

# Boom & Bust: The Spirit of Appalachia

Appalachia is a natural wonderland, full of crystal clear streams, rolling hills, rugged mountains, and an abundance of wildlife. Appalachia is also full of one of this country's most prized natural resources - coal. For more than a century, these two realities have competed for the soul of the Appalachian people: their need for jobs and their love for the land.

Genesis 1:31 says, "God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good." Because God's world is good, the Social Principles of The United Methodist Church teach that people have a responsibility to care for it: "All creation is the Lord's, and we are responsible for the ways in which we use and abuse it. Water, air, soil, minerals, energy resources, plants, animal life, and space are to be valued and conserved because they are God's creation and not solely because they are useful to human beings. God has granted us stewardship of creation. We should meet these stewardship duties through acts of loving care and respect." (P160.1: The Natural World)



## Ways to Get Involved:

- Appalachian Ministry Network: [www.umamn.org](http://www.umamn.org)
- Good Works: [www.good-works.net](http://www.good-works.net)
- Red Bird Mission: [www.rbmission.org](http://www.rbmission.org)
- West Ohio Conference: [www.westohioumc.org/boomandbust](http://www.westohioumc.org/boomandbust)

## Statistics:

- In 1948, there were 125,000 coal miners in West Virginia; today, there are only 73,000 coal miners in the entire country.
- Still, coal supplies 37 percent of the electricity in the U.S., with residents burning about a billion tons of coal each year.
- More than 100,000 coal miners have died in mine accidents and disasters, and each year more than 1,500 miners die of black lung disease.
- Nearly three-quarters of the 1,727 coal mines in the U.S. have not been inspected in at least five years to see if they are following water pollution laws.
- More than 500 mountains have been destroyed by strip mining, removing more than 1.5 million acres of forest and polluting over 2,000 miles of streams.

## Questions for Reflection:

1. What does it mean to say the world is good?
2. What does it mean to say the world is useful?
3. How do you balance the world's goodness with its usefulness?
4. How do you see the Image of God reflected in the people of Appalachia?