“Reshape Your Lives, for God’s new Order of the Spirit is Upon You”: A Tribute to Millard Fuller

by Amanda Moore

In 1965, a tall skinny young fellow, his wife and two children came to Koinonia for what they thought would be a short visit, perhaps an hour or so. Little did they know or expect that their entire lives were to change in that next hour or so; in fact, millions of lives all around the world would change as a result of that short visit. Instead of staying for an hour, Millard and Linda ended up staying for a month. At Koinonia, they found a loving fellowship and a guide on their path to a new life.

Fuller at Koinonia Farm in the 1960s

At Koinonia, they found a loving fellowship and a guide on their path to a new life. Koinonia

Co-founder Clarence Jordan often spoke and wrote about living a reshaped life, and thought of Millard as the rich young ruler. As Millard later said many times, Clarence would become the most influential person for him, and the spiritual mentor who would help him and his wife redirect their lives.

In 1968, Millard and Linda moved their family to Koinonia. Clarence and Millard sought to demonstrate how God calls us to be in partnership with Him and one another. They were looking for something with a broad scope, something that people could be involved in wherever they were. They proposed the establishment of a Fund for Humanity, through which land could be purchased and made available to people by virtue of usership rather than by virtue of ability to pay. The houses would be built using volunteer labor and no-interest loans to be paid off over 25 years. It would begin right here at Koinonia Farm with 192 houses for their friends and neighbors who desperately needed adequate housing.

The project would grow to become Habitat for Humanity International, building over 300,000 houses in more than 130 countries around the world in just 33 years. In 1969, while the first house was under construction, Clarence died from heart failure. At the burial, Millard read passages from the “Cotton Patch Version,” C l a r e n c e ’ s translation of the Greek New Testament into South-Georgia vernacular.

Peace Through Reconciliation

by Amanda Moore

A lot changes in 50 years, even in small towns like Americus, Ga. In the late 1950s, the South was already moving into the battle that would become the Civil Rights Movement. Koinonia was at the heart of that battle in Americus, and was asked to leave several times, even by Chamber of Commerce members. This year, nearly 50 years later, the Sumter County Americus Chamber of Commerce presented Koinonia with the Agri-business of the Year Award, and thanked us for being such a wonderful local attraction in this area.

Since 1942, Koinonia has sought to demonstrate the qualities of the Kingdom of God, including brother/sisterhood of all humanity. Anyone is welcome, regardless of skin color or nationality.

For many years, this acceptance only caused discomfort to the local community, but beginning in the late 50s, discomfort boiled into hatred. The violence came to a head in May 1957, when a store-front in downtown Americus was blown up. It was the first act of violence not specifically directed toward Koinonians, but a local vendor who dared to do business with Koinonia in the midst of the boycott.

Following the bombing, a delegation of citizens from Americus including the Chamber of Commerce implored Koinonia to leave Americus. Here is what one Chamber member said during that meeting.

“Unfortunately your experiment has not [made brotherly love in the community]. It has set brother against brother; it has created bitterness; it has created hatred; it has created every emotion that is contrary to my concept of Christianity.”

The member continued, “We want to appeal to your good judgment to pray over it and think over it and see if you don’t think you’ll be serving the best interests of the community and certainly the best interests of your Lord to move and leave us in peace.”

In the years to follow, Koinonia sought economic relief through a direct mail-order business. Gradually, boycott began to subside in the mid-1960s. Today, we enjoy a variety of business ventures, from painting Christmas scenes on the windows of downtown businesses, selling our blueberries to the Windsor Hotel and our produce at the Farmer’s Market, and working closely with local coffee roastery Café Campesino and several other businesses.

We’re honored that the Chamber of Commerce chose to recognize us with this award and for the reconciliation it signifies. We are eager to work in partnership with the local community demonstrating how to better care for the land using a farming and gardening technique called permaculture.

To learn more about this, read “A Community of Biodiversity” on page 5.
God is a God of abundance.

Walk this farm and you’ll see demonstrated over and over again what an abundant place it is. Koinonia is beautiful. It is a feast for the eyes, especially, right now as we enter springtime. Flowers stretch up and out of the rich Georgia clay dazzling us with an array of colors. The grass is a deep, deep green — you swear you can see it growing. Walking around the farm on these cool spring evenings, the world’s economic crisis doesn’t loom so harshly.

But, like just about everyone, we’re feeling that economic crisis. We don’t despair, though. Koinonia is blessed with wonderful bounty — trees, chocolate, animals, pecans, one another and friends around the world. No, we don’t despair; rather we look at the abundance God has given us and trust that in that abundance is the answer.

Simply put, we need to sell in products and/or raise in donations $100,000 by June 30, the end of our fiscal year, to meet current budgetary needs. If we look only at ourselves, $100,000 is a daunting figure. If we look to God, you, and ourselves we have faith that it isn’t an impossible task. Will you partner with us to get it done? How?

• Buy: You buy our products in great numbers October to December each year, but what about for your every day use throughout the year? Do you drink coffee? We have it. Do you eat cereal? We have it. Join our Nut of the Month Club and we can even send you a monthly shipment of your choice of goodies. Remember, too, that our products make wonderful gifts for other holidays and graduations, weddings, end of school, birthdays, back to school, retirement, thank you gifts, etc. Call us or order directly from our Online store. Ask your friends to do the same. (www.koinoniapartners.org).

• Donate: Give a tax-deductible unrestricted gift or designate a gift for the Adopt-A-Tree project or any other Koinonia project: Summer youth camp, Circle of Friends, hospitality, etc. Clarence and Florence Jordan and Mabel and Martin England purchased this farm with a donation from a friend and donations from friends continue to help us do the work God has called us to do.

• Invest: Our pecan orchards serve us well, but we realize the benefit and necessity of diversifying. We’re in the process of getting into the business of raising and selling grass fed beef. Part of our education effort is to raise awareness of organic food and healthy eating. Grass fed beef is a better option for our friends who eat meat. You invest the price to purchase a steer and after we raise it and take it to market, you will be repaid either with or without interest — your choice. This project will create another income stream to insure the future. Call Sanders Thornburn at 229-924-0391 or e-mail him at info@koinoniapartners.org if you’d like more information.

Clarence wrote that “Jesus loved the feast” and that if we ask God for bread, he will not give us “a little grudging crust.” Koinonia’s focus as the 21st Century has gotten well underway is to feed the hungry. Our education projects help feed hungry minds; the hospitality we offer helps to feed hungry spirits and our efforts in agriculture work to feed hungry stomachs. God has given us a vision and we know the resources needed to accomplish this vision are within our reach. All we have to do is ask. So, are you asking to buy, donate and/or invest. We pray that you will say yes.

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**Wish List**

Many thanks to those who have responded to previous wish lists.

We’ve received numerous gifts from our readers, including frequent flier miles, child-size furniture, micro-waves, many interested interns, Montessori material, and a scanner.

We’re grateful for whatever you have to share! Here’s a current list:

- **Mattresses**
- **Manure Spreader**
- **Wood Chipper (grinder tub)**
- **Back Hoe**
- **Dishes for Dining Hall**
- **Bedding for Twin & Queen beds**
- **Hybrid Vehicle**
- **Golf cart for interfarm transport**

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**Bulletin Board**

- We’re excited about yet another issue of Koinonia Farm Chronicle. We appreciate all the support we’ve received. And we’d love to hear from you! Send us your feedback, suggest an article you’d like to read or let us know what you don’t enjoy reading about. Send them to news@koinoniapartners.org or mail them to the Farm.
- Please send address corrections to info@koinoniapartners.org or call 229.924.0391 and ask for Amanda Moore. She’ll fix everything.
- The love bug has hit Koinonia! We’ll celebrate three upcoming weddings: Elizabeth Dede & Jerry Nelson, Nichole Del Guidice & Seth Schroerlucce and Ana Navarro & Bryan Knowlton. Look for more info in upcoming e-news publications.
- The local Sumter County High School was selected to play in one of the inauguration day parades, and our own Jessika Williams was able to go! Despite the freezing cold weather, they had a great time!
- Ellie Castle will be moving in May to Sherwood Oaks, a retirement community near Pittsburgh. For more information, read “Passing on the Baton” on page 4.
Economics of the God Movement
-excerpts from Clarence Jordan

“Wherever you are on the earth, you wish to perceive the mystery that lies at the heart of your heart: do you sense within you, even fleetingly, the silent longing for a presence. This simple longing, this simple desire for God, is already the beginning of faith.”

-Bro Roger Schutz

When God first made humanity, he made provision for all our needs. This has been true ever since. God has already “added all these things.”

-Editor’s Note: Taken from “The Substance of Faith: The God Movement”;
**Taken from “Sermon on the Mount.”**

Living in community for five years has taught me something about change. People of faith rightly want change. Changing war into peace, eradicating homelessness, hunger, the death penalty, abortion, racism, mistreatment of the alien, imprisonment of the mentally challenged, the abandonment of the child or the elder, and on and on. These are all noble causes.

Wanting to change wrong to right is indeed good, but … if it is all about exterior change, if it is all about doing rather than being, if it is all about happiness coming from without, where’s God? The “cause” becomes the God. And we make those standing in the way the enemy.

“I march for peace, but I don’t have time to spend 15 minutes in prayer.” Peace is the god and the Prince of Peace is all but forgotten.

Economics of the
God Movement

Living in community has taught me the necessity of interior change. We’re told from time to time that those who seek life in a community such as Koinonia or in a convent or monastery or some other intentional community are those who want to escape from the real world.

Perhaps that’s the intention of some, but if you come and truly give yourself over to the practice of this common life, what you come face to face with is the real world and it is close and it is scary. You may arrive with aspirations to work for a cause, but living here day in and day out, you can’t escape the darkness in yourself or others … and you come to realize that change is needed within.

I’ve seen a pattern at Koinonia. People arrive and are swept off their feet by the inexplicable holiness of the place. They go through what we call the “honeymoon phase.” Then comes the recognition that there are all sorts of flaws, bumps and bruises here. The next is “I am going to change everything that is wrong with this place” phase.

We’ve learned this is especially the time to gently encourage our brother or sister to look within. We do this by attempting to create an environment where prayer, work, study, service and fellowship are in balance and flowing throughout the day. Many can only focus on the exterior change they desire and if it doesn’t happen quickly enough, and it seldom does, they leave and go on to the next “cause.” Some come face to face with the monsters within then the true work for change may begin.

This change is a shift within. We fall in love. Living with people, staying put and loving them day in day out despite all those times we don’t even like them, giving up the idea that we can change them by making them over into our own image, gives birth to an interior change that, in turn, can give birth to a whole new way to work for exterior change.

Working for a cause coming from a place of love is far different than working for a cause against a sworn enemy. I’ve come to believe that Jesus shows us there are no enemies. Yes, I know he told us to love our enemies, but something has happened since I’ve changed and gotten better at loving others. Perhaps a story from Abraham Lincoln will help.

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When a cacophony of voices called for the destruction of the enemies of the South, Abraham Lincoln responded, “The best way to destroy an enemy is by making him my friend.”

Chasing causes or looking for exterior change is not where happiness lies. Changing on the inside and learning over and over again to love God, neighbor and self is where happiness lies. Then no one is the enemy. Everyone becomes neighbor.
Shoes to Fill
by Sarah Prendergast
During my three years at Koinonia, I've carried many different work responsibilities. Now I find myself with some very big shoes to fill. Or maybe I should say small shoes. In preparation for Ellie Castles transition to Sherwood Oaks in May, I've risen to the challenge of taking her place as the coordinator of our ministry of hospitality.

One of the highlights of working in hospitality is that I get the opportunity to share stories with so many people, and then get to invite them to be part of making history today.

I get to learn what brings people to our small patch of heaven nestled in the red clay soils of Georgia, and then get to share with them the many ways in which Koinonia remains a revolutionary witness as a demonstration plot for God's kingdom on Earth.

It was always smooth sailing. For example, the first night that the groups from James Madison University, and the Universities of Florida and Georgia arrived for a week of alternative spring break, the pump on our well went out and our 20 guests had to spend their first day with no running water. We fetched basins of water from KCOC to wash the dishes after potluck, and everyone met the challenge with a spirit of adventure and flexibility.

The same two groups made a huge contribution during their week with us, collecting sticks and leaves from the main campus lawn to be used as mulch for the garden, planting a rose bush as a haven for our honey bees, digging sawdust – ditches to assist with rainwater collection – in our recently converted garden and fruit orchard, and planting countless fruit trees and shrubs.

We couldn't thank these young folks enough for all of their help, but the humbling part is that their gratitude ran at least as deep as ours. It's something that can't fully be articulated, but what happens to people when they come here is nothing short of transformation.

I've heard it said so many times that stepping onto Koinonia soil feels like walking on holy ground. God's presence here is almost tangible, and when people head back to their everyday lives, they carry a small part of that with them.

As we like to say in the South, “Y'all come!” Come and see for yourselves what's happening in this little corner of the kingdom. Visitors are welcome year-round, so if you've never been, or if it's been a while, drop me a line or give me a call.

We host individual visitors, group retreats and work weeks, conferences, tours, and many other events. We'd love to host you whether for several hours or several days.

For more information on how you or your group can schedule a visit, call the office at 229-924-0391, visit our Web site, or e-mail hospitality@koinoniapipartners.org.

A Blessed Homecoming: Stories Enough to Share
by Amanda Moore

We're blessed by the many visitors who come to our corner of creation. Since last fall, we’ve had countless friends come to spend time with us and share stories about the community at the time they lived or were involved here. You can always read stories from a history book or watch a documentary, but there’s something special about tradition and history passed down orally. We love hearing these stories.

When Al Zook visited, we gathered in the museum for “story time.” Community members, neighbors, and visitors came to hear Al share about the time he spent here from 1968 to 1976, partnering with our neighbor Bo Johnson to do the farming and pecan processing.

Al told us that Clarence didn’t like for the new tools to go missing or be left out in the fields or in the rain. So, even though he believed in and lived a life of holding all things in common and was a man of great generosity, he would hide the new tools under his bed!

Al also shared about C11, once his death and burial. They worked on his grave from 8 a.m. to 2 a.m. the next morning digging it up with the very same tools used to plant the pecan trees. The next morning, they finished the grave and buried Clarence in a shipping crate. As they filled the grave with dirt, 2-year-old Faith Fuller – Millard and Linda’s daughter – stepped to his graveside and sang, “Happy birthday to you.”

Thank you for passing on these stories, Al.

Passing on the Baton
by Amanda Moore

She’s welcomed thousands of visitors over the past ten years, made just as many beds and prepared just as many rooms and meals, given countless tours of the farm, participated in hundreds of community meetings and study sessions, witnessed many comings and goings, and now she passes on the baton to those of us following in her somewhat smallish, although steady and strong footsteps of stewardship.

Those who have been to Koinonia in the past 10 years most likely have received a warm Koinonia welcome from the Hospitality matriarch Ellie Castle. When her husband David died last August, Ellie had the difficult task of discerning where God was calling her. She was confronted to Koinonia and yet, at 80 years old, she decided to be closer to her children and grandchildren. After considerable prayer and conversation with both the community and her son and daughters, Ellie decided to move up North to Sherwood Oaks, a retirement home north of Pittsburgh, near her eldest daughter and her beloved Chautauqua, New York. She will make the move in May.

She’s committed to coming back to the farm each fall, though, to spend quality time with us and help out with preparation for Christmas. We’re glad she will only be a phone call away, allowing for her to continue offering wisdom and guidance to our community. Ellie and David moved to Koinonia at a difficult time for Koinonia, jumped right in to help out however they could and remained through all the ups and downs. Ellie fit naturally with Hospitality, giving tours, welcoming groups, pointing out sites as groups rode through the farm in the Joy Wagon, hosting interns and visitors to watch the “Cotton Patch Gospel” musical, and being an absolute delight.

Lighting our peace candle each day at lunch, Ellie leads us in a short prayer for peace in our world. She’s also become the infamous poet of our “worse verse,” a poem written for visitors when they leave. Often the worse verse creates words to follow a rhyme scheme based on the person’s name. Known for being a true energizer bunny, Ellie often has more energy and excitement than many of the younger adults in the community.

Ellie is a true treasure to us, and we’ll surely miss her physical presence in our daily lives, especially her insightful Tuesday morning chapel and joyful spirit she brings to our gatherings. Please pray for Ellie and for us as we adjust to this major change.
The birth of Koinonia’s organic garden goes back decades and has evolved into multiple forms with different leadership over the generations.

The oral tradition of story-telling passes along the memory of Koinonia’s first organic gardener, Will Wittkamper, and the fascinating discussions he had with Clarence Jordan about farming in the God-Movement.

In more recent history, Koinonia’s organic mantle was worn by former community resident, Bob Burns, until he moved away in 1998, and then Michael Grainge in the early 2000s.

Now, over the course of the last year or so, Brendan Prendergast has fully entered into his calling to restore the visionary work begun by those who dressed and caressed the trees and soil before him. I am convinced that Brendan is the one who is now called by God to lead us into a renewed commitment to care for the environment which sustains us.

From the very beginning of Koinonia, there has been recognition of how important a responsibility it is to be good stewards of this corner of creation that God has entrusted to us. Clarence Jordan described his relationship to this land 51 years ago. When asked why he didn’t want to sell the property during the years of intense persecution, Jordan poetically responded:

We bought that old, run-down piece of land. It was sick, there were gashes in it, it was sore and bleeding. I don’t know whether you’ve walked out over a piece of ground and it could almost cry out to you and say, ‘Heal me, heal me!’ I don’t know whether you feel the closeness to the soil that I do. When you fill in those old gullies and terrace the fields, you begin to feel the springiness of the sod beneath your feet and you see that old land come to life…when you walk through a pine forest and see [the trees] reaching to the sky and hear the wind through them… Men say to you, ‘Why don’t you sell it?…they might as well ask you, ‘Why don’t you sell your mother?’

As Clarence understood, Koinonia is like a nurturing mother to all of us who live here. It is our Christian duty to protect her as she protects us. God designed her to provide us with food, shelter and spiritual rejuvenation.

When anxiety and stress overwhelm us, a sure remedy can be found in a prayerful walk along Koinonia’s forested Peace Trail. Walking into the Cathedral of Nature, the undeniable presence of the Holy Spirit balances the psyche and heals the wounded heart.

God has designated us humans to be the caretakers of this sanctified place. We are standing on holy ground; home not only to us, but to an entire bionetwork. If you think about it, Koinonia is a communal habitat not only to people but to a multitude of interconnected species of life all the way down to the microbes flourishing in the top-soil.

Koinonia predates all the humans who now live here, but the same Spirit of God which was here in the beginning still unites us all in Christ’s love. This Love weaves us together into one fellowship of believers who are linked beautifully into a dense web of interrelated life forms. Comprehending what a blessing it is to be on this hallowed land compels us to fall on our knees in awe, giving thanks to the Creator for the gift of life.

Porching: A New Word for an Old Way of Life by Jo Knox

Porching is a new noun/verb we coined for our evenings sitting on the screened in porches at Koinonia. We mellow ourselves from a day’s work on the farm with a little banjo and guitar music, and a genuine desire to remember the lyrics which somehow escape us in the middle of a song!

But we laugh and make up words because we don’t want to stop and end the porching or the song. If we start in the early evening when the sun just begins its fiery display, we can watch the hummingbirds make their final trip of the day at the feeding stations.

Life is good.

I feel as though I were in a time warp, bringing into this moment the simple pleasures Clarence Jordan and his family and friends experienced back in Koinonia’s early days. Considering the troubles and chaos bouncing around our planet, we count ourselves fortunate to have rediscovered a pastime as simple and fulfilling as porching. Come on over and join us one evening, bet you know the words.
Hopes to Break Ground on Meeting House in Summer 2009
by Bren Dubay

With a few more dotting of the “I”s and crossing of the “T”s, we may be able to break ground for the new addition to and renovation of the dining hall/guest house this summer. The new space will be 2,300 square feet and serve as a meeting space and dining hall.

As more and more groups come to Koinonia and as our course offerings grow, this project will be a blessing.

It’s been exhilarating to work on plans for the building with LeRoy Troyer, Bill Barnard and Andrew Roche of The Troyer Group. LeRoy is the chair of the Fuller Center for Housing Board of Directors. The plan calls for all sorts of sustainable as we continue efforts to "green" the farm, making it a demonstration for environmental stewardship.

Thanks to the Castle Building Fund, established in the honor of Dave and Ellie Castle, to an anonymous donor who gave a matching challenge grant of $50,000, and to all of you who sent in gifts to match it and meet the challenge, we continue to move toward the $600,000 overall goal. We could wait until all the money is raised before beginning but we walk in faith knowing that the remainder of what is needed will be provided.

We’re going to have an ample amount of work for many, many volunteers on this build. Watch for an announcement. For more information about contributing to this project or volunteering, please contact Amanda Moore at 229-024-0391 or e-mail info@koinoniapartners.org.

Koinonia Loses House to Fire, Fuller Center & Habitat To Rebuild It
by Amanda Moore

Late one night, we were startled to hear sirens and to see a bright glow in the Southern sky. By the time we reached the burning house, it was engulfed in flames, sparked by an electrical fire. This Koinonia farm house stood on the Sunny Acres lot, where “Bud” Style lived about a half-mile up from the main campus. We’re so thankful that Bud is OK. He has been a part of the Koinonia family and lived in the house for decades. What a relief to see Bud standing outside unharmed and in his work clothes and slippers. The house and its contents are a total loss, though.

As the volunteer county fire department called for back-up, Bud’s greatest concern was that he would not be able to go to church the next morning, since all of his clothes were burning in the house. God continually provides, though, and Bud got some new clothes and attended church the next morning.

Just after the fire, Bud said one of the things he cared about most was his Bible. There are two reasons why he wanted to find his Bible: It’s a family Bible, and is important to him, and it also held what little bit of cash he kept in his home.

The next morning, as we were trying to salvage a few things, we found the Bible. It was a bit charred and wet, of course, but the money inside the Bible was perfectly intact. What’s most amazing, though, is where the Bible opened to: Jesus and the Rich Young Ruler. Some of you will remember that Clarence Jordan referred to Millard Fuller as the rich young ruler. It’s as if Clarence and Millard were sending us a sign.

Just a few days after the fire, we were delighted to learn that the Fuller Center for Housing and the local Habitat for Humanity will be coming together to rebuild the house for Koinonia.

It’s one of the first joint projects of a Habitat affiliate and the Fuller Center. It seems appropriate, given recent events, that Koinonia would be the grounds for such a coming together.

We hope to begin construction on the new house before Summer. If you’d like to help with the build, contact us at info@koinoniapartners.org and we’ll let you know as the details unfold.

We can’t say with certainty that this is a sign from Clarence and Millard, but we know that they believed the power of unselfish partnership to be a visible sign of the Kingdom of God.
Community of Learners and Teachers
by Seth Schroerlucke & Nichole Del Giudice

“Community is a group of people who share a certain oneness and who contribute to the growth and development of one another… Our responsibilities are to be mindful of others’ feelings and thoughts, to learn, to teach, and be a good role model, to share insights and experiences, and above all to love.”

–Mary Thornburgh (Responding to the question ‘What does community mean to you and what are your responsibilities to it?’ posed in Community Building class)

It is transforming for us to be a part of this community within the community, to see these ideals attempted on a daily basis. Since the second semester began, we’ve enjoyed abounding involvement from visitors and members sharing their expertise and experiences with the students.

A few highlights have included a field trip to the Andersonville POW museum and hearing about the realities of war from Koinonia apprentice Jerry Nelson. The students conducted a study of our carbon footprint on land here, and participated in this year’s Lego League competition with the coaching of Cori Lyman-Barner and assistance from apprentice Dan Truesdale. More recently, they worked with the Art Miles Mural Project, a 12-year international project that combines the effort of children and adults to promote global peace and harmony through mural art.

We were honored by visits from our SOOP (Service Opportunities for Older People) visitors Anne, who helped us make quilts, and Lester, who shared stories of growing up during the Great Depression. We also enjoyed a bike repair class with visitor Ben, a rocket launching with Jim Dubay, and Emma Sue Clay, a long time neighbor and friend, leading our centering time one morning.

We are truly blessed to have such a wealth of resources here on the farm to enrich the lives of these students.

We’ve just begun a journalism class with apprentice Amanda Moore and fellow-faculty member Jimmy Foglio; look for articles from the students in upcoming e-news and newspaper publications. We are especially excited about an upcoming Permaculture study and the building of a low ropes course with apprentice Craig Martindale.

We are still a work in progress, but we are amazed by how we all have helped each other grow.

Pantoum*

by Ben Thornburgh (12 years old)

The sky is beautiful
Green, Blue, and Red
as I look up
over my head

Green, blue, and red
So glorious and fun
over my head
for the day is almost done.

So glorious and fun
as we play in the field
for the day is almost done
but that would not make me yield.

As we play in the field
I laid down in an ant hill
but that would not make me yield
for the ants I wanted to kill.

I laid down in the ant hill
my arms started stinging badly
for the ants I wanted to kill
and I drooped my head down sadly.

My arms started stinging badly
and my mother called me in
and I drooped my head down sadly
The ants threw my day in the bin.

The ants threw my day in the bin
and now I’ve had no fun
and my mother called me in
for now I see no sun.

[Editor’s note: Pantoum is a form of poetry with the second and fourth lines of each stanza repeating as the first and third lines of the next until the final stanza.

The Beauty of Green was Ne'er so Blue

by Mary Thornburgh (16 years old)

One winter I set my eyes to the ocean.
The beauty of green was ne’er so blue
Now the sand is littered with glistening tan bodies
And I know that they haven’t a clue.

The beauty of green was ne’er so blue
The wash of the waves ne’er sounded so smooth
And I know that they haven’t a clue.

Their eyes close behind shields of dark plastic.
The wash of the waves ne’er sounded so smooth.
But buds in their ears block out the shore’s music.
Their eyes close behind shields of dark plastic
And I only wish they could feel the breeze.

But buds in their ears block out the shore’s music.
And I only wish they could feel the breeze.
Maybe next winter when the sun’s left their skin
They’ll set their eyes to the ocean and see that the beauty of green was ne’er so blue.
Maybe they’ll feel it too.
The Glory Man: A Tale of the Tremendous Story
by Amanda Moore

We were pleased this year to witness the world premiere of our friend Dennis Hassell’s “The Glory Man,” a play about the story of Koinonia, our co-founders Clarence and Florence Jordan, the inspiration behind Habitat for Humanity, and Clarence’s ground-breaking approach to Christian service.

The actors and actresses did a phenomenal job capturing the spirit of Koinonia, from its early formative days during Clarence’s childhood to the days filled with shootings, beatings, bombings, and the boycott, to the productive and flourishing days that ultimately begot Habitat for Humanity International.

Alma Jackson was able to make the trip to Virginia with the group of Koinonians. He lived and worked at Koinonia when the violence and boycott began in the 50s. Once the boycott gripped the farm, Alma chose to give up his paycheck, since he knew the farm couldn’t afford it, and he sought to join the community and become a partner.

In an intense scene from the play, Alma is called to testify before the grand jury. Ironically enough, Koinonia is being investigated for mistreatment of African Americans. Alma testifies that Koinonia no longer pays him for his work.

“And what kind of pay did Koinonia give you for your labors,” asks the prosecutor.

“Nothing,” Alma responds. “They gave me nothing.”

The courtroom fell silent.

“But they gave me everything,” Alma continued. “They gave me a place to live, food to eat, a warm bed to sleep in, my first indoor plumbing. But most of all they gave me friendship. They gave me everything.”

Congratulations, Dennis, and good luck with the play as it gets off to a great start!

Koinonia on Tour
by Amanda Moore

We held the first Friends of Koinonia Gathering in Eugene, Or. hosted by our sister community, Church of the Servant King. We had a great time meeting local friends of Koinonia, and we were even able to offer a sampling of our products. Following a showing of the “Briars in the Cotton Patch” documentary, we answered questions and shared news about the community today.

These events provide an opportunity for Koinonia’s friends to connect with others in their area, learn more about Koinonia, and bring new people to learn about the community. The next Friends of Koinonia Gathering will be hosted by St. Catherine’s Montessori School in Houston, Texas on Saturday, September 19, 2009.

We’d love to take our community “on tour” to all 50 states this year! If you’re interested in hosting a Friends of Koinonia event in your area, contact Amanda Moore at info@koinoniapartners.org.

Come Walk with Us

There are three ways to come and walk with us for a while: As a neighbor, a visitor, or a seasonal intern.

Neighborhoods, visitors, and seasonal interns who desire a longer period of time to serve and learn more about community living may petition to become a community intern. Individuals may be invited for a specified length of time, usually one year, to serve in this capacity.

Through petitioning and by affirmation of the community, a community intern may become an apprentice, or exploring member. The apprenticeship lasts for a minimum of one year and is for those who desire to discern whether they are being called long-term to this way of life in the koinonia.

After completing the apprenticeship, a person may be invited to deepen his or her involvement in the community by becoming a provisional member, called a novice. The novitiate is a final period of time to demonstrate by one action his readiness to become a full member of Koinonia.

When ready, the person may be invited to pass from provisional membership to full membership, becoming a steward. One becomes a steward because one feels called by God to this way of life. To show this, the steward freely, joyfully, and lovingly commits to the set of covenants held by Koinonia.

For those interested in supporting and being a part of Koinonia’s mission and vision through a role focused more on their work rather than through stewardship, we invite them to become a partner. Partners are full members and sign an annual letter of agreement.