



# The Land That Calls Me Home: Connecting God's People to God's Land through God's Church

*Dr. Hughey David Reynolds*

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The Land That Calls Me Home investigates the disappearance of small-scale farms from rural America and casts a vision for the church to lead in their recovery. The book goes beyond naming the usual suspects of industrialization, agricultural policies, and corporations most often blamed or credited with orchestrating the mass exodus of farmers from rural America and brings to light two overlooked contributors to driving farmers away from the land: Theology and the Church. The author shows how a misinterpretation of scripture erroneously equates farming with God's curse on Adam for eating the forbidden fruit in the Garden of Eden. That fallacy lies at the root of the uncontested takeover of agriculture by corporate powers. The takeover centralized farming so that today a few giant corporations monopolize global farm markets and only one-percent of all Americans farm full time. Globalizing farming promised to free the masses from the curse of having to work the land to survive. The author debunks the portrayal of tilling the soil as a curse and interprets the curse rather as the separation of human beings from the soil. The more distance we create between ourselves and the soil, the less healthy the earth and our human bodies become. Therefore, restoring the viability of small-scale farming is a means of counteracting the curse on Adam and the soil. The church has been an accomplice to the theft of agriculture from the people and forcing their mass migration from rural farmsteads to suburbs and cities. The church saw the increase in productivity of those who were left to farm on a large scale as a positive development to be celebrated. The negative impact of farming with pesticides, herbicides, genetically modified organisms (altered seed), and chemical fertilizers, along with the effect of agricultural runoff on the soil, rivers, oceans, and on human health were seen as negligible compared to the promise of increased yield that could be used to eradicate global hunger. Corporate greed, however, has stockpiled food while millions die of malnutrition annually. Furthermore, the church has too often separated the care of souls from the care of the earth and ceded earth and health care to government and free enterprise. In shrinking rural communities, decimated by the migration of farmers to the city, a few dwindling churches have remained open long enough to care for the lingering souls and to bury the dead. By confessing our complicity in causing the current farm crisis in America, church leaders can with renewed vision help restore the viability of small-scale farming in rural communities on the fringes of larger population centers. Churches can serve as network hubs for farmers, whose crops are too small to win contracts with large grocery chains, to sell their produce in local Farmers Markets and community supported agriculture (CSA) networks. Churches that catch the vision to support local agriculture have the volunteer base, the parking lots, and the presence in their communities to organize and run an effective Farmers Markets. They provide a service to the farmers and to their community while reconnecting people to the soil. The author sees the loss and revival of small-scale farming from the standpoint of a pastor and a farmer. He grew up on and moved from a small-scale farm and has served in pastoral ministry 40 years, including the last 20 years when he has also farmed. He believes the small-scale farm's best chance of financial solvency is having more local markets, which churches in population centers are ideally positioned to provide. He worked with the church he served in Huntsville, Alabama to organize a Farmers Market in their parking lot. After moving to serve Decatur First United Methodist Church in 2015, he was appointed by the City Council to the Decatur-Morgan County Farmers Market Board of Directors. He consults with pastors and congregations seeking ways to support local agriculture.

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