



KOINONIA 70 YEARS LATER: 1942-2012

BY BREN DUBAY

We're pleased to announce that Lenny Jordan, Clarence and Florence's youngest son, has agreed to serve as Chair for the 2012 Celebration. In "Looking Toward 2012" on page 2, you'll read about all we're doing and hope to do (with your help!) leading up to the month-long event.

The celebration begins with the Clarence Jordan Symposium on September 28 and 29, 2012, at the Rylander Theatre and Georgia Southwestern University in Americus, Ga.

The Symposium features an impressive list of speakers across many disciplines who have been influenced by Clarence Jordan and Koinonia. See the list of confirmed speakers so far. Tickets will be available this fall.

Kirk Lyman-Barner of The Fuller Center for Housing is chairing the Symposium, and we're pleased to announce that President Jimmy and Mrs. Rosalynn Carter are serving as Honorary Chairs.

Following the Symposium, we'll have a month-long series of projects at the farm and in the wider community. In 1968, Koinonia started the partnership housing movement that later became Habitat for Humanity. We've built 192 houses in Sumter County, repaired dozens, and now it's time to show a little TLC to some of our homes that were built 50 to 60 years ago. We'll publish more details—

In 2012, Koinonia will be 70, and Clarence and Florence Jordan would have been 100 years old. We plan to celebrate—for a whole month!

Sketch by Greg Joens



Carters to Serve as Honorary Chairs

BY KIRK LYMAN-BARNER

"Let us pray for the translators."

Millard Fuller once told me that Clarence frequently prayed for the translators. When I first learned this, I suspected Clarence meant the scholars of ancient languages such as Greek and Hebrew. But as we continue planning for the Clarence Jordan Symposium, I'm discovering a deeper meaning to this prayer.

Through conversations with the impressive panel of authors, activists, artists, and theologians inspired by Clarence's thinking, I now see that we are all called to be translators of God's love - to interpret and incarnate the love and grace of God.

It is with this awesome task in mind that I joyfully share with you that President Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter have enthusiastically agreed to serve as honorary chairs of the Clarence Jordan Symposium.

Living just 7 miles up the road, the Carters have a unique perspective and admiration for Clarence and the Koinonia community. Each year since 1984, President and Mrs. Carter have committed themselves to volunteer and promote Habitat for Humanity, which grew out of the Koinonia Partnership Housing Project.

Whether it be through President Carter's Sunday School lessons, Mrs. Carter's passionate advocacy for improving the mental-health system, their work with Habitat, or their tireless efforts to improve the quality of life around the world, the Carters quietly, and without much fanfare, continue to demonstrate what Clarence meant by "incarnational evangelism." Now that's relevant religion!

President and Mrs. Carter are indeed "translators." Come join them for the Clarence Jordan Symposium, September 28-29, 2012.

Featured Speakers for 2012 Symposium

Greg Cary - New Testament Professor, Lancaster Theological
Shane Claiborne - Simple Way, author of Irresistible Revolution
Tim Downs - Conference Minister, Southeast Conference UCC
Philip Gulley - Quaker Minister, Humorist, and Author
Charles Marsh - Center for Lived Theology, University of VA
Don Mosley - Author, Jubilee Partners Community
Jim Mulholland - Author, Pastor, Resident SE Neighborhood Dev.
Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove - Author, The Rutba House Community
Joyce Hollyday - United Church of Christ Minister and Historian
Tripp Pomeroy, Bill Harris, Jr. - Founders Café Campesino & Cooperative Coffees
David Snell - President of Fuller Center for Housing
Al Staggs - Theologian and Clarence Jordan Impersonator
Nora Tisdale - Professor of Homiletics, Yale Divinity School
Wayne Weiseman - The Permaculture Project
Greg Wittkamper - Businessman, former Koinonia Kid

including work crew needs—as they're available.

The month of celebration will end with the Koinonia Family Reunion, October 26-28. If you've ever called Koinonia home, or wanted to call Koinonia home, we'd love for you to come share in this special time with us. The excitement is building around here.

As you see from the photographs, we're working hard to prepare our place to receive company. So ya'll come.

Palestine Today

BY AMANDA MOORE

I was privileged to represent Koinonia Farm this spring in Israel, Palestine, and Turkey with Tree of Life, an interfaith peace-building group.

I met with countless Palestinians, Israelis, and Syrians, and even an American nun as I became intimately aware of the Israeli occupation and its effects in Palestine and Golan Heights. My head quickly swirled with statistics, details, and unforgettable images.

Our guide Jiries Atrash met us at the airport and shared basic information with us as Shafik drove us from Tel Aviv to Bethlehem. The road we were on—a nicely paved four-lane highway—was an Israeli only road. Israeli citizens, tourists, and visitors can drive on it, but Palestinians cannot. Police distinguish between the two by license plate color. Israelis and tourists have yellow tags; Palestinians have green.

As we approached the West Bank, I got my first sight of the wall that surrounds the Occupied Territory. Shivers went down my spine.



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LOOKING TOWARD 2012

BY LENNY JORDAN, YOUNGEST CHILD OF CLARENCE AND FLORENCE

Daddy used to call Koinonia “a demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God.” At the time he coined this phrase, the farm was little but an experiment—in living true Christian principles, in practicing what one preached, in reaping a harvest from a dried up, hardened plot of clay and the sadly similar community in which it was located.

Even in those early days, though, Koinonia was not an experiment for Daddy. And now, 70 years later, Koinonia is no longer an experiment to the rest of us—it is a testament. Those of us who have spent time on this demonstration plot, who have witnessed the evolution of a community and the richness of a soil once so highly doubted, do not have doubts anymore.

Koinonia works hard to build a better world, leading by example—and that work is real and thriving. The vision, “Love Through Service to Others, Joy Through Generous Hospitality, Peace Through Reconciliation” is not static. It is a dynamic goal that the members of Koinonia continuously reach for, and one that is brought to life every day by each friend who has visited or supported Koinonia over the years.

The upcoming 2012 Celebration provides a chance to look back over the years, conjuring up memories of hardship and joy, successes and failures, challenges and triumphs, sorrow and celebration. It is in this spirit that we look forward to coming together again, this time to reminisce, and in so doing, renew the energy that conceptualized Koinonia so long ago and that it continues to give each of us today.

Each month as I look toward 2012, I am blessed with new realizations of what has made Koinonia so special to so many of us. Recently, I reread an entry from the journal Daddy kept while at the seminary in Louisville, Ky.

3/5/1940: *In the absence of Bro. Jones, I preached at 5th St. Church Sun. a.m. It was a good gathering of “upper crust.” Several of the students have been working there quite a while and doing a good piece of work. When the services were over, Jitsuo Morikawa, a Japanese student at the Seminary, handed me an envelope, which I put in my pocket. He said it was a little money he wanted used for the poor. When I got home and opened it, behold, seven five-dollar bills! I could hardly believe it. That really will go a long way.*

In 1940, \$35 was the equivalent of a couple hundred dollars today. Unfortunately, the work is never over and the calls for help have only increased. As Daddy and Jitsuo felt compelled to do their part back then, each of us are reminded that we, too,

should continue to share in this work until it is done.

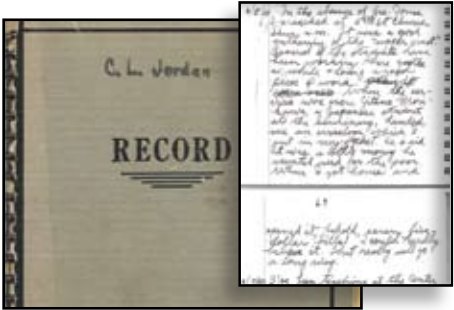
Koinonia today is not the same Koinonia of 1942. The projects have changed, the technology has changed, the people have changed. But the abiding principles, those that drew us in and taught us love, remain the same. Please take a look at some of the new projects at Koinonia and consider a special gift to continue the work begun almost 70 years ago. If you would like to discuss any of these projects, please do not hesitate to call Bren Dubay or me. Look for more information on these projects and the 2012 celebration in future publications.

These are some of the major projects we hope to have mostly completed by the 2012 events.

- Sponsorship for the Clarence Jordan Symposium.
- Donation to complete construction projects: "Meeting House" (dining hall/guesthouse addition & renovation), Reconciliation House, refrigeration unit
- Donation for renovation projects during 2012 Celebration
- Sponsor for the 2012 Koinonia Family Reunion
- Relocating and upgrading museum and archives
- General operating expenses for 2011-2012, allowing us to focus on raising these special funds

So many things are happening at and through Koinonia. I’m reminded of the story about Daddy planting pecan trees one Christmas Day out in the rain. When asked why he was doing such a thing, since it takes 25 years for the trees to produce a crop, Daddy replied—“I’m planting them for the people that are coming after me.”

The people at Koinonia today are doing the same thing – tirelessly, unselfishly. Won’t you join me in helping them “plant” for those coming after them?



Mark Your Calendars

• **September 28-29, 2012 - The Clarence Jordan Symposium**
Kirk Lyman-Barner serves as Chair of this event. President Jimmy Carter and Rosalynn Carter serve as Honorary Chairs. The Symposium will feature speakers across many disciplines who have been influenced by Clarence Jordan and Koinonia: Academics, activists, artists, farmers, theologians, peacemakers, and more.

• **October 1-October Work Projects**
We are planning several rehab projects leading up to the reunion weekend. We hope that some of you will consider coming down and pitching in for a few days or a week. We will post more on these opportunities as they firm up.

• **October 26-28, 2012 -The Koinonia Family Reunion**
The party is open to all. We welcome those who have spent time at Koinonia and those who have been loyal fans and supporters but just never made it down. We will have more information in upcoming issues with event details, local accommodations, and more!

New Man in Town

BY LAURA

NEEF



In 1955, Koinonia established a roadside market along Highway 19, a stop where people could stretch their legs and pass the time with the friendly man behind the counter who sold ham and peanuts and other farm produce. While the market turned a profit for only a few years—racial segregation and the succeeding boycotts quite literally destroyed it—what followed still lives today: our mail order business.

The modern day version of our roadside market still has a friendly man holding everything together, but this time he is behind a computer.

Tucked behind our Welcome Center in a room neatly lined with boxes and packaging materials, a man will greet you with a ready smile and a hand that can play piano as well as any professional.

Carl McNear joined the community as a partner in December 2010, after a time of much patience and prayer while he listened for God’s direction.

“I prayed and then prayed some more,” he said. It was a big decision. He and his wife have two children, a 15-year-old son Christian and a 6-year-old daughter Trinity. Both attend our Educational Cooperative, so there was already a connection. One day while reading the Bible, Carl got the confirmation he was seeking.

“And here I am,” he said.

Carl has been taking advantage of these recent quiet months to reorganize and clean the shipping room, and most days he’s been able to do so and still fill all the orders himself. He knows, though, that come this fall—the busiest season for the mail-order business—more than a few others will be there to help out.

While the mail order business is thriving under his care, it might, in fact, not be his favorite thing about being at Koinonia each day.

What could possibly be better?

“It’s pretty cool seeing my children at lunch every day,” he said.

He’s been known to sneak a peanut butter cookie or two off Trinity’s plate.



The foundation is finished for both the Meeting House addition and the surrounding porch. You can't be in the South and not have a big front porch!

Next we'll put the walls up and the roof on. But we need your help to go beyond that!

Also, the new refrigeration unit is finished. We're putting on the final touches before it's ready for use. Then we'll transfer all our products to the new unit.

A Brief Reflection

BY BREN DUBAY



Kirk Lyman-Barner told me recently of a conversation he had with author Joyce Hollyday. “Civil Rights is often understood as the dramatic events like Rosa Parks’ bus ride,” she said. “But it is the quiet, behind the scenes work of relationship building, forgiveness, and the interaction of people when the press isn’t around that creates lasting change.”

For me, 2011 began with unexpected changes – one that brought insurmountable joy and another that brought inexpressible sorrow. Both have set me to reflecting about those people who bring lasting change to our lives.

Professional theater has been central to my adult life; I’ve acted, produced, and written. Once we moved to Koinonia, though, I thought acting was behind me. Then came Cori Lyman-Barner.

Sumter Players asked her to direct “Nunsense,” and due to what I am certain was temporary insanity, I decided to audition—I must have forgotten that one possible outcome is that you get cast. And I did get cast—in the leading role.

Throughout rehearsals, I observed Cori with growing admiration. She knew what she was doing. She quietly created an environment where we felt safe. Because of that security, we could take risks and soar or fall flat. It didn’t matter which one—Cori didn’t judge, she didn’t coddle. She supported.

Then, suddenly, death shattered this environment. On Sunday, the day we were moving from the rehearsal space into Rylander Theatre, Father Robert Girardeau died. I had seen him just the night

before—I had even chuckled at how happy and full of joy he seemed. Now, at age 48, he was dead.

I have read a great deal about holy people, but, though many, many good people have blessed my life, I don’t think I had ever known a holy person until I met Father Robert. He walked gently on this Earth.

In his presence, it was hard not to think about Jesus. He reflected God’s love with such purity. I could hardly wait to have theological discussions with him about “Nunsense.” Now, 11 days before we were to open the play, he was gone.

There was a prayer service the night he died and three Funeral Masses the following week. Cori and I made the four-hour drive to Savannah for the one held at St. John the Baptist Cathedral, where Father Robert had been ordained a priest 18 years before.

Cori ran lines with me and listened as I sang along with the rehearsal CD all the way to Savannah and back. She didn’t know Father Robert, but she was walking gently with me. There was no coddling, just gentle walking.

Father Robert’s very presence was life giving. His death has brought me and many others inexpressible sorrow.

“Nunsense” opened. We soared—moments of insurmountable joy.

People like Cori and Father Robert are demonstrations for us. Because of them, I am changed. I pray that you, too, experience these kinds of people in your life. When you do, cherish them.

May we all be blessed with those who demonstrate for us how to walk gently on this Earth.

ON THE DISPOSITION OF ANGER

BY CLARENCE JORDAN § “SERMON ON THE MOUNT”

One of the early signs of a disposition of anger is self-pity with its attendant hurt feelings. Craving attention, and not getting as much as you think you should, you become angry and seek to punish those withholding affection from you by making them feel they have hurt you in some way. You sulk and pout and become resentful. This leads to another sign, that of withdrawal.

When you find yourself getting into this mess, it’s time to take immediate action. Listen to what Jesus says! “If you are offering your gift upon the altar” (the disposition of anger will frequently withdraw and seek solace in religion), “and there you remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go out and first get right with your brother and then come back and make your offering” (Matthew 5:23-24). That’s really the only hope for you. The worst thing possible would be to attempt to escape from facing up to your real situation by crying on God’s shoulder. God’ll have none of it—for your benefit. God wants you to stop thinking you have grounds for being mad at other people; it’s probably the other way around. Take the initiative in getting things put right. You’ll be amazed at how much better you and God will get along. Your offering, as well as your whole religious life, will be a joyous thing. Incidentally, you won’t be as apt to be bothered with high blood pressure and stomach ulcers.

“The worst thing possible would be to attempt to escape from facing up to your real situation by crying on God's shoulder.”

Please consider becoming a monthly customer and/or donor. Any amount helps, no matter how small.

If each household donates or purchases just \$35 each year, the budget will be met. Now imagine if each household donated or purchased \$35 per month—we could dramatically increase our ministry efforts and take care of much needed improvements, too! Won't you fill out the form below and partner with us monthly? We'll give you a call to discuss the details of your monthly support.

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I/we pledge to purchase \$_____ monthly.
- ☐ Yes, I will be a monthly donor.
I/we pledge to donate \$_____ monthly.

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Street Address	City	State	Zip
Credit card information, if applicable, check one: <input type="checkbox"/> Visa <input type="checkbox"/> MasterCard			
Number		Expiration Date	

KOINONIA FARM
with Wayne Weisman

**PERMACULTURE
DESIGN COURSE**
Oct 15-22; Early Bird \$1050*

NATURAL BUILDING COURSE
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Take BOTH for just \$1300. Other discounts available.
Tuition includes on-site lodging and 3 meals a day.

For more information contact:
Sarah Prendergast 229.924.0391, sarah@koinoniapartners.org



The cattle herd continues to grow! We welcomed our first two Pineywood calves born at the farm. During the pecan off-season, we rotate our grass-fed cattle through the orchards, so they benefit from the yummy grass growing there (which means less mowing for us!) and provide their home-made fertilizer for the orchards.

A MODERN LOOK AT PALESTINE

PHOTOS AND ARTICLES BY AMANDA MOORE

Brief History

In 1922, with the end of World War I, the League of Nations divided up lands previously occupied by the Ottoman Empire. The British were given a Mandate—authority to govern—in Palestine, Iraq, and Transjordan, later named Jordan. With influence from the Zionist movements in Europe, Britain passed the Balfour Declaration, supporting a national homeland for the Jewish people in the area under British Mandate. The British also made promises to other Arab nations concerning this land. As early as the 1860s, European Jews were already immigrating to Palestine to prepare their new nation.

In 1947, Britain turned over the situation to the United Nations, then only a few years old. Against the will of the people living in the land, the U.N. General Assembly voted to partition the area into two independent states—a Jewish state and a Palestinian state. The Palestinians were allocated 38 percent of the land when they still made up 63 percent of the total population. The Jewish accounted for 30 percent of the population and were allocated 56.5 percent of the land. Jerusalem would be international territory. It should be noted that of the U.N. members, every Middle Eastern country voted against this Resolution.

Several things happened within 24 hours in 1948—the British withdrew before any smooth transition of power could be planned, Israel declared statehood (without declaring its borders), and the first Arab-Israeli war broke out. The armistice lines Israel established with Jordan and Egypt formed the West Bank and Gaza Strip, respectively. These territorial divisions remained until the 1967 War when Israel captured Gaza Strip, the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights, destroying more than 531 villages. No one really knows how many Palestinians and Syrians were killed or forced to become refugees, some of them for the second time. Today there are an estimated 8-10 million Palestinian refugees around the world.

With the oppression turned-genocide of Jews in Germany and other parts of Eastern Europe, Jewish immigration into the Palestine area skyrocketed in the early and mid-1900s. By the 1970s, Palestine—a previously Arab majority area—peaked

at over 70 percent Jewish, almost all immigrants from Europe and the U.S.

Today, Israel's population is nearly 7.7 million, including approximately 296,700 Israeli settlers who live in the West Bank, 19,100 Israeli settlers who live in the Golan Heights, and 192,800 Israeli settlers who live in East Jerusalem. Palestine's population is 4.2 million.

Of the entire 10,733 sq mi area; sovereign Israel controls over 8,416 sq mi. Of the occupied territories, the West Bank is 2,178 sq mi, Gaza Strip is 139 sq mi., and Golan Heights is 690 sq mi.

As of yet, there is no lasting peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinian Authority—the internationally recognized Palestinian government based in West Bank. Since 2007, Gaza Strip has been ruled by the rival political party Hamas. Just this May, the two parties have agreed to reconcile under one Palestinian government, in preparation for declaring Palestinian statehood at the U.N. in September 2011.



Two impediments to the peace process:

Settlements

From 1967 to mid-2010, Israel established 121 “settlements,” over 100 “outposts” (settlements built without official authorization but with support and assistance of Israeli government), and 12 neighborhoods—all in areas internationally recognized as Palestinian territory. In the West Bank, with the extensive network of settler roads and restrictions of Palestinian land ownership and use, these settlements dominate more than 40 percent of the entire West Bank.

Many settlers believe that Israel has

rights to all of the surrounding territory—well beyond Palestine borders—through the covenant God made with Abraham and his descendants. These Israeli settlers are known to be violent, sabotaging wells, killing livestock, uprooting trees, even killing their neighbors. Palestinians retaliate with similar violence.

Jane Hilal of the Applied Research Institute described the impact these settlements have on Palestine's access to water. “There is enough water,” she said. “There is just an issue of political control.” With Israel taking more than 83 percent of the water collected by the Aquifer, Palestinians face shortages or are forced to buy their own water from Israel—at almost double the price Israelis pay—while many settlers enjoy large swimming pools in their homes.

Throughout the decades, the U.N. repeatedly condemned these settlements and declared them illegal. In February 2011, the Security Council brought a resolution co-sponsored by over 120 of the U.N.'s 192 member states that would halt settlement construction and expansion. Of the 15 countries voting, 14 supported the resolution. However, the U.S. vetoed it, saying it “harmed chances for peace talks.” Since then, Israel has only increased their demolition of Palestinian homes in preparation for new or expanded Israeli settlements.

The Wall

Israel began building what it calls a “security fence” in 2002. When complete, the barrier is expected to be approximately 500 miles long, costing \$1.2 million per mile. Up to 10 percent of this fence is a 25-ft high concrete wall. Numerous security checkpoints are set up along this wall and throughout the entire West Bank, severely restricting Palestinian movement in their own territory.

The barrier cuts deeply into the West Bank territory. Between 8 and 12 percent of the West Bank is or will end up on the Israeli side, including hundreds of thousands of Palestinians. Families are separated, getting to work and school is a daily battle, access to healthcare and clean water is restricted, and farmers are separated from their olive groves that have been their families' sole livelihood for generations.

In October 2003, a U.N. resolution declared the barrier illegal where it deviates from the green line and should be torn down in these places. The U.S. vetoed this resolution.

Israel built on the backs of America?

Since 2000, more than 1,084 Israelis and 6,430 Palestinians have been killed, including 124 and 1,452 children, respectively. The Palestinian economy is crippled by the control of its borders and internal transport of goods. Fertile agricultural land has become no man's land, another global refugee crisis has been created, and Israel's relationship with its neighbors is precarious at best.

Unfortunately, nothing will change until the Palestinians and Israelis are able and willing to sit alone at a table as equals and negotiate land, borders, shared resources, and work together to come up with creative solutions to their internal problems. Until then, the superpowers of the world—U.S. being chief—will continue to determine the fate of the situation.

The U.S. gave \$3 billion in military aid to Israel this year, an estimated 18.2 percent of their defense budget. This doesn't include non-military government aid, any of the private donations raised to help construct and expand settlements, or the donations by fundamentalist churches who believe Jesus will return when Israelis control all of their ancestral land.

Instead of increasing military aid each year, which only serves to further the tension and violence, we the American citizens—especially those who claim to follow Christ's teaching—should demand that our money be spent finding creative solutions to the world's problems, not perpetuating an ethnic cleansing based on religious and cultural principles.

We should work to build a world where children of all nationalities are allowed to grow and learn in safety and security of their place in this world.

Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann once said, “I am certain the world will judge the Jewish state by how it will treat the Arabs.” This is true of Americans as well, and every other international power that allows this situation to continue. As we judge those who came before us who allowed awful atrocities to happen in their lifetime, so we are being judged now and will be judged in the pages of history.





PALESTINE TODAY continued from page 1



The thought of being enclosed in this massive cement wall terrified me.

The checkpoint closed at midnight, our friend said, which

means no Palestinian can pass through overnight, no matter the reason, even in the case of an emergency. This didn't help my fear.

Here are a few of the stories I heard in the weeks to follow:

In Bethlehem, George Saadeh shared about his daughter Christine, who was killed eight years ago by an Israeli soldier who opened fire on their car. This experience gave him the strong belief in the power of forgiveness. He is now a member of the Parent's Circle, an Israeli-Palestinian support group and serves as principal of Shepherd's Field school and the Deputy Mayor of Bethlehem. Of the 30,000 graduates in Bethlehem every year, only 3,000 find employment. Graduates used to find work in surrounding areas like Jerusalem, which is six miles away, but they are no longer allowed.

Israeli veteran Dana Golan works with Breaking the Silence, a group that seeks to expose the Israeli public to the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories. "After 2 months," she said, "you stop seeing the Arabs as human beings anymore. They are the people you have to control, and you don't even want to do this. ... We all share one feeling—we were taught to do something different from what our family taught us, and that made us entirely different people."

In the Negev, 45 Bedouin villages face an end to their ancient way of life. The Israeli government views these 150,000 Bedouins—nearly 90,000 of whom are now Israeli citizens—as illegal squatters on the land they've inhabited for centuries. Many of these ancient Arab tribes have already been forced into refugee-style villages without electricity or running water. Like many others, the village of Alsira has a demolition order on every structure.

In Golan Heights, the land is still littered with land mines. This community is largely a farming area. They receive as much water each year as Europe does, but since the Israeli occupation, farmers only receive 30% of the water needed to produce a good harvest. Families who live on opposite sides of the border occasionally speak through a megaphone across the deep valley that divides them.

In Turkey, we visited several of ancient Ottoman and Byzantine ruins. We visited many of the ancient Biblical ancient ruins, including the House of Mary,



Below left, Hazem and Mattie pose for peace in front of the wall. Above, the view of Jerusalem and Israeli settlement from Bannoura's rooftop. Right, Tree of Life members with Jamileh Bannoura, center, George, and Bara'.

where John took her to live in Ephesus.

Perhaps the most formative lesson of the entire trip for me, though, came from the two days I lived with the Bannoura family in Beit Sahour—the village where those famous shepherds were watching their flock on a very special night 2,000 years ago. Jacoub and Jamileh spoke little English, but their actions showed they treasured me better than any words they could've said. In their home I felt cherished, like a precious jewel. Their 27-year-old son Hazem is studying to become a tour guide, so we let him practice with us, taking us through many of the holy sites in Bethlehem and touring the infamous Wall. My fellow traveler Mattie Renn and I formed an instant bond with Hazem. We spent two days sharing stories, discussing theology, dancing wildly at a dinner party, smoking nargeela—the "Hubbly Bubbly" as they call it—and thoroughly enjoying each others' presence.

The night before we were to leave Beit Sahour, Mattie, Hazem, and I stood on Hazem's rooftop. We had an amazing view of Jerusalem, an Israeli settlement where protected forest once existed, and into Jordan. As we surveyed the lands and the heavens, we shared with each other our hopes, our frustrations, and our dreams for the future. We weren't ready to say goodbye to each other yet, but Mattie and I were going to Jerusalem the next morning, where Palestinians are not allowed without special permission from the Israeli government.

"Imagine," Hazem said, "A 10-minute walk, but I cannot go. I don't know why. Maybe in 10 years or more, I can go." The next night we were on the opposite side of the wall, staring into the Occupied Territory at Hazem's village. We were literally just a few miles from his home, but until the Wall is torn down, he and his family will not see the view from this side.

As we were traveling in Turkey, I received word that my 48-year-old priest and close friend Father Robert Girardeau had suddenly died of a heart attack. I was utterly devastated. I came home early, just in time for his funeral Mass and burial, but I will never forget the way my traveling companions helped to care for



me in the midst of my grief. Our group had become family in those few short weeks. I'm thankful for God's hand of protection and comfort through these dear brothers and sisters.

I returned home exhausted in every way possible—emotionally, physically, and spiritually. I struggled readjusting to my own life. There are moments when all I wanted was to stand on

Hazem's rooftop again, taking comfort in the quiet stillness of the night, or to have lunch with Father Robert and share with him what I experienced. The process of reconciling my faith with what I witnessed and learned is still confusing and sometimes overwhelming.

One thing is crystal clear, though—this "occupation" is in no way legally or morally acceptable. It is incomprehensible to me how our global society can continually support such mass-scale oppression. In our collective consciousness we have the Civil Rights Movement, Holocaust, Rwandan genocide, South African Apartheid, aboriginal ethnic cleansing and so many other examples of what happens when societal racism is left unchecked. We cannot continue ignoring history's lessons.

At Koinonia, we're already building on relationships formed during this trip. This summer we welcome three Palestinians to share in our life for a few weeks: Jiries Atrash, who coordinates the Tree of Life trips; Amal Abu Alkhom of "Bedouin Women for Themselves"; and Nawal Sami Shomali, Director of le petit Prince School. We're excited to see what doors of opportunity God opens through these and other new-found friendships.

For more stories and photos, visit my blog Return to God at <http://returntogod.wordpress.com>.



Page opposite, Hazem, Mattie, Elaine, and George try to push over the wall. Far left, I renew my baptismal promises in the Jordan River. Near left, I stand next the Door of Humility at the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem. Right, Fr. Robert offers Eucharist to the Church.





HOPE OF THE LIVING STONES

Jeremiah 6:16 “Thus says the Lord: “Stand by at the crossroads and look, and ask for the ancient paths, where the good way lies; and walk in it, and find rest for your souls.”

Throughout my journey in Israel and Palestine, a simple children’s song continually ran through my mind. “Father Abraham had many sons, and many sons had Father Abraham. I am one of them, and so are you. So let’s just praise the Lord.”

From the time I was a child singing this in VBS, I never questioned God’s care and concern for all of his creation, regardless of race or religion. I’ve never had this belief challenged as strongly as it was in Israel, particularly in Hebron while visiting Haram al-Ibrahimi, Abraham’s tomb.

This 1,000-year-old sanctuary enshrines the tombs of Abraham and Sarah, Isaac, Jacob, and their wives. In 1967, Israel captured the Mosque and has since converted part of it to a Jewish Synagogue and restricted Palestinian access.

In line at a checkpoint near the Mosque, I watched as a mother struggled to get her groceries and children through the small revolving gate. After taking my turn through the gate, I looked up to see an automatic rifle pointed directly at my face by a young Israeli soldier, his finger hovering over the trigger. Panic struck my heart until I realized that was a typical “warm welcome” into Israel.

In the Mosque we attempted a moment of silent prayer but were stopped. “You know we cannot do this here,” the Israeli guard told Jiries. “Maybe in America, but not here.” There we stood—Christians, Muslims, Jews—all of us pointing back to Father Abraham. Yet, even on this most unifying ground, we still fight and push each other away. We journey to holy ancient shrines built of dead

stones but reject the living stones God places in our path.

Returning through the narrow Hebron streets, we came upon Israeli settlers touring the Old City. Because of the violence, settlers are especially heavily guarded here. The soldiers stopped and formed a barrier around them. The tension in the air nearly smothered me. I was terrified as I slid past a soldier, careful not to bump his hand on the trigger. Over his shoulder I caught the eye of a young woman about my age. I wondered if she—like so many Hebron settlers—had moved here from America. I quickly averted my glance, but not before I noticed the terror in her eyes. She was just as afraid as I was.



The Ibrahimi Mosque is a sacred site in all three Abrahamic faith traditions. Pictured in the center the Mihrab, or prayer niche, indicates the direction toward Mecca. The Minbar, or the pulpit, is the wooden structure on the right.

When we allow the Confuser’s fear to control our hearts and minds, we forget who we are in relation to each other. Instead of a tender reception at the gate, the stranger receives a hostile welcome. Where the handshake of peace should be between two brothers, a rifle stands in its place. Where two sisters should share an embrace, they instead have an armed soldier between them.

Religion and its customs should route us to a way of life that allows humanity to see God. It should not become a barrier among his creation.

Too often we use scripture as a divisive tool to defend these barriers that exist between us. We lift certain verses, ignoring their context. When we look at the full narrative of the Old Testament concerning the Israelites, we see what God was accomplishing by calling the Israelites by his name, why God would establish people in a land.

They were chosen to do something, to be something special—to demonstrate God’s eternal kingdom on Earth, to express and to mirror virtues of his own character. What I witnessed of the state of Israel is clearly not a demonstration of God’s kingdom.

When people become the target of racism and violence as the Jewish people were in the Nazi Holocaust, it’s understandable that they seek to create security for themselves, but we cannot allow our world to be ruled by fear. We must move forward by remembering who we were before the fear animated our actions, before our relationship was broken.

As Melkite Christian Abuna Elias Chacour said, “We Jews and Palestinians do not need to learn how to live together, we need just to remember how we used to live together for centuries and centuries.”

We stand at a crossroads. We have an obligation to the Jewish people who desperately need security of place in this world, to the Palestinians who, as Abuna Chacour said, “were forced

to become the Jews of the Jews,” and to the next group who will take their place. Through forgiveness and reconciliation, we can break this cycle of fear and violence before it is passed on again.

We must look for the ancient paths, where the good way lies—letting go of our fear, our pride, and our sense of entitlement in order to remember who we are and what our purpose is. And if we walk in it, we will find rest for our weary souls.

I was so encouraged by those we visited who are actively seeking this ancient path, who were willing to be living bridges in this land so littered with walls - The Parents' Circle, Tent of Nations, Breaking the Silence, and so many other beacons of light.

The Bedouin village Shegev Shalom is involved in a program that brings together Jewish Israeli and Arab Bedouin teens. We talked with these young people during our visit. Tamara, a 14-year-old Bedouin said, "It's pretty important to see each other and know each other as friends, and to be together like brothers and sisters."

These bridges build hope in a land that knows too well the outcome of fear. As St. John Climacus said so long ago in these very lands, "Hope is the power behind love. When hope fails, so does love."

Fear not, God says. For behold, I created you all in our image. Love one another as I have loved you.

“ I WAS NOT BORN A CHRISTIAN. I WAS BORN A BABY. ONLY A BABY. I WAS CREATED IN THE IMAGE AND LIKENESS OF GOD. ”
- ABUNA ELIAS CHACOUR



Just outside of the Mosque countless young heavily armed soldiers stand around guarding the streets where 500 Israeli settlers live among Palestinians in Hebron.

OPEN LETTER TO CHURCH LEADERS

BY DAVID GOOD

[Editor's Note: This article is a condensed version of "Open Letter to Church Leaders," published by Americans for Middle East Understanding. Please read the full letter at www.ameu.org. David Good is a pastor in Connecticut and former chairman of Koinonia Board of Directors.]

Our church first became involved in the Israeli-Palestinian issue after the tragedy of 9/11, and at least some of us began to see that terrible tragedy and the subsequent war in Iraq and so many other problems in the Middle East as being inextricably linked to the unresolved conflict between Israel and Palestine.

"Tree of Life" was the name we gave our church's engagement on this issue, and we have been blessed to have many from other faith traditions as partners—Catholic, Protestant, Greek Orthodox, Jewish, and Muslim. The theologian Paul Ricoeur said that the symbol gives rise to thought, and as people ponder this universal symbol, my hope is that this will be a reminder that we do not live in an orchard, with a Jewish tree, a Christian tree and a Muslim tree in separate locations. Rather, we are all branches on the Sacred Tree of Life, drawing sustenance from the "Ground of our Being," dwelling in a state of mutual interdependence. The Book of Revelation tells us that the leaves of the Tree of Life are for the "healing of the nations." Note the "s" on the end. It is an important reminder to move beyond our nationalism and to embrace our common humanity.

One of the things we resolved was that we needed to redouble our efforts to strengthen our interfaith community. Little did we know then that discussions with our Jewish and Muslim neighbors would lead us right into the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, taking us on nine annual "Tree of Life Journeys" to Israel and the occupied territories in which over 200 have participated. These journeys, in turn, have led to five annual interfaith conferences in which we have tried to amplify the voices of conscience of Israelis and Palestinians—Jews, Christians, and Muslims—who have been working for a just and peaceful resolution to what they often refer to as "the American-Israeli occupation."

Another major emphasis in our Tree of Life endeavors is trying to involve our young people. Upon visiting the Holy Land, Pope John Paul said that what is needed "are fewer walls and more bridges." As an attempt to respond to that

wisdom, our church established a "Bridges of Hope" program in partnership with the community of Beit Sahour. Each year, we have brought over young people from that community as ambassadors of their Palestinian culture and community, to show the human face of those too often dismissed by our media as "terrorists."

Around the ancient walls of Jerusalem there are many gates - Jaffa Gate, Damascus Gate, and New Gate to name a few. But if you were standing in the Garden of Gethsemane, looking across the Kidron Valley, the gate you would see is "The Golden Gate." It is completely walled in and some believe it will be so until the Messiah comes. For that reason it is also called the Messiah's Gate.

If we believe as St. Paul said, that "Christ is all and is in all," then that Messianic spirit is present within each one of us and the work that we do in our churches, synagogues, and mosques and all other faith traditions as well. If that is the case, then as the Hopi Elders have said, "We are the ones we've been waiting for."

I know it may seem outrageous, but we are the answer to someone else's prayer. We have a sufficiency of God's loving spirit to bring hope and joy to the children of this world. We can be a bridge between the Israelis and the Palestinians. We can be a gate in a place that has known so many walls. We will live and work and dream for that day when the streets of Jerusalem shall be filled with boys and girls, Jews and Christians and Muslims playing in the street, no longer divided, no longer afraid. We will do all this because we are God's anointed. We are the answer to someone else's prayer.

Like so many of the biblical journeys, "we set off not knowing where we were to go," and little did we know back in 2001 what an amazing, sometimes tumultuous, but oftentimes inspiring road this would be. To be sure, there has been opposition—both from inside and outside our church—but I would invite all of our churches to become more actively engaged on this, one of the most critically important human rights challenges of our day.

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"I would invite all of our church leaders to become more actively engaged on this, one of the most critically important human rights challenges of our day."

Flourishing in the Face of Injustice

Daher's Vineyard is a family owned farm near Bethlehem in Palestine. It was a home away from home for me, complete with chickens, goats, and rusted out vehicles used for animal shelters. The land was purchased in 1916 by a Christian family, the Nassar family, and has been farmed by all four generations since. Five Israeli settlements now surround this 100-acre farm that, since 1991, has struggled simply to remain.

In 1991, the Israeli government declared the whole area, including Daher's Vineyard, Israeli state property. Since then, the Nassar family has attempted to prove their ownership of the Daher Vineyard to the satisfaction of the Israeli courts. The struggle has cost them well over \$150,000.

Both the Israeli government and the Israeli settlers pressure them to leave. One settler came and said, "You have no right to be on this land. It is our [Israeli] land." "I have papers," Daoud said, "showing this is my family farm. We bought it in 1916." The settler replied, "You have papers from the state, but do you have papers from above [from God]?"

It reminded me of Koinonia's own story set in the Deep South. Daher's Vineyard was violently attacked until 2003. Over 400 trees were uprooted by neighboring settlers. The Israeli army tried three times to build a settler road through the farm. When that didn't work, they blocked the farm road with huge boulders. Last year, the family received 9 demolition orders for various structures on their farm, which means that the Israeli army can demolish parts of their farm at any time.

"The land control is the top issue for Palestine," Daoud said, "because without land we won't have a future. And without its people, the land will not have a future."

Just as Clarence Jordan felt claimed by the Georgia-red clay, so the Nasser family feels claimed by this Palestinian-red clay. When Daoud was offered millions of dollars to sell the farm and move away, his response was nearly word-for-word the same as Clarence's when he was pressured to sell Koinonia Farm and move away. "This land is our mother," Daoud said. "Our mother is not for sale." Clarence's response: "They might as well ask you, 'Why don't you sell your mother?' Somehow God has made us out of this old soil and we go back to it and we never lose its claim on us."

Daoud refuses to be beaten down, to be backed into a corner or take the easy road. "We refuse to be enemies,"



Daoud said. "We do not want to become a victim; it's a very dangerous mindset. So we decided to break the chains and overcome the evil with good."

Daoud and his family run Tent of Nations, an international organization seeking to build bridges across cultures. Their ministry effort is two-fold: People and land. With the help of international volunteers, they provide several local and international ministries. They reach out to their neighbors with peace efforts, and try to build a better future for their children. "We will have to face reality together and share the land, even if we don't want to," Daoud said. "We must do it for future generations."

Their ministry for the land is very similar to Koinonia's agricultural efforts. Through their farming practices and educational training, Tent of Nations strives to restore a right relationship between humanity and Mother Nature, specifically through organic farming and alternative energy.

Daoud is well-aware of the risk he runs by challenging the Israeli government, but knows the importance of taking this risk.

"There is a way for a better future," Daoud said, "but you cannot have it given to you. You must shape it. [...] I believe always in small steps, like a mosaic, small stones to shape the picture."

One of these small steps is to "plant for peace"—inviting others to come plant trees at Daher's Vineyard. Our group planted nearly 40 olive trees while we were there. We planted these trees to nourish not only the people who will see them everyday and be reminded of our friendship, but also to nourish this rocky soil that cries out in thirst for justice. No longer to be fallow in fear of uproot, but to flourish in the face of injustice. To bring peace to a soil that has known war and violence for far too long. For even when we choose to remain silent, the rocks cry out in praise to God, and I believe they cry out for peace and justice among God's creation.

Learn more at www.tentofnations.org.

IN A NUTSHELL
THE STORY OF
KOINONIA

Koinonia, Greek for loving community, was founded in 1942 to be a “demonstration plot for the Kingdom of God,” sharing resources, work, and prayer much like the early Christian example found in the Book of Acts.

Our most deeply held beliefs are drawn from Jesus' teachings—peacemaking, radical sharing, and brother/sisterhood among people. In the 1950s and 60s, Koinonia was fiercely reviled by many for these beliefs. Enduring violence and rejection even from local churches, Koinonia survived only by God's faithful protection. Our mail-order pecan business brought us through years of local boycott, and it remains our main source of earned income.

Koinonia is also a haven of down-to-earth theology. Founding member Clarence Jordan was a farmer and a Greek scholar. He penned the “Cotton Patch Version” into South Georgia vernacular, seeking to place the New Testament scripture in the 'here and now' of his day. His books and lively sermons are still beloved today, and his version of Matthew continues to be produced on stage as the “Cotton Patch Gospel” Musical.

Our life of service has taken various forms through the years. In the early days, we extended friendship to our neighbors, mostly Black sharecroppers and tenant farmers. Partnership Housing, which later became Habitat for Humanity, was born here to help neighbors afford decent, simple homes.

Our current works include sustainable agriculture, local ministries, internship program, educational offerings and, as always, welcoming people to walk with us on this journey.

Come join our story!

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CHANGING THE WORLD: ONE BITE
AT A TIME

by Sarah Prendergast and Amanda Moore

“Only when the last tree has died and the last river been poisoned and the last fish been caught will we realize we cannot eat money.”

~ Cree Indian Proverb

When it comes to food, money is often the determining factor in what is grown, who grows it, and the process chosen to grow it. Markets demand large-scale, low-cost food production in order to ensure the highest profit margins. Not that profitability is a bad thing for a farm business, but we must ensure that our profits are not compromising the health and well-being of the earth and those who live on it.

More frightening is that food has gone from being an item of basic necessity to an item on the stock exchange. Speculation in the commodities market has risen to the point that investors in "grain futures" outnumber grain farmers almost four to one. In other words, there is more money to be made on imaginary wheat shares than in the actual production of a wheat harvest.

To show just how perverse our system has become, an estimated 70 percent of the world's poor are people who grow food for a living. In some countries, there isn't adequate access to food—not because it's

not available, but because it is all destined for export. For these farmers, cheaper food is imported onto their tables so the companies can realize a maximum profit.

It's hard for Americans to imagine such effects of the international food market because on average we spend only one-tenth of our income on food. So if a loaf of bread rises 50 cents, the effect is barely noticed. However, for the poorest 2 billion people who spend between 50 to 100 percent of their income on food, when prices rise, they are forced to cut out entire meals from their day.

To further complicate things, the politics of the Environmentalist Movement in America are often just as unrealistic in their expectations of land use and its effect on the food market. "Green" protesters demand that cattle be removed from soils that have been natural rangelands for thousands of years, and that humans keep off the grass. Such extreme restriction of land use only increases our dependence

on imported food in order to appease the growing demands of American appetites.

Balanced management is the answer, not extremism in any direction. We must observe and mimic the delicate balance we find in nature. Even more difficult, we must do this in a food market that demands unnatural, mass production with no regard to regional access.

We at Koinonia are part of a movement to make sense of this muddle. In April, Bren and Brendan attended a workshop in Holistic Resource Management. Holistic planning is a values-based system for setting concrete goals that address the need for healthy soils to produce clean food sources as well as a more stable, bio-diverse ecosystem. And, to sweeten the deal, a well-managed holistic plan ensures reasonable profits that enable farmers to enjoy quality of life as they dedicate themselves to feeding the hungry.

We invite you to join us in the mission to provide real, clean, delicious food to all who hunger. Together, let's use our monetary tool kit to change the world, one bite at a time.

A Fresh Look at Community

by Douglas Rountree, Spring 2011 Intern

My experience as a seasonal intern at Koinonia has been different from what I first expected. I came in with several preconceived ideas of the community; some of them were right and some were wrong. What surprised me most about Koinonia, I suppose, was its young spirit.

The community has undergone significant changes in the past six years. It recommitted to a communal way of life in 2005, and in 2008 it obeyed the call to a new direction in permaculture farming. This new direction can be felt in the air. Koinonia has a rich history reaching back into the 1940s, but the spirit of the community is largely that of the start of spring. We're planting new seeds. Some old plants still stand strong and tall, and some new plants are already dropping fruit; but everywhere, we're in the process of planting seeds. Something new is growing.

I have also found that the community's invitation to share in “aspects of the Christian faith” is not an exhortation to believe as they do. I have retained my own particular faith without conflict here. I pause and pray at the ringing of the prayer bell; I sing; I partake in communion; and never once have I violated my own sense of truth. I follow the spirit of these things and not the letter. My faith has not conformed to theirs, but has grown in its own right, strengthened by theirs.

I don't want to heap endless praises on Koinonia or paint it as a utopia, though. It is a general rule that where there are people there are also problems. We must remember that even the disciples had conflicts with each other and were flawed individuals.

They fell asleep at prayer; we don't always follow the prayer bell. Paul had disagreements with them; we have

disagreements with each other.

People are often surprised and disappointed when I tell them that here, as anywhere else, there are conflicts, short tempers, and bad moods. What makes Koinonia different is that here, we actively seek reconciliation. This is the reality of community and the hope implicit in Christian community.

My experience here has been one of struggling growth. I've spent my life bent over books. Now I am working with my hands and muscles; my jeans are always dirty. The conflict and comfort that comes from communal relationships is shaping me as a person. Learning to be of service to others, and being of use to the community has been gratifying. I don't know where I will go from here or what impact Koinonia will have on my future life. I can't even begin to make predictions in that direction. Something, however, is different.



COME WALK WITH US

There are two ways to come and walk with us for a while: As a visitor, or a seasonal intern. The seasonal internship program lasts roughly three months, introducing the individual to the prayer, work, study, service, and fellowship of the community. It is also the first step in our process to membership.

Seasonal interns who desire a longer period of time to serve and learn in community living may petition to become a community intern. This internship is usually one year.

By invitation and affirmation of the community, a community intern becomes 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 the next step in the process, becoming a provisional member, called a novice. The novitiate is a final period of time to discern full membership in the koinonia.

When ready, the person may be invited to pass from provisional membership to full membership, becoming a steward. A steward enters into a covenant that promises a life-long commitment.

There are also non-communal members called partners. Partners support and actively participate in Koinonia's mission and vision in a role more focused on the work of the farm.