

An Economic Community: Rethinking Community Development, Anti-Poverty Work, and Economic Development

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ABSTRACT

Economic and community development has always been important to the work of the church. This essay examines two popular frameworks of community development employed by congregations. The first posits a choice between charitable work and justice-focused work, which leaves us without any clear expectation of how relationships, which are central to the Gospel, might influence our community development work. The second framework emphasizes the need to build deep friendships, but inadequately explores when and how such friendships relate to works of justice and charity. This essay argues that there is a need for a third framework, based on Joerg Rieger's notion of *deep solidarity*, that synthesizes both the need for charity and justice, as well as the embracing the necessity of building friendships. This third framework provides us with a deepened theological lens through which to view not just economic development, but the church's missional and evangelical work as well.

After seminary, in my first job as a Methodist minister, I was appointed to a one-year fellowship at a public policy think-tank, housed in a major university in North Carolina. The think-tank's stated goal was to connect stakeholders from across our state to address new and emerging challenges. We worked through four issue areas – economics, education, healthcare, and natural/built environments – broadly working for the economic development of the state. My grant-funded position was the fruit of

a partnership between the think-tank and an initiative at a nearby seminary, from which I had recently graduated, aimed at strengthening rural churches' community engagement. My job was to work with a network of rural United Methodist ministers in order to help those churches understand the issues facing their communities, find ways to connect them to other partnerships and resources, and help them develop plans to engage with the issues that we had identified. Essentially, I was tasked with consulting and helping churches understand their role in community and economic development in new ways. During that appointment, I was also appointed by the bishop to pastor a small rural church in an economically diverse community in the midst of transitioning from rural to suburban.

Much of my experience has been drawn from work in the rural church. I grew up in a rural part of North Carolina, and my seminary education was funded by a grant aimed at strengthening rural communities and rural churches. While North Carolina remains one of the fastest growing states, 80 of its 100 counties are still considered rural.¹⁻² All of the most economically distressed counties are rural, compared to only 8 of the most economically advantaged.³ While economic development is certainly not limited to rural communities, the vulnerability of rural communities provides a helpful lens through which to view how the church has engaged in this important work.

Economic development can take many forms. I want to define it here as any work that engages the broader community in order to strengthen, create, or expand access to jobs, education, health, infrastructure, political participation, and community partnerships. An economy is built upon a number of variables, and influencing any of them can provide immense benefits for the whole community.

In reality, Christianity has long been interested in economic development. A casual skim through the Gospel of Luke reveals that Jesus had something to say about the way we live in economic community. In Luke 3, Jesus offers a clear example of charity, exhorting the disciples to give away extra tunics to those who have none. In Luke 16, Jesus offers two parables dealing with money and wealth, the Parable of the Dishonest Manager and the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus. Even the Lord's Prayer includes economic language, mentioning the forgiveness of debts (Luke 11:3).

Churches today have continued that legacy, though in vastly different ways. Many churches engage in short-term work aimed at providing aid and charity. A church might, for instance, set up a food distribution center in a fellowship, or provide a space for the unemployed to advertise their skills. Some might offer after-school tutoring to students in low-performing schools. Other congregations might take more radical approaches, engaging in lobbying or protesting controversial bills. At the extreme, we see communities like the Bruderhof Community, in which members live under a rule that forsakes private ownership.

Recent popular books like Robert D. Lupton's *Toxic Charity* and Steve Corbett's and Brian Fikkert's *When Helping Hurts* have launched important conversations about the helpfulness of many of these charitable actions. While there is no small amount of credence to these arguments, I am not interested in a debate about whether tactics are ineffectual or wrong. Rather, I hope to explore the local church's participation in economic development from a theological reference.

Using my own experiences, both in my work in this statewide public-policy organization and as the pastor of a rural church in a changing community, I want to highlight two distinct frameworks that I often used in community development. The first, a framework of charity or justice, leaves us without an obvious

way of incorporating the necessary relationships that Christ demands. Meanwhile, the second, a framework centered around varying degrees of relationship building, often leaves us desiring some sort of resolution or action. By raising questions around both of these, I want to propose a third option, based on Joerg Rieger's "deep solidarity," that might synthesize and deepen both of these previous approaches. Finally, I will explore how this new framework might not only reshape our practices of community and economic development, but also help us to rethink our missional and evangelistic goals.

THE FIRST FRAMEWORK: CHOOSING CHARITY OR JUSTICE

During one of my earliest consulting calls, a pastor in a rural community called with an interesting dilemma. His community was built around a coal-powered electrical plant, both literally and figuratively. The plant sits at the physical center of the small community – even the church is only a short walk to the plant's gates. The plant once provided jobs to the majority of residents, many of whom are now retired, and residents tell stories about coal ash falling like snow while they played outside. Like most rural communities, this small town was in economic decline. It was originally built as a mill village, with the residents all working at the plant. Physically, economically, and culturally, the plant dominates the small community. The coal-ash produced when the coal was burned for energy had been stored in unlined pits. Over the previous year, groundwater, which impacted the well water that most citizens relied upon for drinking, had been found to have higher traces of dangerous materials. The energy company maintained that they were not responsible, environmental advocates launched lawsuits, and the community became embroiled in controversy. A large scandal around health would have further negative impact upon the community's chances at economic growth, and possibly expedite its decline.

In an effort to help the pastor, I convened a meeting in his church's basement with him, our agency's environmental policy expert, and a clean-water advocate, and we listened to his dilemma. The water had been deemed as unsafe to drink, and residents were given pallets of bottled water. Meanwhile, a class-action suit had been brought against the company, and the church had been asked to participate. Naturally, the community was divided. Participating in a lawsuit against a large and historic company was controversial. The company that ran the plant had been recently at the center of its own scandal after a major river had been contaminated by a coal-ash spill. The sitting governor had close connections to the company and was accused of using his power to protect them. What would have normally been a conversation about pollution in a small community soon became wrapped up in a broader political controversy. Detractors felt that this was a means by which to target the governor, while supporters emphasized the corporation's record with pollution across the state. Despite the controversy, the church did not feel as if it could do nothing.⁴

As we talked, there seemed to be two different options for engagement. On the one hand, the pastor could lead the church to function in a charitable role – distributing water and serving as a clearinghouse for information for residents. On the other hand, the pastor could lead his church to participate in the lawsuit, injecting himself into the middle of the controversy. At its core, the framing question was this: Should the pastor lead his congregation in charitable work to provide water? By doing so, the pastor could maintain

a stance of non-partiality and gain respect within the community, giving the church the opportunity to do even more good in the future. Or, should the church join in a pursuit for legal justice – including the possibility of being hooked up to a nearby municipality’s waterlines paid for by the corporation – but risk alienating members of both the congregation and the small community, thereby jeopardizing its status in the community?

Pope Benedict XVI’s encyclical *Deus Caritas Est* discusses the alternatives between charity and justice. Charity, Benedict writes, “is first of all the simple response to immediate needs and specific situations: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for and healing the sick, visiting those in prison.”⁵ Benedict goes on to say that charity is a non-ideological activity, rooted in an outpouring of love. While these outpourings of love are necessary in a just society, it is not an explicit or direct means by which one reshapes society. Charitable actions are limited in their scope, focusing on that which is immediate and non-ideological, rather than on reshaping society on a grand scale.⁶

On the other hand, justice, as Benedict notes, is an ordering of society. It is a way of structuring society so that every person “receives what is his or her due.” Justice is an inherently political term, because a just order requires the State and government to organize itself in such a way that justice is the primary goal.⁷ A just society, Benedict argues, “must be the achievement of the state, not of the Church.”⁸ Benedict tells us that the church (both local and global) should be more concerned with the development of individuals who lead the political structuring of society.⁹

The charity/justice dichotomy is clearly seen in this pastor’s dilemma. As the pastor decided which route to take, we considered several questions. First, how might the response affect the unity of both the community and the congregation? In this case, a charitable response would maintain the unity of the community, and serve to strengthen the relationships within the congregation. Second, there is a lingering question over whether a charitable action would result in the well being of the entire community, or simply provide short-term relief. Third, should the pastor choose to participate in the lawsuit in an effort for justice, either real or perceived, would the benefits outweigh the potential division of his congregation? While a legal recourse might result in immediate actions, it would also collide with the Christian imperative to build relationships, and threaten the unity of the congregation.

Both approaches have clear benefits and clear risks, meaning that there is no one immediate and logical “correct” solution. A charitable solution offers relief and maintains unity, but leaves the question of long-term health for others to engage. A justice-oriented approach offers a restructuring of the community in a way that can potentially help everyone, but threatens to tear apart the relationships themselves. The weakness here is not whether one approach or outcome is more ethical. Rather, such a framework leaves us unclear as to how one lives in the community she serves. What role do relationships have in such an outcome-centric framework? Should they be preserved at all cost, or sacrificed for the sake of a just community? Or, to put it another way, how do relationships with the people with whom we live and serve direct our approaches to community development?

THE SECOND FRAMEWORK: CHOOSING THE RELATIONSHIP

Community development and anti-poverty work rely upon relationships. Those relationships are mediated through both formal and informal systems – the programs we offer, our time spent in the community, and our geography. While the charity/justice framework does not immediately address this, relationships are central parts of whatever work we are doing, and a failure to understand that can, in fact, prevent us from achieving our ultimate goal of community building. In his book *A Nazareth Manifesto*, Sam Wells helpfully offers four categories of relationships found in economic development and community engagement. In order to define these, Wells uses a helpful example of encountering a homeless person. If you are *working for* that homeless person, you join boards and agencies and advocate for her. To *work with* a homeless individual is to engage her in the work that you do, essentially asking that person to be a partner. *Being with* does not focus on the work at all, but rather focuses on building a relationship that might (or might not) change and affect you. Finally, *being for* is devoid of personal interaction. Rather, Wells describes this as seeing an issue at a distance (perhaps you read about homelessness in the newspaper). If you are *being for* someone, you might advocate for her, as Wells suggests, by ensuring that people do not make false assumptions about the homeless, regarding their life choices or personal histories.¹⁰

During the summer, my congregation was approached by a nearby food-bank to become a distribution point for their summer feeding program. Every other week, we would distribute enough food for each child in qualifying families to have enough meals to last two weeks. We would provide food to roughly 50 families, many of whom had two or three children. The whole process was well organized. The families would sign in to receive a card that indicated how many children would be receiving food, and volunteers would distribute the appropriate amount of food to them. From start to finish, it took about 10 minutes for a family to receive their meals. We did not know the families, and given the expedited nature of the service, we did not have a chance to get to know them. Additionally, a majority of the families were Spanish speaking, and my small congregation has only one Spanish speaker.

There are clear benefits to this type of program, which can have positive ripple effects, since hunger is related to a myriad of other health and economic problems. Our congregation was able to quickly and positively impact our community, even with our limited resources. Our relationship, though, was one based upon giving and receiving. We were, as Sam Wells would say, *working for* them. We have no serious relationship, other than recognizing an issue and moving to provide relief. While helpful, this has severe drawbacks. In this case, my overwhelmingly white congregation was serving a majority of Hispanic families. What is communicated by having an all-white, middle class group of volunteers serving predominantly Hispanic families? How might such a relationship prove to be a barrier for my congregation to know and see others as also created in God's image? How might such work reinforce notions of class within our rural community? And, while my small congregation has at least one member who is fluent in Spanish, how do language and cultural barriers erode our ability to, at a minimum, better serve them, and at a maximum, develop friendships?

Not all charitable community development work can be categorized in this *working for* relationship. In one of my earliest cases at the think-tank, I was asked to be part of a conversation about mental healthcare

in a rural community near the coast. This particular community had a large refugee population, and in recent months had been scarred by a horrible triple-homicide. The offender was a refugee who was left untreated for mental-health and behavioral issues including post-traumatic stress disorder. Aware of the need for adequate mental healthcare in transitioning to a new community, a working group was established. Members of the group included pastors whose churches were comprised of refugees, members of the refugee community, and others who were simply passionate about this cause. The resulting actions were a partnership between the members of the refugee community and a majority white population, illustrating what Wells would identify as *working with*. This partnership sought to develop cultural competency among the predominantly white participants, develop ongoing parenting classes that aided refugees in navigating school registration for their children, doctor appointments, and other skills needed to thrive in a southern rural community.

In this instance, cultural competency was vital, and the partnership demanded a more nuanced understanding of the problem. Since cultural aspects could not be ignored, everyone was forced to think about new approaches. However, relationships between leaders were formed more out of utilitarian necessity than desire for friendship. Additionally, the increased number of stakeholders resulted in a slower deliberation and action, which increased the possibility of frustration among more action-oriented group members.

In the mountains of North Carolina, I experienced what Wells refers to as *being with*. A church led program brought at-risk students together for two days each week. These students were children of drug addicts who lived in poverty and had their own behavioral problems. The aim of the program was a fairly simple one; it simply sought to provide community for the students. According to their pastor, they “spent most of the first week teaching them not to drop the f-bomb in the sanctuary, and the rest is just supposed to be sort of fun.”¹¹ They played games, went to the pool, or went hiking and rafting.

On the day I observed the program, the program participants and I participated in a simple activity: we paired off and told personal stories. When we came back together as a group, each pair would tell their stories to the entire group. There was a twist, though. I would tell my partner’s story from a first person point of view. She, meanwhile, would tell mine. Some stories were funny and trivial. Others were deep and painful. I was paired with a young teenage girl, not much older than 13 or 14. She recounted, tearfully and slowly, a story of when she was violently sexually assaulted. I was aware of the ways in which poverty and economic decline negatively impacted a wide range of a person’s life. It is commonly understood, for instance, that violence, drug use, inadequate healthcare, and low school performance are all correlated to poverty. The data behind why that was more likely in her community was suddenly irrelevant; her story, and my ability to hear her story, took priority. Her sharing that story, and in me retelling that story from her perspective, left a lasting mark that reshaped how I viewed anti-poverty work and economic development. I was now no longer solely focused on economic and demographic data sets. Rather, I cared about her as an individual, as a beloved child of God. Behind every piece of data, I began to realize, was a person who bore God’s image, each with their own story. Those stories, those *beings*, were more important than what my statistics could reveal. Wells would call this *being with*.

This type of work, where friendship is valued above the utilitarian outputs is both impressive and

frustrating. It brings us to a deeper sense of incarnational ministry, and yet it leaves us wanting the world to be changed *now*. There are some unintended benefits. A number of teachers who had volunteered formed relationships with the students, and the students began performing better at school during the academic year. Some students even began attending church and found a loving community there. But these were not necessarily the goals. If anything, these unintended benefits became a utilitarian apologetic for the existential friendship. While unintended benefits satiated my results-driven consciousness, friendship remained the ultimate goal. And, while the building of that relationship left a mark on me, there was no tangible relief, and no immediate economic outcome that could be observed. Still, these more profound relationships are deeply important. They lead us to remember and see humanity in a way that honors each person as a unique and important creation by God. Without being bound in the story of one another, the importance of developing a community for the benefit of its members is forgotten.

The final type of relationship in this framework is a common one, which Wells calls *being for*. Recently, Hurricane Matthew devastated parts of eastern North Carolina. While our community was not heavily impacted, we heard stories from family members and friends in those areas telling us about the damage they witnessed. We read and saw pictures of the devastation in our newspapers and heard about it on TV. My congregation decided to collect an offering to send to our denomination's relief efforts and later decided to collect winter coats for a community that had been impacted. We did not experience the tragedy of the storm firsthand, nor did we witness for ourselves the needs of those who had. Rather, we heard secondhand reports, and relying on those reports, began advocating for those communities through our donations and collections. We postured ourselves in such a way so as to support those with whom we did not have a personal relationship.

Once again, we see the immediate benefits of this type of relationship. We were able to quickly mobilize in our advocacy for another in the same, though more tangible, way we pray for those affected by natural disasters and violence across the world. That sort of advocacy and charity are not a bad thing. Yet, in relying upon second-hand accounts, we divorced ourselves from the reality on the ground. We would not personally experience the pain of seeing our town devastated, so our grief would also be second-hand. We could not grieve with those in other parts of the state in the same way that we would if we had experienced that devastation first-hand. At the same time, we were giving control of the outcome to others. Our donations might have helped rebuild a community, but there was no guarantee that were used to rebuild the community in a just manner, or that the money was used in responsible ways. While we could minimize this risk by careful giving, we could never fully have insured against it. The lack of immediate relationship produced a chasm that invited a number of new variables into the process of community development.

As the relationships move deeper, the intended outcome becomes less clear. If the ultimate goal is to build towards a relationship of *being with*, resulting in profound friendship, then we are left longing for some sort of resolution to the communal problems which face us and our new friends. In the other three types of relationships, we risk providing aid and charity that leave us without understanding both our actions and our relationships as part of our missional imperative. How do we blend the need for deep relationships with a desire for intended outcomes that build communities in meaningful ways?

SEARCHING FOR A THIRD FRAMEWORK: DEEP SOLIDARITY

Having worked with both my own congregation, and pastors and congregations across my state, I have wrestled with the benefits and limits of both of these frameworks. In the first framework, the relationships that have been developed are not given adequate attention, a frustrating position for a pastor to find himself in. A pastor must be able to relate to parishioners who desperately need clean water, whose wells have been rendered permanently unusable, even as they remain politically opposed to a lawsuit that might bring about a firm solution. In such a setting, it seems next to impossible to imagine a community like the one in Acts 5, in which the entire community acted for the benefit of one another, openly sharing all resources. Being forced to choose between charity and justice, even if those choices lie in a spectrum, seems to add an obstacle when attempting to form a congregation around the ethics of Galatians 3, which rejects dichotomous identities in favor of new creations in Christ.¹² Such a framework leaves us wondering: How can we realistically expect to engage in evangelism if our missional activity is centered on a framework of intended outcomes, rather than a relationship? Can community building happen without consideration of those deep relationships?

On the other hand, the focus on relationships often prevents us from seeing a clear picture of the need for charity or justice. In my own congregation's missional work, the majority of families that came through our distribution center were Hispanic. By engaging in this work *for* their benefit, without engaging their stories or their lives, we also have to account for whether or not our actions silently reinforced or even formed negative stereotypes and assumptions. Likewise, one must also consider how such charitable actions free us from the responsibility of understanding and addressing the reasons behind their poverty, thereby potentially, though inadvertently, limiting economic mobility simply because we sought charity when justice might be more appropriate.

In the instance of developing a relationship of "being with," I find myself asking what the limits of that friendship are. By focusing on the relationships without an end goal, I inevitably begin to wonder when my actions for a friend, with or without their request, might become harmful to them, or reinforce dangerous social hierarchies. Is it always better to just *be with* a friend, or is it ever appropriate to act *for* them?

In thinking through the limits of choosing one or the other of these approaches, I found myself participating in a new type of event. During my transition from my work at the think-tank to my pastorate, I was asked to help plan a series of regional gatherings that would convene rural and urban community members within those regions. While such gatherings often highlight the disparity between rural and urban and effectively place them into competition, we hoped to illustrate the ways in which those communities were interdependent. As our data and experience showed us, the collapse of one would have disastrous repercussions for the other.

In those conversations, there were a myriad of interested parties: faith leaders, businesses, non-profits, and local elected officials. The individuals who came were comprised of different ethnicities, races, and religions. Each table, which intentionally mixed urban and rural community members, formed a small group. In those small groups, participants were invited to reflect on and name the specific needs of rural and urban areas, the shared responsibilities, the ways that class, race, and gender have impacted those communities (both in historical and modern ways), and how their geographic, economic, and social lenses

shaped the current relationship between the urban and rural communities in their regions. In one instance, an urban leader opened by discussing how his city was built primarily on manufacturing cigarettes and other tobacco products, immediately forming a notion of solidarity with rural advocates, whose economy was still struggling to transition away from tobacco as that industry downsized. By using this as an access point, both were able to begin a conversation about labor practices, both on farms and in manufacturing, and the interdependence of their communities.

By placing the urban and rural communities into a regional grouping, and promoting the region as a broader community, we were able to reorient the conversation away from carving out the best work for their particular localities. Instead, we began addressing ways to strengthen the entirety of the region, which in turn strengthened both urban and rural communities. Rather than choosing to address hunger in an urban core *or* the plight of the family farm in a rural county, we were able to begin creating programs that would utilize family farms in rural areas to supply food to areas of hunger in an urban setting, thereby benefiting the entirety of the region. We moved to affirm common goals, identify the complexities involved in economic development and anti-poverty work, and understand how forming longer-lasting relationships might positively shape the region.

I began to notice that these conversations had a distinctively theological frame to them. By reframing our focus away from the individuality of rural or urban centers and moving into a frame of regional solidarity, we were displaying a mature sense of unity, all the while careful to not gloss over the particularities in our distinctive communities. Meanwhile, as we admitted to faulty assumptions, like the idea that food deserts are non-existent in heavily agricultural areas, and viewed the ways that our actions might have an unintentionally negative impact on another community, there was a deep sense of confession and repentance. In affirming ways to move together as one economic community, rather than as a myriad of smaller economic entities, we were affirming the totality of community above the individualized desires. Just as the early church held all things in common (Acts 5), we too began to see our work as contributing to a commonality.

In multiple books, ranging from *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude*, written with Kwok Pui-lan, to his most recent work, *Unified We Are a Force: How Faith and Labor Can Overcome America's Inequalities* (co-authored with his wife), Joerg Rieger has written about a concept that he calls *deep solidarity*, which closely resembles the type of gathering seen here. Applying Rieger's concept allows us to include both of the two previous frameworks, resulting in a new approach to economic development and anti-poverty work. Though it may appear simple, this deep solidarity requires a subtle yet enormously profound shift in the way we relate to the communities around us. As Rieger articulates it, *deep solidarity* calls us to "understand ourselves in terms of those whom we used to consider less fortunate."¹³ Rather than viewing our work in community development as being for the benefit of someone who is less fortunate than us, Rieger argues that we should begin to recognize that we are intertwined, even with our own particularities – what happens to one person impacts the wider community, and therefore, all must be a part of the solution.¹⁴

This reframing is helpful when rethinking the relationship between mission and evangelism to community and economic development. In this framework, missions and evangelism both move away from tasks of giving and receiving. Traditionally, missions might give relief or give advocacy, while evangelism

might give a doctrine or a faith. Instead, this framework of deep solidarity and economic community helps us to consider where we see the Kingdom of God already at work, and leads us toward a desire to participate in that divine community. Both mission and evangelism become connected to the wellbeing of the entire community. This attention to the wellbeing of the whole increasingly urges us to seek out what God is already doing through others, and lead our churches to join in the work of strengthening our economic community.

A conversation around charity and justice or the development of relationships does not carry the theological depth needed to reimagine the evangelical and missional responsibility to the community around us, nor do they allow for a deep theology of economic development. Instead, the church should begin to examine how we are connected to the broader community, those whom we would traditionally advocate for and with. Such a framework reinforces the necessity of relationships, remembering that the kingdom of God is incomplete without these friendships. Yet, it does not forfeit charitable and justice driven approaches. Rather, relationships, charity, and justice must all be viewed as interconnected pieces in the Kingdom. Considering the work of deep solidarity provides an opportunity to reframe community development and economic development for a particular group to one in which the whole community is involved. Ultimately, this shift in thinking requires us to view community engagement and development as a theological act, an embodiment of the relationship rooted in the divine kingdom. When adopted as an alternative framework, deep solidarity offers a refreshing theological lens by which we in the local church engage the entirety of the world around us.

NOTES

1 Off, Gavin. "State Population Map: NC among Fastest-growing States." *Charlotte Observer*. 29 Dec. 2016. Web. 05 Feb. 2017. <http://www.charlotteobserver.com/news/local/article123514614.html>.

2 Here, I use the North Carolina Rural Economic Development Center's definition of rural, which defines rural as a county with "an average population density of 250 per square mile or less, according to 2014 U.S. Census population estimates." See their definition and map at <http://www.ncruralcenter.org/rural-county-ma>. It should be noted that there is not a fixed definition of rural, and many non-profit and federal agencies offer different definitions. For a deeper look into some of these definitions, along with some of the benefits and disadvantages of each, see: Coburn, Andrew F., A. Clinton MacKinney, Timothy D. McBride, Keith J. Mueller, Rebecca T. Slifkin, and Mary K. Wakefield. *Choosing Rural Definitions: Implications for Health Policy*. Issue brief no. #2. Omaha: Rural Policy Research Institute Health Panel, 2007. Mar. 2007. Web. <http://www.rupri.org/Forms/RuralDefinitionsBrief.pdf>.

3 NC Department of Commerce. "2017 County Tier Designations." *2017 County Tier Designations*. North Carolina Department of Commerce, Web. 03 Feb. 2017. <https://www.nccommerce.com/research-publications/incentive-reports/county-tier-designations>. Each year, North Carolina sorts each county into one of three tiers. The above website provides a map with rationale of rankings, lending some rationale behind the economic distress of rural communities in particular.

4 To make matters more complicated, that particular company was a major corporate donor to our think-tank's major annual event.

5 "Deus Caritas Est," Paragraph 31a, published December 25, 2005. Accessed August 31, 2016, http://w2.vatican.va/content/benedict-xvi/en/encyclicals/documents/hf_ben-xvi_enc_20051225_deus-caritas-est.html.

6 Ibid, paragraph 31b.

7 Ibid, paragraph 26-28.

8 Ibid, 28a.

9 Ibid, 29. Benedict argues that it is the lay faithful, formed by the church, through the church's efforts to "reawakening of those moral forces" that a just society requires.

10 Wells, Samuel. *A Nazareth Manifesto: Being with God*. Malden, MA: Wiley Blackwell, 2015 (11-20).

11 David Reeves (pastor), in conversation with the author, July 2009.

12 In Galatians 3:23-29, Paul rejects divisions between Jew/Greek, slave/free, male/female. Rather than allow followers of Christ to remain in those dichotomies, Paul argues that followers of Christ become a new creation. They are neither of the former options, but a new third option. Forcing a choice between charity and justice creates a new dichotomy, and it carries the possibility of splitting a congregation itself. As such, it becomes problematic for a church hoping to embody Paul's teachings.

13 Rieger, Joerg. "Occupy Wall Street and Everything Else: Lessons for the Study and Praxis of Religion." *Peace Studies Journal* 5, no. 1 (January 2012): 33-45. Accessed August 17, 2016. <http://peacestudiesjournal.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/PSJ-Vol-5-Issue-1-2012.pdf>

14 Rieger, Joerg, and Pui-lan Kwok. *Occupy Religion: Theology of the Multitude*. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2012. Rieger and coauthor Kwok Pui-lan argue that a justice found in deep solidarity is one that is not blind, but rather brings "those who have been treated unjustly back into community, while challenging those who have promoted injustice and curbing their transgressions" (64).ww