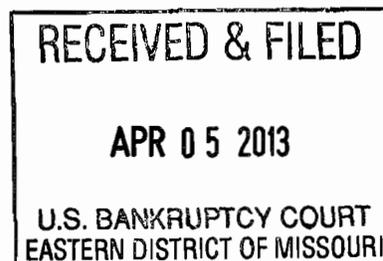


Rev. Donna J. Blythe
Sunfield United Methodist Church
7785 School Street
Du Quoin, IL 62832

March 29, 2013

The Honorable Kathy A. Surratt-States
Re: Case No. 12-5150
Thomas F. Eagleton U.S. Courthouse
111 South 10th Street, 4th Floor
St. Louis, Missouri 63102



Dear Judge Surratt-States,

At the request of members of my congregation, I am enclosing the press release that I recently submitted and that was published in a local newspaper in Pinckneyville, Illinois regarding the case with Patriot Coal.

I do not pretend to have complete understanding of the legalities and merits of the case being presented by both parties. I am writing bearing witness to the fear and distress it is causing within my local community and congregation. My small 160 member United Methodist congregation has at least ten families who will be directly effected by loss of pension and benefits. We all have family members and friends who will be impacted.

I wanted to share this article with you and let you know that I and my congregation are praying for you in this case. Your difficult task and honorable position are not easy responsibilities. We are praying that justice might be served and that the law will be merciful. My parishioners are very aware that what is legal may not represent the intent of the law and what is legal may not be fair or just.

We are praying for you and we are praying for a good and right outcome for those who have the least and will lose the most.

In service with Christ,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Rev. Donna J. Blythe".

Rev. Donna J. Blythe
Lead Pastor
618-974-8468
dblythe@igrc.org

Ministerial Alliance Article
Rev. Donna Blythe
Sunfield United Methodist Church
Monday, March 18, 2013
Submitted March 11, 2013
Pinckneyville Press
Photo Attached

I grew up with an understanding that God values our labor. I grew up with the understanding that God cares about working people and understands well the demands on our lives to provide for our families. I grew up understanding that there are times when workers have to stand together to receive fair wages, safe working conditions and health care benefits. Growing up in a small Southern Illinois community, I saw my neighbors and faith community rally around workers who were out on strike and in need of help to feed their families during those times. I have watched others picket and I definitely grew up with the understanding that you don't cross a picket line or undermine the efforts of those seeking to improve their lives through collective bargaining. And I have been a co-owner of a union print shop and understood my responsibility to care for the needs of employees.

Peabody Coal's spin-off of Patriot Coal jeopardizes retiree pensions and health care via Patriot's bankruptcy action. Actions taken by Arch Coal to shed itself of its promised health and retirement benefits through corporate schemes will also hurt coal retirees' pensions and health care. Imposing the Peabody and Arch legacy costs onto Patriot Coal, all under the direction of former Peabody executives implicates all three corporations in these acts of injustice.

This is an injustice that requires the community to stand with those persons at risk of great loss. 22,000 are potentially impacted nationwide and thousands in our area are a portion of that number. The impact upon Southern Illinois will be devastating if the miners' battle in court is lost.

I am hopeful those hearing this case in St. Louis might be wise and fair judges and I am hopeful that they heed the words God spoke to Israel in Isaiah 10:1-2, "What sorrow awaits the unjust judges and those who issue unfair laws. They deprive the poor of justice and deny the rights of the needy among my people. They prey on widows and take advantage of orphans."

As a United Methodist clergyperson, I support fully the statements of our denomination taken from our Book of Discipline and Book of Resolutions. "Corporations are responsible not only to their stockholders, but

also to other stakeholders: their workers, suppliers, vendors, customers, the communities in which they do business, and for the earth, which supports them. We support the public's right to know what impact corporations have in these various arenas, so that people can make informed choices about which corporations to support." And "Legislative and judicial mechanisms, including a strong, just criminal justice system, must deal with graft and corruption at every level of society."

The 2008 Book of Resolutions states under the resolution for The Rights of Workers, "The concern of the United Methodist Church for the dignity of workers and the rights of employee's to act collectively is stated in the Social Principles. Both employer and union are called to 'bargain in good faith within the framework of the public interest' ...Historically, The United Methodist Church has been concerned about the plight of working men and women in the United States, we were among the first supporters of the labor movement where both lay and clergy members played leadership roles in supporting garment workers, textile workers, farm workers and factory workers and advocating passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act and the National Labor Relations Act. From our beginnings and across the globe, we have led the way in seeking improved conditions and stronger unions for workers."

I know the gains that have been made by workers historically. I know personally retirees and widows that are facing and bracing for the possible loss of contractually agreed upon promised pensions and health care benefits.

These folks are your neighbors, your family members and friends. Let them know you are standing with them and standing for justice. Join the "Fairness at Patriot" movement. "Like" them on Facebook, sign the petition at, fairnessatpatriot.org, follow their live event blog, be sure to view the videos on their Youtube channel or even come out to the next rally and march.

It has been a few decades since I have found myself in a protest march but I plan to gather with retirees and surviving spouses to march at Kiener Plaza in St. Louis, Tuesday, March 19 at 10:00am. I plan to stand with members of my congregation and others from our local communities. May we all strive to answer God's call through the prophet Micah, "The Lord God has told us what is right and what he demands: 'See that justice is done, let mercy be your first concern, and humbly obey your God.'"

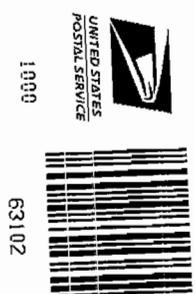
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EASTERN DISTRICT
ST. LOUIS, MISSOURI - MR

The Honorable Kathy A. Sinnott - State
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