moral test of whether or not an action is right before God;
- t establishing spiritual and religious basis for a sustainable and just society, and

t revealing a vision of how society must transform its attitudes in order to integrate itself into the ecosystem of the planet.

For these reasons, the National Religious Coalition on Creation Care has adopted as its slogan this summation of our Biblical heritage in its relation to the Earth and urges all individuals and religious institutions to include this ethic of the environment in every process of decision-making.

The National Religious Coalition on Creation Care (NRCCC) is governed by a Steering Committee comprised from a spectrum of Jewish and Christian (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical) faith communities. The Steering Committee provides counsel to the Executive Coordinator, Fred Krueger. CFTM's Bob Marshall and Allen Johnson are members of the Steering Committee. The NRCCC is a project of World Stewardship Institute, a 501-c-3 nonpro t. Offices are in Santa Rosa, California. Website is www.nrccc.org

Christians Caring for the Creation

The mission of Christians Caring for Creation (CCC) is to provide the opportunity for Christians across the country to pray for each other and our Lord's precious creation. CCC endeavors to do this by sending out email Praise Reports and Prayer Requests concerning those in the CCC Prayer Network; those who are working to protect, preserve, and restore God's creation; and, the creatures, forests, and causes that need our help and prayers." To receive prayer updates, contact Connie Hanson at cccpnch@aol.com

CCC is eager to notify its prayer partners to pray for successful action to end mountaintop removal, and to pray for people who need healing, and to pray to God for hope and perseverance toward justice and peace for all

40 Days of Prayer for the Mountains

LEAF, the Lindquist Environmental Appalachian Fellowship, invites all Tennesseans to join us in 40 Days of Prayer for the Mountains, November 30, 2012 – January 5, 2013.

During the next six weeks, we'll share the prayers of Tennessee faith leaders, highlight creation care Scriptures, and offer earth-care reflections from the writings of Christian theologians ranging from Billy Graham to Martin Luther. This year's vigil will be shared in 6 weekly e-mails, each containing a week's worth of prayers and reflections. If you are already on LEAF's e-mail list you will receive them automatically, if not, you may register <http://tnleaf.org/>

The 40 Days of Prayer is an annual event sponsored by LEAF to unite and focus Tennessee Christians in prayerful support of political action on behalf of our mountains. Last year, thousands of Christians across Tennessee participated in this interdenominational vigil, among them, Baptist, Catholic, Church of Christ, Evangelical, Episcopal, Lutheran, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Quaker and United Church of Christ congregations.

LEAF's ongoing mission is to raise awareness of the scriptural call to care for God's creation, while expressing special concern for the fate of Tennessee's mountains that are endangered by mountaintop removal mining. The Holy Scriptures, as well as the writings of the early church fathers, are filled with admonitions to care for creation out of respect for the Creator. Indeed, it was Martin Luther who declared: "God writes the Gospel, not in the Bible alone, but also on trees, and in the flowers and clouds and stars." Sadly, over time this view of creation was lost, replaced with the belief that the earth is merely a resource to be exploited, rather than a revelation of the Divine.

Our deepest hope is that the 40 Days of Prayer renews Tennesseans' gratitude for the Divine gifts that surround them, and offers both inspiration and courage to all of us as we seek to protect the mountains for future generations.

Please join us,

Patricia Hudson, LEAF Executive Director

Editor's Note: Praying is not restricted to Tennesseans. All are welcome! For more information, visit <http://tnleaf.org/>

PRAYER

"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you." Matthew 7:7

Prayer is essential for the work of Christians For The Mountains. For while we employ science, technology, media, and our biblical and theological resources, we recognize that the move of God is central. So we thank God for life, thank God for calling us to the task of creation care, and we thank God for equipping and empowering us for this holy work. And we beseech God to lead us to right attitudes, discernment of truth, and vigor for the work. And we ask God to move in the hearts and minds of all of us, friend and foe, to bring us closer to God's will and everloving presence.

CFTM invites our friends to submit your prayers.

Prayer for the Poor and Suffering

We pray for orphans, widows and the peoples of the world who are facing shortages of food, water, clean air, shelter, energy and medicine, that you would provide for them in their needs.

t 8F QSBZ GPS UIF DPVOUSJ Bangladesh, Tuvalu, the Maldives, and other island and coastal nations who face the prospects of needing to move in response to rising sea levels.

t 8F QSBZ GPS UIPTF FYQFSJFOD climate change and severe weather, that the developed industrial peoples of the earth might be awakened to reduce rampant consumption and toxic emissions, that those facing climate calamities might be delivered and sustained.

t 8F QSBZ GPS DIVSDI MFBEST Christ in every land, that your Holy Spirit would move the hearts of your people toward lifestyles of conservation, acts of compassion and deeds of mercy.

t 8F QSBZ GPS PVS PXO IFBSU trouble and instruct us in ways to rightly order our lives and priorities to be unfettered witnesses to the life and gospel of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. [from Creationcare.org]

Biblical/ eological Considerations on Marcellus Shale Gas Hydrofracking

CFTM welcomes people to submit Biblical/Theological perspectives on Marcellus Shale exploitation in Appalachia. As a barebones starting point, we offer the following considerations:

1. "The earth and all that it contains belongs to God" (Psalm 24:1) is CFTM's key scripture regarding the use of the creation. This and other similar scriptures show clearly that the earth's "resources" are ultimately God's property. Those of us who hold title to property deeds must recognize that our ownership is subservient to that of God's "ownership" prerogative for the purpose of creation.

The Marcellus Shale gas is under the rightful authority of God.

2. Genesis 2:15-17 concisely demonstrates that our human responsibility is to nurture, enhance, and protect creation. Creation then reciprocates by providing for our human substance to live. Furthermore, God places a limit that is not to be transgressed, most pointedly, to not attempt to usurp God.

3. Overarching human responsibility to nurture and protect creation? Is human hubris (self-idolatry) active as a boundary transgression (playing God)?

3. "Love thy neighbor as thyself."

4. Intergenerational Covenant. What responsibility do we have to future generations?

5. Mammon, the lust for money and power. Just as gold fever can possess people, so can "gas fever." That is, the allure of riches from gas extraction can cloud moral sensitivities. Jesus warns that one cannot love both God and Mammon, but will love one and hate the other. Money lust is incompatible with Christian faith. (Matthew 6:24). The sin of covetousness is denounced in the 10th Commandment. Greed is equated with idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

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Mary Did You Know?

Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day walk on water?
 Mary did you know that your baby boy will save our sons and daughters?
 Did you know that your baby boy has come to make you new?
 This child that you've delivered, will soon deliver you.

Mary did you know that your baby boy will give sight to a blind man?
 Mary did you know that your baby boy will calm a storm with his hand?
 Did you know that your baby boy has walked where angels trod?
 And when you kiss your little baby, you have kissed the face of God.

The blind will see, the deaf will hear and the dead will live again.
 The lame will leap, the dumb will speak, the praises of the lamb.

Mary did you know that your baby boy is Lord of all creation?
 Mary did you know that your baby boy will one day rule the nations?
 Did you know that your baby boy is heaven's perfect Lamb?
 This sleeping child you're holding is the great I am.

(by Mark Lowery)

To look at any thing,
 If you would know that thing,
 You must look at it long:
 To look at this green and say,
 "I have seen spring in these
 Woods," will not do - you must
 Be the thing you see:
 You must be the dark snakes of
 Stems and ferny plumes of
 leaves,
 You must enter in
 To the small silences between
 The leaves,
 You must take your time
 And touch the very peace
 They issue from.

~ John Muir ~

Joy To e World!!! (Watts/Handel)

Joy to the World, the Lord is come!
 Let earth receive her King;
 Let every heart prepare Him room,
 And Heaven and nature sing,
 And Heaven and nature sing,
 And Heaven, and Heaven, and nature sing.

Joy to the World, the Savior reigns!
 Let men their songs employ;
 While fields and woods, rocks, hills and plains
 Repeat the sounding joy,
 Repeat the sounding joy,
 Repeat, repeat, the sounding joy.

He rules the world with truth and grace,
 And makes the nations prove
 e glories of His righteousness,
 And wonders of His love,
 And wonders of His love,
 And wonders, wonders, of His love.

"Dawn at San Diego"

(Joaquin Miller)

Behold! the Holy Grail is found,
 Found in each poppy's cup of gold;
 And God walks with us as of old,
 Behold! The burning bush still burns
 For man, whichever way he turns;
 And all God's earth is holy ground

Finally, be strengthened in the Lord and in the strength of his power.

Clothe yourselves with the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil.

For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.

For this reason, take up the full armor of God so that you may be able to stand your ground on the evil day, and having done everything, to stand.

Stand firm therefore, by fastening the belt of truth around your waist, by putting on the breastplate of righteousness,

by tting your feet with the preparation that comes from the good news of peace,

and in all of this, by taking up the shield of faith with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one.

And take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

With every prayer and petition, pray at all times in the Spirit, and to this end be alert, with all perseverance and requests for all the saints.

---Ephesians 6:10-20

Earth's crammed with heaven,
 And every common bush a re with God;
 But only he who sees,
 takes o his shoes,
 The rest sit around it

and pluck blackberries,...

by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Any error about creation also
 leads to an error about God.

--Thomas Aquinas

Whether we and
 our politicians know it or
 not, Nature is party to all
 our deals and decisions,
 and she has more votes,
 a longer memory, and a
 sterner sense of justice
 than we do.

---Wendell Berry

e Peace of Wild ings

by Wendell Berry

When despair for the world grows in me
 and I wake in the night at the least sound
 in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
 I go and lie down where the wood drake
 rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron
 feeds.

I come into the peace of wild things
 who do not tax their lives with forethought
 of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
 And I feel above me the day-blind stars
 waiting with their light. For a time
 I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.

Upcoming for the Spring Edition of e Mountain Vision

The second edition is scheduled for March. Please let us know if your friends would like a sample copy.

In the upcoming issue we plan to delve into the biblical concept of the "Powers and Principalities" as they relate to King Coal, discuss parameters of the Marcellus Shale "fracking" in Appalachia, and explore the "Precautionary Principle" within a biblical framework in dealing with energy and climate.

We invite and welcome your comments and suggestions.