"A Place, a Spirit, a Ministry":

The Persistence of Koinonia Farm in the Post-Jordan Years

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Introduction

Clarence Jordan's death in 1969 came as a shock to the members of Koinonia Partners, an intentional community in southwest Georgia. Koinonia had been the brainchild of Jordan in the early 1940s as he searched for the best way to live a true Christian life focused on pacifism, equality for all, and a total sharing reminiscent of the early Church as described in the Book of Acts.[1] Koinonia Farm, as it was called for the first twenty-seven years of its existence, had persisted through years of harassment from supporters of World War II, aggression from local Ku Klux Klan members, and boycotts by local businesses because of

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[1] Tracy E K'Meyer, *Interracialism and Christian Community in the Postwar South: The Story of Koinonia Farm* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1997); Dallas Lee, *The Cotton Patch Evidence*, 1st ed., A Koinonia Publication (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 19-20; P. Joel Snider, *The "Cotton Patch" Gospel: The Proclamation of Clarence Jordan* (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1985), 13.

the position members took against racial discrimination and violence.[2] Despite the adversity they faced in their early years and the years following their founder's death, Koinonia celebrated its seventy-fifth year in the spring of 2017. Even without the rise of a new, charismatic leader Koinonia has not only stood the test of time, but is thriving in the new millennium.

Scholarship on Koinonia has focused primarily on the community's founder Clarence Jordan, while only briefly covering the life of Koinonia in what have been referred to as the "Post-Jordan years." In 2008, David Castle, then a member of the community, published a manuscript detailing the history of this period. Castle, principally concerned with giving a history of the community, described Koinonia as "a place, a spirit, a ministry."[3] While giving the most detailed account of Koinonia in the Post-Jordan years, Castle did not contemplate one important question: Why Koinonia? How is it that Koinonia has enjoyed this much success when so many of its intentional cousins do not survive the departure or death of their founder? The answer lies in the ideology formulated by Clarence Jordan at the founding of Koinonia in 1942. The ability of this message to be transmitted and transformed between generations and across cultural shifts has allowed Koinonia to adapt to the needs of Sumter County, Georgia and the United States.

Jordan began his adventure into intentional communities after meeting with a Baptist missionary named Martin England. England struggled with many of the issues that Jordan concerned himself with, principally Christians' paradoxical ideas about brown-skinned people of the world as missionary opportunities but not treating them as full Christian brothers and sisters after their conversion.[4] England also saw a need for agricultural education to assist underprivileged people in the world, just as Jordan did. They were also both concerned with nonviolence and communal ownership of property as an expression of their Christian faith.[5] Koinonia would serve as an example to Christians, or a "demonstration plot for the kingdom of God," as Jordan described it, for the way that Christians could live in a system that harkened back to the early Church. Through nonviolence, equality, and communal living, Christians could demonstrate a faith that is sustainable and true to the gospel message.[6]

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[2] Lee, 35-52.

[3] David Castle, *A Brief History of Koinonia : The Post-Jordan Years, 1970-2007* (Americus, GA: Koinonia Partners, 2008).

[4] Bren Dubay, "Living as a Demonstration Plot," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2008; Lee, 27-28; Snider, 13. Issues of the *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* can be accessed at https://www.koinoniafarm.org/news/.

[5] Snider, 13.

[6] Ibid., 14.

To understand how Jordan's ideology has persisted, we first need to recognize how close Koinonia came to being lost to the history books even before Jordan passed away. Jordan himself harbored doubts about the viability of Koinonia as an intentional community in the years leading up to his death. The 1960s were a time of cultural upheaval and, despite the spread of intentional communities lasting into the 1970s, Koinonia struggled to find its place in the ever-changing political and social climate of the decade. By the early 1960s, Jordan had already moved away from some of his stricter views on communal living, including having a common purse that distributed income to community members equally. Instead, by 1963, the remaining families at Koinonia were required to produce their own incomes. This made organization of Koinonia's finances as had been done in the preceding decades nearly impossible.[7] Despite this conversion to a more traditional approach to finances, Koinonia still struggled to retain members and find new recruits for living in the community.[8] By 1968, membership had dwindled to only two families residing at Koinonia: the Jordans along with Will and Margaret Wittkamper, who joined the community in 1953 along with their four sons.[9] Even visitors to the community were less interested in the way of life that Koinonia espoused in favor of learning about the historical significance of the community in the context of the civil rights movement.[10]

In the meantime, a young millionaire, Millard Fuller, decided his family needed a new direction. Casting their money-driven lifestyle aside, the Fullers visited Koinonia in the early 1960s.[11] The chance meeting of Fuller and Jordan would serve as the catalyst for change in a time when Koinonia was facing what appeared to be its imminent demise. In 1968, Clarence Jordan was prepared to sell the farm and take a position at a university or other institution where he could cultivate his speaking engagements more effectively. Through collaboration with Fuller, Jordan formulated a new direction in which to channel his Christian zeal into good works.[12]

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[7] Tracy E K'Meyer, *Koinonia Farm: Building the Beloved Community in Postwar Georgia* (Dissertation, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, 1993), 262.
[8] Snider, 24.
[9] Castle, 3, 5; K'Meyer, 262-63; Lee, 203.
[10] K'Meyer, 264; Lee, 203.
[11] Lee, 198-200; Snider, 25.
[12] Lee, 205-08; Snider, 25.

In a letter to friends of Koinonia, Jordan outlined this new plan that would transition them into a new phase.[13] The community would take a three-pronged approach to this new ministry.[14] First came communication. Fuller and Jordan aimed to spread the message of the gospels that Jordan had articulated in the first twenty-five years of Koinonia. Fulfilling this aim would require both men to move to Atlanta to make travel to speaking engagements less logistically challenging. This would mean either selling the farm or transferring management to another party. The unlikelihood of the Wittkampers leaving Koinonia heavily influenced Jordan's plan to transfer ownership instead of outright selling the property.

Following the communication of these "radical ideas" found in the gospel message, they sought to cultivate this new approach in people who initially responded to their mission. Making these ideas concrete and actionable in these respondents would create "fanatics," in Jordan's view, that would advance the idea of partnership in Christian community. After these ideas had firmly taken hold, Fuller and Jordan wanted to create a way that people could act upon these compulsions. This application phase of their new plan would provide funding for businesses, farming, and housing to underprivileged individuals through interest-free loans provided by the Fund for Humanity that Koinonia would spearhead.[15] These men sought to make land available to people not by their economic status, but rather by their ability to work the land. With the Fund for Humanity, Koinonia would purchase unused land from Southern farmers and redistribute it to those that stood to benefit from the opportunity to better their economic situation. This way they were not only waging a war on the materialist, money-centric American culture, but also a war on wealth itself.[16]

While Fuller and Jordan never made it to Atlanta, this reformulation of Jordan's original message of equality, sharing, and nonviolence persisted in the newly renamed Koinonia Partners.[17] By responding to a changing economic and cultural climate that no longer centered on farming in the South, Koinonia could retain relevance, as many African Americans had migrated to factories in the North, and the remaining black farmers in the South viewed Jordan's original agricultural model

[13] Ann Louise Coble, *Cotton Patch for the Kingdom: Clarence Jordan's Demonstration Plot at Koinonia Farm* (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 2002), 173.
[14] Castle, 5.
[15] Ibid., 7; Lee, 205-08; Snider, 25.
[16] Lee, 209.
[17] Ibid., 217.

as too reminiscent of sharecropping.[18] Koinonia now began working out ways to supply housing to impoverished people of color in Sumter County. This new emphasis would serve as a springboard for Fuller's own organization, Habitat for Humanity, which continues to provide interest-free loans to disadvantaged families in need of housing. Although Clarence Jordan passed away before he could see the completion of the first house in this new phase of his experiment in intentional community, this reformulation of his original idea would serve as a blueprint for years to come, as Koinonia members navigated new obstacles and needs in their local community.[19]

The 1970s

By the start of the 1970s, Koinonia had made its full transition from Farm to Partners.[20] This new corporate, non-profit model would prove to be both a blessing and a curse in the pursuit of realizing Clarence Jordan's original vision for a community centered on equality, nonviolence, and communal sharing. While Koinonia Farm looked like it was in its final act at the end of the 1960s, the Koinonia Partners of the 1970s were characterized by a flurry of activity that would carry the community to its most prolific state at the end of the decade. Not only would Partners itself become more fruitful, but two new organizations would be spawned out of this time of growth: Habitat for Humanity and Jubilee Partners.[21]

The presence of Millard Fuller after the death of Clarence Jordan played a key role in implementing the new plan that had come out of the planning meetings of the last decade. The instructional component of their new strategy had already planted seeds in the minds of those sympathetic to their cause before the 1970s and, with national sentiment favorable to communitarianism increasing, there was plenty of room for Koinonia to grow.[22] One significant component of the new approach was the formation of a board of directors to help steer the organization through this new era in its history.[23] One of the biggest changes made by

[18] Ann Coble, *A Demonstration Plot for the Kingdom of God: Koinonia Farm as Clarence Jordan's Incarnated Interpretation of the New Testament* (Dissertation, Saint Louis University, 1999), 147.
[19] Castle, 7.
[20] Ibid., 5.
[21] Ibid., 9; Andrew Chancey, *Race, Religion, and Reform: Koinonia's Challenge to Southern Society, 1942-1992* (Dissertation, University of Florida, 1998), 246, 48.
[22] Chancey, 205.
[23] Lee, 219.

the board of directors was the postponement of returning to community of goods.[24]

Many visitors and potential new members to Koinonia, often referred to as "seekers," came to Koinonia for many of the same reasons as they had in the earlier years of the community: to remedy the problems that they saw in America, whether they were race related or centered on nonviolence.[25] There were plenty of opportunities for young activists to get involved with organizations on the front lines of these issues, but none of them did it quite like Koinonia by incorporating the element of community. The disconnect between perceptions of communal life as it had been at Koinonia Farm and the reality of life in the relatively privatized Koinonia Partners forced the community's leadership to draw a hard line. Fuller, along with the Board of Directors, determined that Koinonia was to be a service organization, primarily, and that ideas about community would just tag along and not be in the forefront of the organization as they had been under Clarence Jordan's leadership.[26] This new direction would characterize the most significant break yet from Jordan's original vision for Koinonia. It would not be until 2004 that Koinonia would recommit itself to full communal life for its members.[27]

Despite this clear discontinuity with Jordan's guiding principles for Koinonia, Partners continued to stay true to the other components of Jordan's message. The newly founded housing initiative allowed Partners to continue to assert their position on the equality of all through providing housing that was accessible to the impoverished residents of Sumter County, Georgia. By the close of the decade, the Fund for Humanity had built ninety houses, many of these going to African American families.[28]

Not only were local, poor African Americans provided with housing, but many were also employed by the community in a variety of capacities. In the early 1970s, some of the first houses were constructed by local construction crews made up of solely African American neighbors.[29] Later in the decade, the construction crews would expand to include Koinonia partners as well.[30] Also, many local African Americans were employed by the pecan processing facilities in the community. Employment at Koinonia was attractive to local African Americans for

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[24] Chancey, 238.
[25] Ibid., 208-09.
[26] Ibid., 238.
[27] Melissa Aberle-Grasse, "Growing Together: Koinonia Farm Has Seen a Renewal of Community Life - and a New, Sustainable Approach to the Land," *Sojourners Magazine* 40, no. 8 (2011): 31; Dubay, 2.
[28] Chancey, 222, 49.
[29] Castle, 6.
[30] Chancey, 221.

two reasons. One, Partners was willing to pay black employees a much higher wage than many of the other employers in Sumter County were and, two, working conditions in Koinonia businesses were often much better than others in the area.[31]

The 1970s also saw the first time that Koinonia extended its minority outreach to communities beyond black Sumter County residents. On the eve of the new decade, Koinonia Partners established the second splinter organization that formed during this decade: Jubilee Partners. Founded in response to the growing population at Koinonia, it became an organization that conducted outreach to new immigrants to the United States. Within the first two years of its existence, the six families that made up Jubilee Partners hosted immigrants from Southeast Asia and the Caribbean.[32]

Koinonia Partners continued to carry on Jordan's original anti-war stance through the Vietnam War. After their founder's death, Koinonia members were in search of new spiritual guidance and teaching. Many community members attended several local churches, but the post-Jordan Koinonia discovered that it was lacking a central theological message. To address the needs of community members, Partners frequently brought in scholars and teachers to lead seminars and Bible studies. John Swomley's 1972 seminar titled, "The Believers and the Political State," reignited anti-war passions in the members of Koinonia. This lecture sparked discussion about how much Koinonia members should participate in practices that contributed to war efforts by the United States government. Because of this lecture, members would participate in protests related to the trial of peace activist Philip Berrigan and begin travelling to college campuses across the country giving lectures speaking out against the air war that was still being carried out by the United States Armed Forces in Southeast Asia.[33] This question of indirect participation in the war effort eventually caused discussion about the payment of payroll taxes to the Internal Revenue Service, but the threat of jeopardizing the whole cause was not perceived as worthy of the symbolic message withholding tax money would send.[34]

The first decade after the death of founder Clarence Jordan became one of the most successful times in the history of the community. Not only was the community thriving because of high membership and thriving industries, but Koinonia Partners was also continuing to embody the ideals set forth by Jordan in 1942. Although Koinonia temporarily

[31] Ibid., 224.
[32] Ibid., 248-49.
[33] Ibid., 242.
[34] Ibid., 243.

stepped away from the communal model of financial organization, this may have functioned as a response to the needs and dispositions of Sumter County residents for whom Koinonia Partners was advocating. While providing a living wage and affordable housing for impoverished African Americans, they created a situation that did not seem to convert these community members over to the communal model that had once been central to Koinonia Farm.

Members of the community often came from affluent backgrounds, where they had become disillusioned with American consumerism and sought to renounce this way of life. The Sumter County residents Koinonia sought to recruit, by providing employment and housing, were able to experience a life they had never had access to previously. This newfound financial stability discouraged these potential members from joining into the communal system, which they saw as a return to their previous impoverished position.[35]

The 1980s

The 1980s at Koinonia stood in stark contrast to the 1970s. The departure of Millard Fuller in the latter half of the 1970s left the community without a clear leader apart from the Board of Directors, which was largely made up of individuals from outside the community.[36] Despite a certain amount of unpredictability at Koinonia, members continued to move toward the goals set forth by Clarence Jordan in the early 1940s, just as they had done in the 1970s. The establishment of yearly retreats in the 1970s for partners took on a greater importance in the 1980s. Serving as an ideological "Etch-A-Sketch" each February, retreats saw members reflect on the past year and reformulate themselves within the framework Jordan had set forth.[37]

Increasingly the number of members that had ever met Clarence Jordan dwindled by the end of the decade. The 1980s were a struggling time for Koinonia in terms of growing membership. By the end of the decade, after the death of Florence Jordan in 1987, the community had dropped to a population reminiscent of the early 1970s, a time when Koinonia's population was at its all-time lowest.[38] While membership dropped significantly during the decade, meetings of members became more and more frequent. This helped partners reassess their adherence to

[35] Castle, 8; Chancey, 224-25.
[36] Lee, 219.
[37] Chancey, 257.
[38] Castle, 14; Chancey, 256; Snider, 26.

Clarence Jordan's philosophy by asking themselves the question, "Who are we?"[39]

The struggle of Koinonia to define itself as a community would permeate the decade. Much of this struggle was a result of its turn away from communal living. By living communally in the preceding years, Koinonians had a clear identity as Christians living in the way of the early years of the Church. Debates in the 1970s, however, centered on the methods the community had for generating capital. In response to financial difficulties surrounding the cooperative grocery store run by Koinonia, some community members were in favor of converting it to a more traditional store, demonstrating an even lower level of commitment to communal activities. This raised questions of how Koinonia would adhere to its mission if it were no longer a cooperative. After three years of debate, the Board of Directors decided to close the store in 1989.[40]

This is just one example of community members wondering how Koinonia industries both served the greater mission of Koinonia Partners and adhered to Jordan's founding principles. The ministry-business question would even extend as far as the expanding products business that had carried Koinonia through the troubling boycott of the community in the late 1950s.[41] The products business, as it was called, had expanded to include a wide variety of pecan-based products, handicrafts made by community members, and books and recordings of Jordan's works. The last six months of 1985 alone brought in over $500,000 in sales.[42] This great success raised concerns for some members. The production and sale of what many considered "luxury goods" ran counter to their lifestyle on the farm. Harkening back to questions of whether the community should pay taxes that ultimately supported the Vietnam War, Koinonians wondered if the products business was at all relevant to their philosophy. Other community members argued that the products industry ran counter to the community's environmentalist leanings because of the large amount of waste produced by packaging.[43] This question would be raised again in the 2000s, ultimately resulting in an effort to use all-recyclable packaging for the products produced on the Farm.[44]

One glimmer of success that shined through the 1980s was the Koinonia Child Development Center (KCDC). Started in the preceding decade as a child care service for Koinonia members, it quickly expanded

[39] Chancey, 257-58.
[40] Ibid., 261-62.
[41] Snider, 20-21.
[42] Chancey, 256.
[43] Ibid., 266-68.
[44] Sarah Prendergast, "What's Happening in the Bakery?," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2013, 6.

to include the employees of Koinonia industries.[45] Originally, the KCDC had been in two houses within Koinonia, but need for additional child care services in the community during the 1980s forced Koinonia to invest more heavily in the program. By the late 1980s, Koinonians had plans to build new facilities for the KCDC that would open in the early 1990s.[46] The KCDC was fully integrated in the 1970s and continued to be into the 1980s, serving the needs of both white and African American parents in the community surrounding Koinonia.

Koinonians continued to support initiatives for equal treatment of African Americans well into the 1980s. With the civil rights debate deemed closed by most standards, community members were required to rework yet another of Jordan's principles. In contrast to the blatant discrimination Koinonia fought against in its early years, Koinonians shifted their focus to the death penalty and its disproportionate effect on African American men. Not only did members object to the death penalty itself, but they also charged the Georgia Courts System with favoring white criminals. While Koinonians did not actively involve themselves with attempts at policy change, their current prison outreach operations can be traced back to their roots in this period. Activities during this time included visiting prisoners, the establishment of New Hope House, a hospitality house for families visiting inmates, and candlelight vigils held at the Sumter County Courthouse on the night of an execution.[47] Koinonia also facilitated death row inmates' ability to send a free fruitcake to their family members during Christmastime.[48]

The largest cultural and political issue that affected Koinonia in the 1980s was the nuclear arms race. While in the preceding decades Koinonia had proclaimed its anti-war, nonviolent stance through the support of conscientious objectors, now the community had to revise its activism to maintain relevance to the shifting circumstances of the decade. Jordan had questioned the purpose and effectiveness of protest, but now members were participating in protests against nuclear armament across Georgia and even in other states. Koinonians also took action against the United States involvement in wars in Central America. Several community members accompanied Habitat for Humanity to build homes in Honduras and Jubilee Partners also began receiving large numbers of refugees from this region.[49]

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[45] Castle, 5, 17.
[46] Chancey, 228, 62-63.
[47] Castle, 17.
[48] Chancey, 273.
[49] Ibid., 263-68.

Despite having moved away from Clarence Jordan's commitment to community, members in the 1980s still found themselves concerned with it. What being a community meant for themselves and their neighbors in Sumter County was a question frequently on the minds of Koinonians, even if they did not share a common purse. Members continued to rework their self-definition according to Jordan's vision throughout the decades. Koinonians addressed problems in Sumter County, and the entire state of Georgia, by expanding their child care initiatives, laying the groundwork for a homeschool system in the 2000s, fighting for African American inmates on death row, and supporting other ethnic minorities through their partner organizations Jubilee Partners and Habitat for Humanity.[50] Koinonians reworked Jordan's ideas in their stance on nonviolence by adapting their mission to the circumstances of the Cold War era. By embracing protest and other acts of civil disobedience, members continued to criticize the country's military complex.

The 1990s and New Millennium

Koinonia was facing a crisis in the 1980s.[51] Membership was down to levels near those at the end of the 1960s, the home building venture had been eclipsed by Habitat for Humanity, and the community lacked direction, but Koinonia clung tightly to the ideas of its founder Clarence Jordan about living an authentic Christian life. The 1990s brought a time of even greater uncertainty than the previous decade. This time, instead of ideological debates, mismanagement of finances and questions of racial discrimination brought the community to its knees.

In 1993 the Board of Directors gave the staff of Koinonia an ultimatum. Within the next year it was necessary that the Koinonia staff get its finances under control in order to deal with a debt of nearly $600,000.[52] In response to the threat of financial meltdown, it was determined that the community would sell nearly half of its land to make up for these losses.[53]

Apart from mounting debt, Koinonia employees would hit the community with a blow that hit at the core of community members' beliefs. Since the 1970s there was mounting sentiment that Koinonia had just become the new sharecroppers of Sumter County. There was no doubt that a paternalistic mentality existed among many members of Koinonia, and

[50] Nichole Del Guidice and Seth Schroerlucke, "With a Passion to Teach," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2008.
[51] Castle, 18.
[52] Bill Osinski, "Community Facing Threat to Its Future," *The Atlanta Journal Constitution*, February 4, 1995.
[53] Aberle-Grasse, 28; Castle, 24.

many even suggested this was the cause of deteriorating relationships with their African American neighbors in the 1970s.[54] There was a disconnect between Partners and employees that was based on, among other things, the lifestyle that members of the community lived compared to the ideals that they claimed to support. In the eyes of many employees, Partners lived the high life with flexible working hours and without mortgages, rent payments, and car payments, among other things.[55] If one squinted at the situation at Koinonia, it bore a striking resemblance to the sharecropping that Koinonia was founded to fight against. A statement to the Board of Directors from employees in 1989 described Koinonia as "just another Southern Business."[56]

Something had to be done for Koinonia to remain true to its roots centered on racial equality. Mending these wounds with their neighbors would last well into the early 2000s. To start, Koinonians focused their yearly meeting in 1990 on fixing this problem of continued, racist paternalism that had continued under their radar. Partners used meetings like this to concentrate on how they could facilitate more equal participation and membership by African American neighbors in the community throughout the 1990s.[57]

The problems of racial reconciliation and financial stability would plague the community through the decade, but in true Koinonia fashion, the community would rise above these problems to continue doing its good works into the new millennium. While the decade opened with big questions about the future of the idea of Koinonia as well as the physical community itself, small rays of hope shone through the uncertainty. One of the focuses of the community became children. The newly built KCDC continued to prosper along with summer youth programs run by the Center.[58] Luckily these programs helped to reconcile some of the disparities felt by African American neighbors between themselves and Koinonia Partners. Prison outreach also became a central focus of the community. The inmate advocacy program that had started in the 1980s continued to be an area of focus for Koinonia. Despite financial instabilities, Koinonia also donated to the Prison and Jail Project, headquartered in Americus, which sought to promote justice in multiple counties in southwest Georgia.[59] In fact, Millard Fuller commented on the growing

[54] Chancey, 224-25.
[55] Ibid., 284, 86.
[56] Ibid.
[57] Ibid., 288-89.
[58] Ibid., 286.
[59] Castle, 21.

doubt about the viability of Koinonia that the KCDC and work with inmates were "just enough to hold it together."[60]

Koinonia would not experience a reinvigoration of its ideals until the beginning of the new millennium. The first perceptible change in this period centered on the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. As David Castle described the situation, these events and the reaction of the United States government to them easily renewed the focus of Koinonia's anti-war stance that it had clung to since its founding, but community members also described this event in terms of wealth and progress. Castle explained that the attack was perceived as being motivated by the desire of the attackers to destroy American wealth and power. This, he argued, has the potential to destroy all of humanity.[61] Castle's reading of these events fits them perfectly into Jordan's anti-materialist ideals, which would soon make a triumphant return to Koinonia.

The climate at Koinonia, as described by David Castle, could not have been more perfect for the radical leadership change that was about to occur in the community. In 2004, the Board of Directors appointed Bren Dubay as the new executive director of Koinonia.[62] Immediately after her appointment, she began to make sweeping changes at Koinonia, reestablishing it as a community that truly embodied the idea that Clarence Jordan had set forth over sixty years before.[63] Within the first year of her tenure, the name Koinonia Farm was reinstated and members recommitted to Jordan's communal vision.[64]

Dubay also made several changes that directly responded to the upheavals that characterized the 1990s at Koinonia. Along with personal administrative skills, Dubay brought a fresh look to Koinonia finances.[65] To deal with issues that stemmed from financial upheavals in the preceding decade, Dubay established a completely transparent annual budget.[66] She also helped to stabilize finances at Koinonia by spearheading large fundraising initiatives. After all, Koinonia had been backed by supporters in other parts of the country during its first fifty years. Dubay sought to continue this tradition. As executive director, she led the charge for the Joining Hands Capital Campaign, a $2.5 million project that would help expand the community by building a Meeting House (later known as the Jordan House), "greening up" existing buildings and increasing their

[60] Osinski.
[61] Castle, 29.
[62] Aberle-Grasse, 30; Castle, 34; Dubay, 2.
[63] Lenny Jordan, "Celebrating 70 Years of Christian Community," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2012.
[64] Castle, 38.
[65] Ibid., 34.
[66] Jordan.

already extensive services to their neighbors.[67] Koinonia is still searching for money to fund this initiative, but broke ground in 2009 and, by 2013, had already started construction on the Jordan House to help assist with their new initiatives to fight hunger.[68]

The changes that Bren Dubay brought to the community were not only financial. Dubay also pioneered changes that returned Koinonia to its spiritual roots. She sought to refocus the community on prayer and reflection. To do this she employed techniques that echo many of the practices in monastic communities.[69] First, Dubay implemented a set prayer schedule that was signaled throughout the Farm with the ringing of a bell. Prayers would be taken throughout the day, including at the two group services held daily, but additional, individual time for reflection would take place three times.[70] This increase would quadruple the number of prayer times held at the Farm previously.[71] She also placed special emphasis on devotional activities including daily reading of the Psalms and practicing examen, a spiritual practiced pioneered by St. Ignatius of Loyola.[72]

In response to the problems that were raised by Koinonia employees and the Board of Directors, Dubay sought to define the membership process at Koinonia more clearly. Again harkening back to monastic communities, Dubay created a hierarchy of initiates.[73] An individual wishing to join the community is required to first petition the stewards of the community, those members who have made lifelong commitments to it, to be considered for membership in the community. If approved, the individual undergoes an apprenticeship that lasts at least nine months. Apprentices then petition to be promoted to novices, again subject to a decision of the stewards. After a minimum of a year has passed, novices can commit themselves to becoming stewards in the community. There is a strong emphasis on feeling the call from God to become a lifelong

[67] Bren Dubay, "Koinonia Announces Joining Hands Capital Campaign," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2008.

[68] Dubay "The Challenge Is On! Make Your Gift Count Double," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2013; "Hopes to Break Ground on Meeting House in Summer 2009," Koinonia Farm Chronicle 2009.

[69] McCrank, Lawrence J. "Religious Orders and Monastic Communalism in America." In *America's Communal Utopias*, edited by Donald E. Pitzer, xxi, 537 p. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997, 210.

[70] Bren Dubay, "Join the Koinonia Rhythm, Find Food for Your Soul," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2013; Amanda Moore, "Spiritual Life on the Farm," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2008.

[71] Bren Dubay, "Living as a Demonstration Plot,"Koinonia Farm Chronicle 2008.

[72] Dubay, "Join the Koinonia Rhythm, Find Food for Your Soul."

[73] Castle, 40; Pitzer, 209-10.

member. As a steward, members commit to a set of seven covenants and commit themselves to the community for life.[74]

Another way that Koinonia Farms has attempted to regain some of its former glory by reflecting the ideas and actions of Clarence Jordan in the early years of the community has been through farming. Initially, Clarence Jordan intended to teach poor African Americans in the South more efficient farming techniques to assist them on the road to independence. This interest in new farming techniques was carried throughout the history of Koinonia and included a focus on organic farming in the 1990s.[75] This focus remained true for most of the farming done at Koinonia, but never went so far as to include their pecan orchards, which supplied pecans for many of the seasonal products that helped sustain the community. This changed in 2006 when Brendan and Sarah Prendergast arrived at Koinonia.[76]

Inspired by Joel Salatin, owner of Polyface Farm and advocate for sustainable farming practices, Brendan was interested in implementing permaculture practices at the Farm. He began to make big changes in the way the farm managed itself soon after being appointed farm manager. He began with a push for further integration of livestock into the farm, expanded the diversity of crops grown, and even worked for soil preservation and improvement.[77] The level of interconnectedness between the different areas of the farm struck a chord with Koinonia members, as it reflected the interconnected nature of living in an intentional community. This view helped spur interest in this new farming technique, eventually leading to Koinonia's hosting of workshops on permaculture design methods.[78] Koinonia would continue to have a much wider diversity of produce and livestock than had ever previously been grown and raised there, as Brendan Prendergast continued to revolutionize the way that Koinonians thought about food, their neighbors, and their impact on the environment.

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[74] Castle, 40-41; Bren Dubay, "The Call to Membership," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2008.

[75] Sanders Thornburgh, "Koinonia Farm: A Community of Biodiversity," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2009.

[76] Aberle-Grasse, 30.

[77] Kacie Cardwell, "From Dirt to Dining Hall and Back Again: The Life Cycle of Koinonia Food," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2009; Nichole Del Guidice, "In Transformation of the Soil," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2008; Amanda Moore, "Animals Run Amuck," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2008; Sarah Prendergast, "Permaculture: From Patterns to Details," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2008; "Methods of Biological Pecan Farming," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2013.

[78] Amanda Moore, "Extreme Makeover: Permaculture Style," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2009; Sarah Prendergast, "Principled Ethics: Whole Farm Planning," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2010.

Under Dubay's leadership, Koinonia also continued to exemplify Jordan's ideas about racial equality. In the 2000s, the community began working with individuals facing deportation at Stewart Detention Center, a for-profit prison facility. In a fashion reminiscent of Koinonia's death penalty protests in the 1980s, members sought to shed light on the various human rights violations that took place within this facility by staging #ShutDownStewart rallies. The last rally had about 1000 people in attendance.[79]

Apart from actively protesting the treatment of detainees, Koinonia also started a visitation and documentation ministry to help many of these detainees gain citizenship. For some, citizenship is simply not an option, but Koinonians still help them in every way that they can. When detainees are flown back to their country of origin, they disembark with only the clothes on their backs. Community members have begun to put together bags for detainees with clothes to help them in their transition.[80]

David Castle argued that one could describe the early years of the new millennium as an era of "defining strategies for the future."[81] This time was characterized by vast reform in the way that Koinonia operates and thinks of itself as a community. The 9/11 terrorist attacks jump-started the community into rethinking its mission as a community emulating the early years of the Christian Church. Bren Dubay's leadership also helped reinvigorate Koinonia by refocusing on its original communal philosophy and redirecting community efforts to fall more in line with the goals Clarence Jordan had originally championed.

Why Koinonia?

Koinonia has faced countless obstacles to its success since its founding in 1942, even as recently as 2015, when Bren Dubay received a breast cancer diagnosis.[82] The success of communal experiments like Koinonia has been measured by a variety of means. Rosabeth Moss Kanter asserts in her book *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* that by merely understanding the strength of commitment and mechanisms building commitment to the cause among members, scholars can gauge a community's level of success or failure.[83] For many intentional communities surviving the death of the founder is difficult, but Koinonia has been an exception. The decades follow-

[79] Anton Flores, "Refuge of Dreams," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2016.
[80] Elizabeth Dede, "Works of Mercy-Clothe the Naked," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2016.
[81] Castle, 33.
[82] Katie Miles, "Update on Bren," *Koinonia Farm Chronicle* 2016.
[83] Rosabeth Moss Kanter, *Commitment and Community; Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA,: Harvard University Press, 1972).

ing Clarence Jordan's death represented a roller coaster ride of ups and downs that tested not only the determination of Koinonia community members but also the plasticity of Clarence Jordan's founding ideals. I contend, much like Jon Wagner, that a single set of criteria against which scholars can measure the success of intentional communities is virtually nonexistent given the diverse nature of communes in the United States and worldwide.[84] In the case of Koinonia, the ability to adapt the values of Clarence Jordan to the relevant issues over time has proven to be its mark of success. Equality of all people, nonviolence, and communal living would be the glue that held the community together for the seventy-five years of its existence. Whether it was the new housing initiatives of the 1970s, Cold War protests in the 1980s, questions of racial discrimination in the 1990s, or a recommitment to communal living in the 2000s, the guiding principles of Clarence Jordan served as a lighthouse guiding the community through every uncertainty. While Koinonia has many years ahead before it will eclipse the longest lived of American communal experiments, continued dedication to Jordan's ideals stands to serve as the fuel the community needs to press on.

[84] Jon Wagner, "Success in Intentional Communities: The Problem of Evaluation," *Communal Societies* 5 (1985) 89-100.