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Intentional Community Curriculum

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Sharpening Intellect | Deepening Christian Faith | Inspiring Action

Messiah College is a Christian college of the liberal and applied arts and sciences. Our mission is to educate men and women toward maturity of intellect, character and Christian faith in preparation for lives of service, leadership and reconciliation in church and society.
Intentional Community Curriculum

A Senior Honors Project by Jared Armistead, 2017
Section 1: Establishing a Vision

Your Program

Welcome to this curriculum for intentional community. This curriculum is meant to be accompanied by experience, since, as many communitarians such as David Janzen often say, you cannot learn community from a book. It is something that must be experienced, a set of actions and disciplines lived out and grown in the fertile soil of concrete community. Therefore, I have set up a hypothetical program to go hand-in-hand with this curriculum, in the hopes that it may be adapted to different contexts, or perhaps even utilized for its intended purpose.

This curriculum is designed for implementation in a set of two for-credit classes, one per semester, as well as a fully immersive experience in a Special Interest House at Messiah College. These classes would occur twice a week for an hour per class, adding up to two academic credits per semester. In addition, the Special Interest House would be either all men, all women, or possibly one of each, as is currently the case with the Men’s and Women’s Restoration Houses. You, as the primary advisor/facilitator of this housing, would be in close communication with the Resident Director of Special Interest Housing (currently Kevin Williams) and the RA in order to model good collaboration.

Teacher Requirements

As the advisor and professor for this particular course, you have a number of unusual guidelines and values. First of all, you are not only the leader, but also a key participant in the holistic learning experience that is this class. Therefore, you must not only be present in classes, but available for conversation and down time. You are the model for building community, which means that students need to see you more than simply in class. If this requires having meals with them on a regular basis, participating in their lives, or simply being around, you must make every effort to make yourself a worthy model to follow. Examine one of the texts for this class, the 12 Marks of a New Monasticism, to find out what values you can embrace in modeling community for these students.

Second, you must be available to mediate conflict and to build relationships. Students will follow your example and respect you if you are available and respect them, and you may be needed to help resolve issues within the housing part of the class. Embrace your identity as the leader! You will find that you grow close with students in a way that will mutually benefit each other.

The Application Process

First of all, before you start to talk about community, you need to learn about your students. This curriculum is meant to be taught to a group of students who are not only intellectually learning about intentional community, but experiencing it as well. Therefore, your process of application to both the class and the housing is vitally important to figuring out how your class will unfold, and how much the students are going to learn. Here are some potential ideas for application questions:
• Do you have any prior experience living in community? (Dorms, shared housing, etc.)

• What interests you about intentional community?

I would strongly advise against admitting someone into the community who is not prepared to deal with conflict, overcome relational obstacles, and fight for their relationships in community. Unless there is a driving passion and sense of commitment, it will be difficult to make decisions and keep going in the face of conflict or difficulty.

• Who have been the most significant people in your life?

Individual history and context is a central part of each of us. If you are going to truly know your students, and they are truly going to know each other, you must learn what is important to them as well as share what is important to you.

• How do you typically deal with conflict?

Conflict resolution is a major part of intentional community. If your students are unable to resolve conflict in a healthy way, they will be stunted in their ability to grow and learn. After all, it is the community dynamics, not the information, which is central. Therefore, while your students do not need to have experience with conflict resolution, they do need to at least have the personal will to do so. This question will determine whether or not they have this personal will.

• Do you know any of the people that you are applying with? If so, explain your history with them.

It may be helpful to find out who has history with whom. If some of your students know each other, they may end up dividing the community or excluding certain people. In addition, you may need to give certain people more attention than others in the initial weeks, to make sure that they are not being excluded and connecting well with others in the community.

• What is your Myers-Briggs personality type?

Knowledge of personality types helps immensely in discovering how your students think and learn. Use the link here (https://www.16personalities.com/free-personality-test) to learn your personality type, and how it interacts with others. You may wish to have your students take this as part of their application process. It is important to find out who your leaders are and who will dominate the conversation or decision-making so that you can make sure everyone has an equal say in casting a vision for their community.
Understanding Vision

Story is one of the most important parts of our identity. Therefore, the first thing that has to happen for community to do well is sharing stories with each other. As the instructor, it is your role to help facilitate your students investing in each other. This means that the first thing you should do, after going through your syllabus, is have each student share their story, specifically as it pertains to intentional community. Why are they in this program? Who are they? What do they want to get out of it?

In order to do this, assign a short paper on the first day of class. Ask the students to provide a brief outline of their lives, including the most important moments, most important relationships, and ways in which they have experienced community. Then, spend the remainder of the week, perhaps up to three lessons, focusing exclusively on getting to know people and hearing their stories. Once everyone has shared sufficiently, you are ready to move on to receiving and finding the vision of the community. This vision will be what your students feel God is calling them to as a collective.

Covenant-Making

Depending on what you have heard from your students, it is largely up to you how far you want to push them in terms of making some kind of document or covenant to define their intentions together. It is extremely healthy to have some sort of vision statement or set of agreements that your students can point to as their primary purpose as a group. This vision will be whatever they see as their God-given purpose together. Take part of a class period helping your students formulate their core values based on the stories that you have been hearing. From that list, help them write up a statement that states what the vision they have for their time together is. Some examples are given below:

- We strive to create a safe place where a passion for community and pursuit of God is cultivated.
- We, as a house, seek to become a powerful expression of intentional community for our community through corporate prayer, service, and hospitality.

Conclusion and Recommended Reading

Now that your students are gathered and have a preliminary idea of what their experience in community will accomplish, you are prepared to begin studying the intricacies of intentional community. However, either you or your students may have additional questions regarding vision-casting or other themes in this section. Many leadership books have valuable resources pertaining to vision-casting. Bill Robinson’s *Incarnate Leadership* provides an excellent view of Christlike leadership. In addition, the chapters on defining core values, mission and vision, and developing a ministry plan in Anthony and Estep’s *Management Essentials for*
Christian Ministries provide a clear and succinct way of thinking about planning and organization that would be invaluable for this project.²

For books on story, the best books I have come across have been *Waking the Dead* and *Epic*, both by John Eldredge.³ While his other books deal with the topic of story, Eldredge focuses extensively on how our view of ourselves in God’s story shaped our identity.

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Section 2: Biblical Community

Israel and Community

This section of the curriculum is a study of community through Scripture. There are multiple Biblical passages and practices for students to discuss and analyze in order to embrace an accurate and well-founded view of Christian community. While it has primarily been the New Testament witness that has influenced intentional community movements over the course of Christian history, it is the story of Israel that plays a large part in shaping the context of early church community. Therefore, a holistic understanding of community must include the Old Testament.

Your students will begin their study of community with an overview of the Biblical story. If they have already taken their Encountering the Bible requirement, they should have this knowledge. However, if this is not the case, you may need to provide them with supplementary information. As long as your students have a basic knowledge of Israel's history, however, you will have no problem continuing. Most of the main points as relevant to community will be covered in this section.

The Story of the Old Testament

Lesson One

First, in order to understand community in context, we must cover some information about the first-ever Biblical community: Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Thankfully, your students have already largely covered the story of creation in their Created and Called for Community class. However, you will want to emphasize the communal nature of the garden, as well as the breaking of community that occurs between the humans and God. To do so, have your students read Genesis 2:4-3:24 for homework and have them discuss the communal aspects of what they have read during the class. Listed below are some discussion questions in case your students are not contributing questions.

- How does God create the man? What does this say about his nature?
- How does God create the woman? Why do you think God does it this way?
- What do you think the hiding in the passage represents?
- What does God's judgment on the humans say about community?

You may wish to provide some additional reading for your students if they are particularly interested. I would recommend James Faulconer’s article “Adam and Eve—Community: Reading Genesis 2-3.” Despite being written from a Mormon perspective, which means the relationship between God and humans is viewed as

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extremely distant after the Fall, this article is both thought-provoking and insightful in regards to what Genesis 2-3 says about humans and community.

Next, you must inspect the story of Abraham. Abraham’s call and promise are vital to a proper understanding of Biblical community, since he is viewed as the father of all major monotheistic traditions. To come to this understanding, have students investigate Genesis 15:1-6 and Genesis 17 in class, since these passages serve to show the familial ties that bind both the people of Israel and the Church. After your students read these, you must explain the nature of communal cultures, since the differences between Abraham’s culture and our Western individualistic one are paramount.

First of all, ancient near Eastern culture did not value the individual as much as it valued the group and interests of the group. Family bonds and commitments, as well as ancestry, were much more important than in Western culture, and the commitment to one’s locality and family was much more telling than personality or even life experience. Instead of having autonomy to decide your own role in culture, you were given an identity from birth that was controlled until your death. In fact, one’s family and locality typically was an indicator of their personality. This idea is known as collectivism, which contrasts with our Western individualism.5

Second, the concepts of honor and shame were much more powerful than our Western concepts of guilt and innocence. The amount of honor a person or family has determines their social standing, and the amount of social respect and inclusion they would receive from others.6 In addition, shame played a part in the framework of punishment, since ostracization from society was much worse than our typical punishments in Western cultures. This type of culture is called a shame society, and is common throughout Asia in particular, contrasting with our Western guilt society.7

Lesson Two

Once you feel your students have appropriately grasped the cultural context, discuss the role of family that plays a part in the Abrahamic narrative. This family motif will play a major part in your later investigation of the early church and their practices. The early church believed that they were the true descendants of Abraham and his calling and promise. The church father Justin stated:

He called Abraham and commanded him to go out from the country where he was living. With this call he has roused us all, and now we have

5 For more information, research Cigdem Kagitçibasi, a Turkish psychologist who has done a wide range of work on individualism and collectivism.
left the state and the evil ways we shared with its inhabitants. We shall inherit the holy land together with Abraham, and we shall take possession of our inheritance for all eternity, for having believed like Abraham, we are his children. Just as Abraham believed the word of God, and this was counted to him as righteousness, in the same way do we believe the word of God, which, after being spoken to us first through the prophets, was proclaimed to us again through the apostles of Christ. Therefore we have renounced all the things the world offers, even unto death.”

Next, you must focus on Old Testament law regarding how God intended his community to live. There are a number of significant passages throughout the books of Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy that focus on this more specifically, but you will only have time to discuss one in depth. I would recommend studying Deuteronomy 14:22-15:11, and its corresponding entry in Gerald Gerbrandt’s Believers Church Bible Commentary (included in the coursepack). He titles this particular section “Justice in Israel: The Community,” and emphasizes the celebration, generosity, and justice-oriented focus of the passage. Have your students read the passage along with the commentary entry and discuss in class. Some prompting questions are listed below:

- What is the purpose of the feasting?
- Who is listed as a valued part of the community? Who is excluded from the community, and in what ways?
- What constitutes generosity in these verses? How does that affect your view of what generosity requires?

Next, you have the option of delving a bit into what pre-exilic Jewish life looked like. It is highly likely that your students will ask a number of questions about what life was like for the Israelite community, so you may not wish to say anything structured about it. However, if you feel as though it would be helpful and timely, I would recommend reading sections of William Dever’s The Lives of Ordinary People in Ancient Israel. Even though Dever is a secular humanist and disagrees with too literal an interpretation of the Old Testament, he does provide a highly detailed and intricate view of architecture, agriculture, materials, and the populated landscape of ancient Israel. I would particularly focus on his sixth

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chapter, which is titled, “Towns, Villages, and Everyday Life.” This resource will provide you with a large amount of what you need to speak on everyday life for Israelites.

**Lesson Three**

Finally, there is Qumran. While the existence of this community occurred after most of the Old Testament was written, it is one of the most informative communities we can examine to understand the more first century Jewish world. In fact, Joseph Hellerman states, “Only one other Judean sect [Qumran] can be fairly cited as a social parallel to Jesus and his group of immediate followers.” Hellerman has done extensive work in comparing the early Christian movement to other groups and religious sects in context, and most of the information here is drawn from his book entitled *The Ancient Church as Family*.

First, the Essenes, who were the Jewish religious group that inhabited Qumran, thought primarily in terms of familial metaphor in regards to their community. This familial metaphor displayed itself in the use of the term “brothers” for those in the community, and all in the community were equal children under their spiritual fathers. Second, they demonstrated a type of novitiate, and once a brother transitioned from a novice to a full-fledged member of the community, they would be required to give up their personal belongings, which would now belong to the community. There were those who were not required to do this, but they commonly lived in the towns rather than at one of the primary communities like Qumran.

Finally, according to Hellerman, there is one primary component of the Qumran community that contrasts dramatically with Jesus’ ethics and practices: exclusion. For the Qumran community, similar to the rest of Jewish culture, it was practices, specifically the keeping of the purity laws and the purity of Jewish blood, that set those in the community apart from those outside. In contrast, Jesus was concerned with ethics rather than blood as the central feature of his followers. (See Fig. 3.1 on page 89 of Hellerman’s book) This made Jesus’ central following an inclusive, rather than exclusive, surrogate familial group. This concept displays itself into the Acts church and further.

Now that your students know a fair bit about the way community worked throughout the Old Testament, they have enough background to move on to the New.

**Jesus and Community**

Finally we get to the person upon whose teaching almost all of intentional community thought is based: Jesus Christ. Since this is the most central part of your class and section, it is vital that you prepare as an individual and a teacher before you start thinking about how to teach this section. If you have not read through any

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12 Novitiate means a level of hierarchy among community members, starting with a novice, or type of intern, and ending with a full-fledged member of the community.
of the Gospels in full recently, I would highly recommend reading through the Gospel of Matthew in preparation, especially focusing on Matthew 5-10. Next, read Gerhard Lohfink’s *Jesus and Community*, an excellent book in all regards, which goes through Jesus’ teaching on what the Christian community is meant to be. This book is also one of your texts for the class, so make sure each student gets a copy since they will be writing a reflection paper towards the end of the section. This book is vitally important. The homework reading is assigned as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Lesson</th>
<th>Chapters</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Jesus and Israel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Jesus and his Disciples 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Jesus and his Disciples 6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The New Testament Communities 1-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>The New Testament Communities 6-8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.5</td>
<td>Late Intermission: Acts 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Ancient Church in the Discipleship of Jesus</td>
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</tbody>
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In prefacing the book to your students, you must emphasize that they need not agree with everything that Lohfink says! In fact, it is much more valuable if they bring their agreements and disagreements to the class for the purpose of richer discussion. Have your students come prepared to discuss each lesson, and assign one student each class to come with two or three thoughtful questions to jumpstart the discussion. This student will also be designated as the temporary leader, in an exercise of community leadership. This student must give equal opportunity to each of their peers to speak and contribute, and you may choose whether or not to give them a graded evaluation or merely an ungraded one. This exercise will be redone later in the year so that other students can have an opportunity. In addition, make sure students know to bring their book to class for reference.

During your first class on Jesus, read through Matthew 10. Ask your students what they think Jesus is saying about community. Then, you should go through each of their reflections, letting the leader for the day facilitate discussion. If they have come unprepared, ask the students what they appreciated most and least about the reading.

In your next class, focus on the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:1-7:29. Read the Beatitudes and open the class up for discussion. Your students will have ended in the middle of a section in their reading, so they may be slightly confused as to where Lohfink is going with his points. Their last section will have been “The Renunciation of Violence,” which is a nonviolence-focused section. You may wish to

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mention, if the students do not bring it up, that this quarter of the book is extremely challenging to many traditions and concepts within American Christianity. It is vital for you to walk alongside students if the concepts within chapters such as this one are causing them to question their religious upbringing. It is healthy and right for this to happen, and you should emphasize that they should lean on each other in times of doubt, questioning, and re-discovery, since it is in these times that community is formed and strengthened. The ideals Lohfink focuses on are vital to both Christ and the Church, and students should see this emanating from you in an exploratory, non-judgmental way. Let them walk their path.

You should also note that Q is discussed in this section. If your students have not taken an introductory Bible course, they may not know what Q is. Make sure they have a basic understanding of this concept before continuing.

In the third class, your students will have finished up the section on Jesus and his disciples. Since this is a particularly bold section, it has been given a shorter reading so that students can process what they have read. If you sense that students are tired and talked out, go through the remainder of the Sermon on the Mount and discuss how they interpret these passages in light of Lohfink’s claims. It is likely, however, that students will be eager to discuss their findings and thoughts on this section of the book. I would suggest taking a passive role unless conversation gets heated, and let the student leader work. I highly recommend you assign a patient and thoughtful leader for this section.

In the fourth class, your students will have read up to “Brotherly Love,” which also ends on an even more controversial note, iterating that a universal attitude of love is not exactly the point of the Christian life. At this point you should be able to pick up where you left off in terms of response to the text, since your students should have plenty to disagree with or agree with from the previous classes. However, if necessary, you may need to step in and moderate if the discussion gets too heated.

The fifth class deals with the primary point of Lohfink’s work, examining the church as contrast-society and how it gets there. By this time, your students should have plenty to agree with based on the flow of Lohfink’s argument, so make sure your leader provides thought-provoking questions that take Lohfink’s claims and take them to their possible ends. For example, you could take the claim that social repentance is based on the behavior of the church and ask how this could work in a specific context, such as American racial reconciliation issues. Bring your own quotes to class as well, and engage in the discussion, as you feel helpful.

Finally, the last class discusses the continuation of the New Testament church into the first three centuries of the Early Church, or the pre-Constantine period. This will transition your focus out of the biblical history of Christian community into church history, so it is important that you start out well. You have the option of going straight into the final section of the book, but, as seen in the table at the beginning of this section, I would suggest taking a break from the primary text and having the class study the church of Acts through Acts 2:42-47.

Have your students read through the first two chapters of Acts the night before you study this passage in class so that they have fresh thoughts and so that they have some context for the verses. In addition, tell them to pay special attention
to the ways in which they see Lohfink’s words lining up with the behavior of the Acts church. Make sure they bring their Bibles to class. During class, write these central values demonstrated in these verses on the board:

- Receiving Teaching
- Sharing Meals
- Prayer
- Signs and Wonders
- Economic Sharing
- Meeting Regularly

Emphasize these six things to your students, and make sure you have them written down. Your students should be relatively familiar with these concepts and what they mean, since they will be using them later. Break them into groups of two or three and ask them to find where in the Gospels Jesus presents these values. They may find any number of parables, teachings, or actions of Jesus or his disciples.

Next, ask your students how they see this displayed in their houses. You may receive some helpful information, or perhaps a blank stare. If this is the case, move on to the next question: how they see this displayed in their churches. These values are pretty central to the Christian tradition, and it is likely that your students have experienced them to some capacity. Have one student come up and, with the class, rate the order of priority of these values in most American churches today. If you would like, you may also rate the order of priority students think they should be in according to their understanding of the Gospel.

Finally, you come to the last section of Lohfink’s book. As he concludes, your students will be thinking about their reflection assignment, so this may affect their discussion. The last leader will facilitate, and hopefully you will have plenty for discussion. If not, you may wish to go over the rubric for students’ reflection papers. It is likely that most if not all of your students will have written a reflection paper before this, but they may still have questions. The grading sheet for the reflection paper is listed here. Because this is a practical class, make sure to point the application section on the reflection rubric out to students.

**Reflection Paper Rubric**

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent 10</th>
<th>Good 8</th>
<th>Fair 6</th>
<th>Poor 4</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Reflection</td>
<td>Paper is well thought out and articulate</td>
<td>More than basic thoughts are considered and discussed</td>
<td>Some basic interaction with textual concepts</td>
<td>Very little thought and effort put in</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engagement with Text</td>
<td>Text is well-understood and engaged with</td>
<td>Some slight confusion, but paper lines up with text</td>
<td>Considerable lack of textual grasp</td>
<td>No integration of reflection and text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
You have now laid a lot of groundwork for your students in terms of what intentional Christian community is based upon. Your students will be able to point back to this section as the foundation of Christian community, throughout the rest of your study together. Now it is time to move on to the practical theological implications of Jesus’ teaching and practice, after which you will begin the history of community.

**Conclusion and Recommended Reading**

For the most part, this concludes your section on Biblical community. If you have time and as a supplemental focus for the end of this section, you may choose to focus a bit on Paul and community. While there is not a lot of space for him in terms of time and syllabus, your students may wish to investigate a bit more. I would suggest offering them Robert Banks’ *Paul’s Idea of Community*, which is a tad academic, but extremely helpful in terms of noting the continuation of Jesus’ communal thinking through Paul’s mission.14 There are two copies available for students in Murray Library.

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Section 3: Communal Theology

Christian Theology and Community

This section is primarily a follow-up to the previous one. Since Christian theology is drawn from the Biblical text, it is difficult to separate them into different sections. However, the progress of Christian theology is distinct in that it has taken on a life of its own. In this section, your students will learn the areas of theology that line up with community, and receive some exposure to a systematic community theology. Since you have already covered the majority of community theology implicitly through your section on Scripture, this will be a relatively short section, covered in two lessons. This will be presented in three parts, with two in the first lesson and the last in the second:

- The Trinity: God in Community
- The Creeds: Belief in Community
- The Church: People in Community

The Trinity: God in Community

The doctrine of the Trinity is one of the most important foundational beliefs in orthodox Christianity, as I’m sure you know. It is also one of the most central areas in grounding the idea of Christian interrelationship, which is the basis for community. Therefore, your students must have some kind of understanding of this concept in order to move forward in their studies.

Below is a link to an article I found especially helpful and coherent.15 It is from an Eastern Orthodox website dedicated to women’s ministry within the Orthodox Church, and appropriately explains one of the common Trinitarian views in Christianity. While it ends on a highly complementarian note that you may want to ignore or cut out, the rest of the article is ideal for your students. Have them read it, either by introducing them to the link or placing most of the article in the coursepack.

www.stnina.org/node/55/print

To speak thus of God as triune is to set all of our prior understandings of what is divine in question. God is not a soliray monad but free, self-communicating love. God is not the supreme will-to-power over others but the supreme will-to-communion in which power and life are shared. To speak of God as the ultimate power whose being is in giving, receiving, and sharing love, who gives life to others and wills to live in communion, is to turn upside down our understandings of both divine and human power. The reign of the triune God is the rule of sovereign love rather than the rule of force. A revolution in our

understanding of the true power of God and of fruitful human power is thus implied when God is described as triune. God is not absolute power, not infinite egocentrism, not majestic solitariness. The power of the triune God is not coercive but creative, sacrificial, and empowering love; and the glory of the triune God consists not in dominating others but in sharing life with others. In this sense, confession of the triune God is the only understanding of God that is appropriate to and consistent with the New Testament declaration that God is love (1 John 4:8).

During your class period, read out this quote from Daniel Migliore’s book on Christian theology so that your students can think about its implications for Christian community. You should also mention the councils of Nicea and Constantinople and the history of how these creeds were formed. These councils, in 325 and 381 AD, respectively, gathered church leaders and bishops from all over the known world to address heresy in regards to the Trinity. They eventually came up with the phrase, “mia ousia, treis hypostaseis,” which is a Latin term for “one in essence, distinguished in three persons.” Once you feel like students have an appropriate understanding of what the Trinity means, have them briefly posit some ways this would affect our views of community with each other. Then you can move on to the way that creeds influence the Christian community.

**The Creeds: Belief in Community**

The second section has already been mentioned somewhat, but is vital to understanding Christian community. One of the most important community dilemmas is figuring out who is “in” the community and who is “out.” This issue has been present on a universal scale within the church from the beginning, which led to the formation of the creeds. These creeds, according to orthodox Christianity, define who is in and out of the community.

As an exercise, have your students write on the board all of the central beliefs they would consider to define those who are Christians in contrast to those who aren’t. They should be able to come up with a fairly concrete list, perhaps with a number of concepts from the Apostle’s Creed. Next, have them read a couple of samples from creeds, including the Apostle’s Creed, the Nicene Creed, and perhaps a sample of Tertullian or Justin. These excerpts or creeds should be projected on the screen so that your students can read along. Have them draw similarities and differences with their list, and among the different samples. This should give them an idea of what these documents felt like.

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The Church: People in Community

Finally, you arrive at ecclesiology. This is a challenging section, because you will be attempting to cover the nature and mission of the church in one class period. However, do not be intimidated! Now that your students have read Jesus and Community, they should be able to draw their own conclusions relatively quickly. In addition, their homework reading will be drawn from N. T. Wright, one of the most notable recent theologians in understanding the mission of the church.

In your coursepack, you should have the thirteenth chapter of N. T. Wright’s Surprised by Hope, which discusses the mission of the church in light of inaugurated eschatology. The chapter touches on three different topics, justice, beauty, and evangelism, and inspects what the church is to do in the world because of the work of Jesus and the mission of God. Your students should be able to grasp the content fairly well without reading the whole book, but of course you should read it so you have knowledge of the contents as a whole.

Begin your class period with discussing the two primary views of the church that Lohfink presents: that of the people of God and of a divine contrast society. Here are a couple of quotes that will refresh your students’ memories on the topic:

“...the community in no way saw itself as a sect distinguished from Israel only through its concrete messianic faith and otherwise fully absorbed by Judaism. The renewed intention of gathering Israel presupposes that the community of disciples saw itself as the true Israel.” (77)

“That God has chosen and sanctified his people in order to make it a contrast-society in the midst of other nations was for Jesus the self-evident background of all his actions.” (123)

“Did the church understand itself, or, more accurately, did the New Testament communities understand themselves as a fundamental contrast to paganism, as a holy people which had to be different from pagan society? This question has special importance since for centuries now the Christian churches have scarcely had the feeling of being on contrast to society. Only sects or mission churches can really grasp what it means to believe in opposition to the rest of society.” (124)

Next, have them discuss how Wright’s view of the Church and its mission compares and differs from Lohfink’s idea of the church. After a few minutes on this, have them share their primary way of understanding the Church, or perhaps one of the phrases or models that they draw from. Finally, discuss Wright and what they think of his chapter. Below are some suggested questions for you to use.

- How did you find Wright’s metaphor of the architect and the cathedral (page 210)? What do you think he’s saying about the church?

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• Do you think you tend to lean more on the side of the social gospel, or of those who declare nothing can be done until Jesus’ return? Why?
• What has been your experience with the word “evangelism”? Is this a part of what you think the church should be doing?
• In what way do you see Christians around you being the church?

Conclusion and Recommended Reading

This concludes your section on the theology of community. Students have discussed the role of community in the Godhead, in theology, and in the Church. For more of similar theological though, take a look at some of Wright’s other works, such as *Evil and the Justice of God* or *How God Became King*.\(^\text{19}\) Now to move on to the history of Christian community!

Section 4: History of Community

The Scope of Christian Community

This section is one of the largest you will cover as a class together. Because the history of Christian intentional community is so vast, it would take an entire series of classes to cover the topic in its entirety. Therefore, you will be investigating a series of snapshots from the beginning of Christian community to the recent past, looking into various intentional communities that have been foundational in influencing Christian community today. This list will include the following:

- Pachomius and Cenobitic Monasticism
- Patrick and the Celtic Communities
- Benedict and the Benedictines
- Francis and the Franciscans
- Zinzendorf and the Moravians
- The Ephrata Cloister and American Anabaptist Community
- Bonheoffer and the Finkenwald Seminary

Each section will provide some insight into the founder(s) of the community, as well as the way that each community was run. In addition, at the end of the section, your students will write a reflection paper on the qualities they resonated with within each community. Make sure they are aware of this at the very beginning so that they can remain aware and prepared when that comes.

Pachomius and Cenobitic Monasticism

Your first section deals with the “father of monasticism,” the desert father Pachomius. For this figure, your students will be reading a chapter from Desert Christians: An Introduction to the Literature of Early Monasticism by William Harmless.20 This book is a fairly easy read, although the chapter is a tad long. Therefore, I would recommend eliminating the section on Theodore and Horsiesius to the end of the chapter, since at this point the community is established and Pachomius has died. This chapter is extremely helpful in learning about the various aspects of the monastic community he established, so your students should have no trouble identifying the various Acts 2 attributes in this community. Write the same features on the board, and revisit the qualities presented in these verses by projecting them on the screen.

- Receiving Teaching
- Sharing Meals
- Prayer

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• Signs and Wonders
• Economic Sharing
• Meeting Regularly

In addition, identify a number of other qualities as listed below.

• Economic Efforts (Business)
• Sacraments
• Evangelism and Growth
• Presence in Community

For each of these qualities, ask your students where they see them displayed in Pachomius’ community. You should see most of these qualities present in the text. For instance, Harmless discusses the way that the monks prayed together, weaving reeds and sitting in silence. For another example there is the annual meeting during Eastertime where the monks gathered together to celebrate the holy season. You and your students should notice other instances of these practices.

Second, discuss the things that Pachomius did to gather and organize his community members. Ask the students what they thought about the leadership structure of the monasteries. If there is any specific thing that they notice, ask them to embellish on it. They will likely relate the monastic experience with their own worldviews and information. Make sure to encourage this, since studying this history is useless without some kind of broader understanding of community.

Pachomius is known as the founder and father of cenobitic monasticism, of which the modern intentional community movement is a product. Cenobitic monasticism, in contrast with eremitic, or hermit, monasticism, is monasticism in community. With this in mind, your students should be able to compare and contrast Pachomius’ communities with the rest of the expressions of Christian community you study in this section.

Patrick and the Celtic Communities

This section begins to get closer to the modern expressions. Patrick and the early Celtic Christians are upheld as an extremely innovative and natural model for its time, especially in comparison to the common Roman monasticism of the day. While his work and the work of Benedict of Nursia were roughly the same time, they served as vastly different types of community. In addition, because there is currently no work exclusively on the Celtic missional monasteries as a model of intentional community, the reading for this section will be drawn from three separate sources, each helpful in its own right:

• Sun Dancing: Life in a Medieval Irish Monastery and how Celtic Spirituality Influenced the World by Geoffrey Moorhouse, p. 143-145.21

• *How the Irish Saved Civilization: The Untold Story of Ireland’s Heroic Role from the Fall of Rome to the Rise of Medieval Europe* by Thomas Cahill, p. 147-150.22

• *The Celtic Way of Evangelism: How Christianity Can Reach the West…Again* by George C. Hunter III, p. 47-55.23

These three texts each present a different view of Patrick's Celtic Christianity and the vast contrast it expresses in comparison to Roman Christianity. Similar to other forms of intentional community, these groups lived on the edges of the known world. Your students should start with Cahill, continue with Moorhouse, and finally end with the more personable Hunter. Again, for this section, write the Acts qualities on the board and have your students point out areas of comparison they saw in their readings.

To change it up a bit, this section can be taken into a bit of a different direction. In light of Hunter’s application in *The Celtic Way of Evangelism*, discuss the differences and similarities between the common way that your students have experienced or participated in evangelism and the way they see it presented in Hunter’s book. Make sure to point out where hospitality enters into the equation! Unlike Roman (and American) Christianity, the Celtic model used the idea of belonging before believing. Community seekers were not required to join the community to reap its benefits, but were treated as members before they became members. Have your students discuss whether they see this as more of a positive mindset, or if it has significant issues. Make sure to let them think about it before you present your own view.

**Benedict and the Benedictines**

This section discusses the other side of Patrick’s communities, that of Benedict of Nursia and the changes he made with monasticism in the Middle Ages and onward. For this, your students will be reading an excerpt from Joan Chittister’s book *Wisdom Distilled from the Daily* (pages 39-50), which describes various gleanings from the Rule of St. Benedict, the foremost work on monasticism in the history of Western Christianity.24 However, this is not the only work that your student should be reading. Your role is to obtain at least one copy of Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove’s paraphrase of the Rule and place it in course reserve at Murray Library.25 Beginning with two classes before this section, inform your students that they should check this out of the library and take a good look at the Rule, which is highly simplified as compared to the other copies in the library. This should enable them to relate the Rule to their Acts qualities. In addition, have each of them select a

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particular chapter that they resonate with, scan it, and bring it to class to discuss. Here are a couple of guidelines to help them share their chapter of the Rule:

- Why did you pick this particular chapter? What did you resonate with?
- How does this chapter contribute to the general community? Is there anything in particular you could apply in your own community from this chapter?

**Francis and the Franciscans**

This section covers a very different kind of historical community, one that is known for poverty and simplicity over other monastic orders. Francis of Assisi, now known as a saint and the namesake of the current pope, was the founder of a monastic order that became known for taking the words of Jesus, specifically the Sermon on the Mount, seriously. Therefore, the reading for this section is drawn from Jamie Arpin-Ricci’s book *The Cost of Community: Jesus, St. Francis, and Life in the Kingdom*.26 Students will be reading the introduction and pages 54-55 and 97-99, which all describe the Franciscan way of living in community.

Again, go through your Acts qualities and discuss the values in comparison with the qualities that you see through Arpin-Ricci’s chapters. You may want to encourage students to also point out ways that they see similarities between Jesus himself, his ministry, and Francis’ way of living. Once this is done, you have a practical exercise to engage the students in.

Have them break up into groups of two or three and give them the following prompt: You are an early follower of Francis, and are dealing with a situation. You are gaining a lot of followers, and it’s getting excessive to try and deal with the economic burden. What would you do to try and feed all of the brothers? Have them discuss for about ten minutes, with the intent of sharing with the class. Once the time is up, have them share their ideas with each other, one group at a time. This should give them an opportunity to think critically about Francis’ ideals and whether or not they think they are feasible.

**Zinzendorf and the Moravians**

This is perhaps the most stirring of the communities to study, and the first Protestant one. Zinzendorf’s community, of which he was not the founder but the benefactor and leader, is not only known for being a profound example of diverse community, but also for being the birthplace of both a sustainable revival and a global missions movement. Zinzendorf, unlike the rest of the “founders” in this list, was not actually a founder as much as a leader and participant. However, the Moravian community at Herrnhut is one of the closest to the Acts community on this list. Therefore, the reading for this section is drawn from chapter 6 of Phil Anderson’s *The Lord of the Ring*, a recent biography of Zinzendorf.27 This chapter discusses the post-revival Herrnhut and the way that their ordinary life worked. Your students should be able to grasp what life was like through this chapter.

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Again, list the Acts qualities on the board and have your students discuss where they come up. Once this is done, specifically ask them what stirred their hearts about this community, and what they would love to include in their own lives and communities. This community is a wonderful one to study not only as an example of intentional community, but an example of what the Christian life can look like when lived out in its fullness. You should have no shortage of conversation around this community.

The Ephrata Cloister and American Anabaptist Community

This lesson revolves around a practical visit to a tangible historic community: the Ephrata Cloister in Ephrata, Pennsylvania. Rather than an in-class lecture, the students will be traveling about an hour from campus to visit the Ephrata Cloister. The visit will primarily focus around a guided tour, which occurs every half hour, and a segment of time in the museum area, where your students will answer a number of questions regarding the community. The questions, and your answers, are listed below.

- Who was Conrad Beissel?
  - ANSWER: Conrad Beissel was the founder and leader of the Cloister, a German immigrant who moved into the wilderness and the community grew around him.
- How did the community support themselves financially?
  - ANSWER: They farmed, worked in carpentry, and ran a number of mills, including a paper mill, saw mill, and grain mill.
- What was the Love Feast? What did it consist of?
  - ANSWER: It was a celebratory meal consisting of Communion, a meal including meat, and footwashing.
- How was discipline and asceticism a part of the community?
  - ANSWER: The members slept on boards, ate very little, remained celibate, and were almost exclusively vegetarians.

The Cloister gives students the opportunity of seeing what an intentional community looks like on the ground. While Conrad Beissel, the founder of the community, did not intend to start a community, the expressions that the community demonstrates undoubtedly show qualities of an intentional community. Hopefully your students will be able to grasp ideas and make connections between this community and your Acts qualities, although it is unnecessary to do this explicitly.

Bonhoeffer and the Finkenwalde Seminary

Your final section is from a very different type of community. It is relatively recent (the 1930s) and in an academic context. Bonhoeffer was a leading member of the Confession Church, and Lutheran branch that went deliberately against the growing Nazi empire, and therefore was chosen to serve as head of the underground Finkenwalde Seminary. However, the way Bonhoeffer organized the seminary was very much an intentional community. For this section, your student's readings will
be drawn from two of Bonhoeffer’s letters titled “The Establishment of a Community of Brethren at the Finkenwalde Seminary” and “A Greeting from the Finkenwalde Seminary,” as well as a couple of pages from Eric Metaxas’ biography of Bonhoeffer on the same topic (pages 266-270).\footnote{Metaxas, Eric. Bonhoeffer: pastor, martyr, prophet, spy. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2011.} The former two letters can be found in the collection The Way to Freedom, which is in the Murray Library.\footnote{Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. The way to freedom; letters, lectures and notes, 1935-1939, from the Collected works of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, volume II. New York, NY: Harper and Row, 1966.}

Again, write your Acts qualities on the board. This one may be missing a significant few of them due to its nature as a communal seminary rather than a specifically intentional community. However, they can still be seen, and it is easy to gain an understanding of Bonhoeffer as the leader of this community like Zinzendorf and the others we have studied. Here are some sample questions to prompt discussion:

- How did Bonhoeffer set himself apart from the students, and how did he engage them?
- How can your communities include some sort of “spiritual haven” for personal growth and strengthening?
- What do you think of Bonhoeffer’s method of Scripture meditation?
- Are there any practices you see here that you would implement in your own communities?

During your next class period, the final assignment for this section will be due. As detailed at the beginning of this section, the students will write a reflection paper on the qualities they resonated with within each community. This may include anything from the approach to economics to their emphasis on prayer, from the style of leadership to the architecture of buildings. Student will be graded in their engagement with the community, and should incorporate their reading into the reflection, either quoting directly or referenced explicitly. The paper should be no more than three double-spaced pages. The grading rubric is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality of Reflection</th>
<th>Excellent 10</th>
<th>Good 8</th>
<th>Fair 6</th>
<th>Poor 4</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paper is well thought out and articulate</td>
<td>More than basic thoughts are considered and discussed</td>
<td>Some basic interaction with textual concepts</td>
<td>Very little thought and effort put in</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Reflection Paper Rubric

| Engagement with Concept | Concepts are well-understood and engaged | Some slight confusion, but paper lines up with concept | Considerable lack of conceptual grasp | No integration of reflection and information |

Reflection Paper Rubric
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Clear Organization</th>
<th>with</th>
<th>Some disconnection, but largely able to understand</th>
<th>A few disjointed thoughts in logical flow</th>
<th>Reader is unable to make sense of logical flow of thoughts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thoughts are well-explained and followed</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some disjointed thoughts in logical flow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtually indecipherable in terms of readability</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Conclusion and Recommended Reading

During your first class on modern expressions of community, your students will be turning in their reflection papers. Then they will be fully prepared to investigate modern intentional communities!

If your students are interested in the practical aspects of Celtic ministry and spirituality, you may want to recommend *Vulnerable Faith: Missional Living in the Radical Way of St. Patrick* by Jamie Arpin-Ricci. While the book merely incorporates Patrick’s story into Arpin-Ricci’s own reflections, it is a practical book that seriously looks at the theme of vulnerability.30 In addition, for more information related to the Benedictines and their relation to modern intentional communities, listen to the podcast from “Emerging Communities, Ancient Roots” on “Family Economics in the Household of God with Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove.”31

For more information on Zinzendorf, you or your students may want to investigate John Weinlick’s biography of him, or perhaps some of the history of the Moravian church and missions movement.32 All of these subjects can be found in the Murray Library.

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Section 5: Modern Expressions

Modern Expressions of Christian Community

Now, finally, your students will be looking at current communities. This section will culminate in a project during which they will get to research and present on a community of their choice. The primary text for this section is both written and published by those in community, and serves as a foundational text in the recent “new monastic movement.” *Twelve Marks of a New Monasticism*, edited by the Rutba House in Durham, North Carolina. Students will read two of these each class period, and come prepared to discuss and learn about a particular community that reflects one or both of these two qualities.

Marks 1 and 2: Relocation and Sharing Economic Resources

This first section deals with two major features of most intentional Christian communities in the United States today. Relocation has become a central part of American community, since the movement into poorer urban and rural communities has become an obvious part of identification with those whom Jesus and the early church sought to reach. Unsurprisingly, the community in the spotlight for this section is Shane Claiborne’s community, the Simple Way. This community is placed in inner city Philadelphia, specifically in the Kensington neighborhood. They also are one of the few communities who list the 12 Marks as their founding and core manifesto.

To begin your class, ask your students what they thought about the chapters. They should have a number of thoughts, and once those are expressed, you will be introducing the community. Hand out the text content from this page, which details the history and mission of the Simple Way. They should be able to grasp the general mission of the community. Following this, have them discuss in groups the following questions:

- Where do you see this community lining up with the qualities of the Acts church?
- Where do you see the theology you studied in this document?
- What do you resonate with in their story?

There will be another sample from the Simple Way later in this section. In addition, make sure to remind students of the community presentation project at the end of this section, and to think about what community they would like to present on. Make sure they know they will be assigned partners for this project. More information about this will be given at the end of this section.

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35 These qualities can be found on the first page of the previous section.
Marks 3 and 4: Hospitality and Racial Reconciliation

In this section, students will be discussing the community qualities of hospitality to the stranger and the pursuit of racial reconciliation. Both of these can be found in a radical way through the Koininia Farm, which was founded on the basis of combating the segregation and Jim Crow laws present in the South. The farm is found in Americus, Georgia, and was a central place in the history of Christianity and Jim Crow in the American South.

Therefore, this class period will be taken up with a documentary detailing the history of Koininia Farm and its role in its local context throughout the past. This documentary does have some violent content, so make sure to warn your students beforehand. However, it provides a powerful look into the strength and determination of a community committed to racial reconciliation. The documentary is called “Briars in the Cotton Patch,” and is available through Amazon Prime for free or as a rental through Amazon for about $2.

Marks 5 and 6: Submission and Spiritual Formation

There is perhaps no community that models submission and spiritual formation better than the Bruderhof communities, perhaps the oldest on this list. Begun in 1920, the Bruderhof was founded in Germany as a group of Anabaptists seeking to practice their faith, and a community was established in New York in 1954. They are a community of communities, similar to the Amish and Hutterites in their removal from the world, but highly hospitable and collaborative with other Protestant communities. Their publishing house, the Plough, is responsible for much of the literature on modern intentional communities. After you have discussed students’ initial thoughts, hand out the text from this page from the Bruderhof’s website, and have them answer the following in groups:

- How does the Bruderhof method of novitiate differ from that of the Simple Way or Reba Place?
- How do you notice submission to the historical church in this document?
- What do you think are the advantages and disadvantages of this method?

Marks 7 and 8: Common Life and Family Diversity

This section strikes close to home, since the community you will be studying is one I have personal experience in: Jesus People, USA. Jesus People, or JPUSA for short, was founded by a group of Christian hippie converts in the late seventies, and is now one of the largest Protestant communities in the country, with about 300 residents. JPUSA has older adults, kids, young adults, middle-aged parents, college students, and babies all in the same building. In addition, they have a very

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36 “Jim Crow” refers to a number of racially discriminatory laws set in place in the American South during the period after the American Civil War.
interesting way of organizing their common life. In contrast to the Bruderhof, JPUSA has no method of initiation or novitiate, but instead accepts participants more and more the longer they are part of the community. One of the younger members, Rich Troche, originally came to the community with the intention of staying for three days. Since he arrived, he fell in love, got married, and now he and his wife Rebekah have a young son in the community. In addition, his wife grew up in the community, and her parents are still deeply involved and help run the community.

To begin your class, write the following phrase on the board: “What is good for children is good for the community.” This phrase was presented to me sometime during my internship period at JPUSA, and I have found it a very helpful and insightful concept. For example, you can say that open space and activity is good for children. These things will also benefit the whole community. Good schooling is good for children. This is also good for the community, since it will provide children with knowledge and insight for the benefit of everyone. You get the idea. In addition, you can replace children with almost any group of people, and, to some extent, it will work. Have students come up with some groups of people to replace children with, and a couple examples of how that would benefit the community. Continue the class with a discussion about how student have experience familial diversity and how it has benefitted them.

Your alternative option for this lesson is a Skype interview with a member of JPUSA. There are a number of people, Rich Troche among them, who would greatly benefit your students due to the richness and depth of their experience in this community. If this is the case, reach out to me at armistead.jared.s@gmail.com and I would be happy to arrange that.

Marks 9 and 10: Proximity and Sustainability

While sustainability and proximity are points of influence in almost all intentional communities, the focus of this one is the Plow Creek Fellowship, an offshoot of Reba Place Fellowship in Evanston, IL. Plow Creek is one of the older communities due to its origins, but also serves as a congregating point for other intentional communities around the country. In 2006, Plow Creek hosted PAPAfest, which stands for People Against Poverty and Apathy. The festival highlighted some of the best of the New Monasticism and intentional community movements across the United States, and gathered communities from all across the country. Plow Creek also runs a farm, which establishes them in the sustainable category.

After you have opened with questions and statements from students, have the students watch this video from the Simple Way on urban farming. It should give students a reasonable grasp of what urban farming and the desire to care for people and for the earth entails.

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Next, share the text from this page from Plow Creek’s website, and have your students discuss the following questions:

- How does their mission statement embody the values present in the sustainability rule chapter?
- Which of these values could you build on in your life and community?

**Marks 11 and 12: Peacemaking and Contemplation**

Finally, we reach the intentional community that published the book students are reading from. Jonathan Wilson-Hartgrove and his wife started Rutba House in 2003. Before you get into the main activity for the day, have your students discuss the chapters again. Once their comments are heard, you may move on. For this section, you will be reading a story to the students, a chapter from Wilson-Hartgrove’s book *Strangers at my Door*. This book is available through the Murray Library. The chapter, “Battle Scars,” tells a couple of stories from Rutba in Jonathan’s own words, about a veteran who lived in their community and the tragic story of an unjust event. Rather than come up with questions for this reading, it is better to just let the words speak for themselves. Beyond being an example of intentional community living, Jonathan’s stories serve to illustrate both the world intentional community is for and the mission of what we need to do.

**Community Project Presentation**

The coursework for this section is a Powerpoint or Prezi presentation about a community of the students’ choice. There are plenty to choose from based on the course text, but they may not choose any of the ones pointed out in the lessons. In addition, if they know of any that are not in the course text, they may choose from those with your approval. Let them know that the Fellowship for Intentional Community database is also a good resource to find communities. However, they must select a community that is explicitly Christian and displays at least 8 of the Twelve Marks to some degree or another.

The reason behind this presentation is that you are often able to decide what you like and dislike in community living based off of the way other people do things. For example, you may like a community’s way of making decisions, and incorporate that into your own. Or, you may be turned off by the way they are involved in their neighborhood, and strive to go against that. This presentation and the research required will help them to do this.

Their presentation must be about 10-15 minutes long, and depending on the size of the class, the presentations will take 1-2 class periods. Students must have some kind of presentation as well as a brief talk, and can include pictures, text, and up to 1½ minutes of video, unless they make the video themselves. Students should focus on why they chose this particular community and what makes the community different from others. Students should also emphasize one point of application that

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40 Plow Creek Farm. “About Us.” Plow Creek Farm. [http://plowcreek.org/farm/about_us.htm](http://plowcreek.org/farm/about_us.htm).
they or others can include in their own communities. Personal reflection and response is highly encouraged. The grading rubric is as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Excellent</th>
<th>Good</th>
<th>Fair</th>
<th>Poor</th>
<th>Your Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Reflection</td>
<td>Community is highly researched and evaluated</td>
<td>Moderate research and good explanation is evident</td>
<td>Some research and thought in content</td>
<td>Little research and a general lack of understanding about community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual Presentation</td>
<td>Clear and considerable effort made</td>
<td>Presentation is well put together and interesting</td>
<td>Slightly dull and generally uninteresting, little effort</td>
<td>Flat-out boring and totally unappealing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depth of Information</td>
<td>Highly informative and insightful</td>
<td>Moderately informative, some interesting facts</td>
<td>Little information and few distinctives</td>
<td>Improvised information, no understanding of community</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Application to Life</td>
<td>Application and thought are clear and integrated</td>
<td>Some application for student benefit</td>
<td>A couple points here and there</td>
<td>No clear application</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Documented Sources</td>
<td>5 or more sources from various print methods</td>
<td>3-4 sources, one print or article</td>
<td>1-2 sources, exclusively Internet</td>
<td>No sources</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion and Recommended Reading**

This section has mainly been from my experience as an ongoing student of community. However, I have greatly benefitted from both Wilson-Hartgrove and Shane Claiborne’s stories and memoirs from their time in intentional community. If your students have not already read *The Irresistible Revolution*, I would highly recommend it.\(^{42}\)

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Section 6: Issues and Practice

Relevant Community Issues and Practice

The final section is an accumulation of very important ideas and things to keep in mind regarding community. This includes any issue or option in practice that may affect the DNA of a community, and ranges from sustainable practices to communication to leadership to placement. The full list of topics are listed below:

- Our Modern Context
- Communication and Conflict
- Leadership Structure and Decision Making
- Diversity in Community
- Sustainable Options
- Common Work and Mission
- Community Economics
- Interconnectedness

This section is based primarily on one final book: David Janzen’s *Intentional Christian Community Handbook*. This book is perhaps the best and most comprehensive out there for those interested in Christian community, and is a must-have for any community leaders. Therefore, most, although not all, of these issues will have some chapter or section from Janzen’s book. The book will also serve as a gift for students to carry on into their own lives and communities beyond Messiah College, since it is the most equipping work to date on intentional Christian community. It is up to you whether you want that gift to be literal or simply figurative.

Our Modern Context

We live in a world desperately in need of community. For this first topic, students will be reading chapter 2 of Janzen’s book, which discusses the changing American landscape in detail. This chapter also focuses heavily on the impact of the car on the American social landscape, and where we are at in terms of community geography.

There are a number of helpful questions to facilitate discussion based on this chapter. Like in previous classes, have students take turns facilitating discussion for each class. They may come up with their own questions, or you may provide two or three questions for them. Below are some example questions.

- What other factors besides cars would you attribute the gradual loss of American community to?
- How have you experienced community in the types listed at the end of the chapter?
- What do you think Janzen means by “circle-dancing?”

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Communication and Conflict

Communication amongst community members is as vital as communication within a marriage. Without good communication, conflict will undoubtedly wear down a community. And without good conflict resolution skills, a community can quickly fall apart. This section bases itself off of chapter 9 of Janzen’s book.

Chapter 9 discusses listening and the steps Jesus gives in overcoming conflict. To start off the class, have one or two students tell about a time when they had to deal with a conflict, and how they handled it, whether Christlike or not. Then, divide them into two groups and assign roles. Some of the participants will pretend to be staunch in their support of their views. Others will pretend to be more relaxed in their opinion, but still have a leaning. A third group will have no opinion.

Next, present an imaginary situation within an intentional community context. For example, they need to purchase a building, or they have a community member that they think is a detriment to the community and should leave. It is up to you to decide how serious of a situation it can be. You will also have to make up details so that they can come to a healthy decision.

Now, let the students try and come to a decision. They can either seek for consensus, or try to find an alternative option. After the debate has gone on for about 25 minutes, stop and have them debrief their feelings and ideas about what happened. This should carry you to the end of the class period.

Diversity in Community

Chapters 12 and 13 deal with issues of the general lack and need for racial diversity in intentional communities and gender issues, respectively. This section mainly discusses gender and racial diversity, but age and belief diversity are also just as important.

To begin, break students into groups of two or three and ask them if they think they are high-identity or low-identity. Then have them discuss what their lives would be like if they were the other. Follow this by asking them how they would incorporate high-identity people of another ethnic background into their friend group or community. Come back together and discuss.

Next, have them discuss the role that they typically see women having in their communities. There will be an obvious difference here between the text and the practical experience of your students, since Messiah College does not approve mixed-gender housing. However, hopefully your students will still be able to see and appreciate the role of both genders in their communities. Let the student facilitating discussion for the day ask questions, and help facilitate discussion if need be.

Leadership Structure and Decision Making

Leadership is perhaps the most challenging issue for intentional communities, partially because it seems every community has a different model for leadership. This section is based on chapter 14, which discusses ways of making decisions and coming to consensus as a community. While Janzen emphasizes consensus as the best way of making decisions, it is not the only way.

After initial discussion, present your class with the document attached at the end of this section. The document is a remnant of my time at Jesus People, USA, and
shows what it is like to make decisions based on a leadership team rather than a consensus. Obviously, this method of leadership is based off of a size of community that is relatively uncommon, which makes it hard to lead. Have your students discuss what this document says about the way that the community makes decisions, and how this would differ from a consensus style of leadership. Additionally, have them brainstorm other possible ways of leading a community, and write them on the board, along with the student’s favorite or most preferred way of doing leadership in community.

**Sustainable Options**

This chapter is primarily based on the ideas presented in Janzen’s chapter 20, along with Wendell Berry’s essay “Conservation and the Local Economy,” found in his collection *Sex, Economy, Freedom and Community.* These two readings are rich with ideas about communities and the environment, and how Christians can differ from the world in our practices of sustainable environmental justice. Have one of your students, if possible one involved with a biology or sustainability major, lead the discussion on the following questions.

- What do you think about Berry including the environment in the community? How could that play out in an intentional community?
- How do you see “secession” working in your context?
- How do you currently practice “food justice,” and how could you do more?
- Do you value hospitality? How?

**Common Work and Mission**

One of the commonly overlooked aspects of intentional community is the fact that in order for a community to last, there needs to be some sense of shared mission. Janzen emphasizes this in chapter 25, giving examples of some who have a shared mission and succeed and some who don’t and didn’t.

To begin, draw the axis at the beginning of the chapter on the board, and have students place different types of communities, including their own, on the axis. After this is done, ask each student where his or her ideal is on the spectrum. Next, have a student lead them in discussion on the following questions:

- What would tempt a community to focus too much on “in-reach?”
- In light of Lohfink’s definition of church as “alternative community,” where would you see the role of mission in intentional community?
- What is your common purpose? What do you hope your common purpose to be in the future?

**Community Economics**

The financial side of running a community is one of the largest sources of tension in community life. Without a stable income of some kind, whether earned or received, a community will fail. However, if a community is truly rooted in faith in Christ, ways will be found to sustain it.

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Janzen’s twenty-first chapter discusses shared finances and how a common purse can benefit a community. Alongside his chapter will be notes from an interview with Rich Troche, the contact from last section. Rich serves as the manager of Everybody’s Coffee, one of the primary moneymakers for Jesus People, USA. He has been a primary catalyst for the development and growth of the coffee shop, and has some significant insights into community economic practices. The interview is attached at the end of this section.

A student, preferably one with some kind of business or economics major, will lead the discussion for this chapter. Give them the interview handout before the class period so that they can come fully prepared. This will give them the opportunity to share their experience with the group, and engage everyone in something they are passionate about. They can come up with their own discussion questions, or use the ones below.

- What would be the advantages of an economically sharing community over a traditional business?
- What would the typical obstacles be to economic sharing?
- Would you be interested in economic sharing? To what degree? Why or why not?

Interconnectedness

Finally, the last chapter students are reading for this section is chapter 27, which discusses getting outside help for communities and collaboration with other intentional communities. It is important to recognize the beauty of other expressions of Christian community, which was the point of the last two sections. This book will also serve students as a way to learn from other communities, since it is created out of a deep collaborative spirit and much hard work from many communities. After some brief comments on the chapter, turn to some final takeaways for the class.

Final Reflections

By this time, both you and your students will be well versed with the ideas and practices surrounding intentional community in America today. Students will be well on the way to founding and participating in their own communities, and will have gained priceless experience in community with each other. To conclude, ask your students what their favorite moments were in class or in community, divided into two separate sections: moments that they enjoyed, and moments they found especially beneficial or formative. Your students will enjoy, as you will, recounting the greatest moments from their yearlong study of community. Hopefully you will have some powerful and Christ-centered reflections as well.

Conclusion and Recommended Reading

For more on the growing need for community in the West, you may want to encourage students to read Robert Putnam’s *Bowling Alone*, which explores the
topic of community disintegration from a sociological perspective. In addition, for more on the changes the church faces and solutions to them, I highly recommend Alan Hirsch and Michael Frost’s *The Shaping of Things To Come: Innovation and Mission for the 21st Century Church*. Additionally, if readers are interested in sustainability, Wendell Berry is a phenomenal starting point. *The Unsettling of America* is a good read for beginners in sustainability.

In conclusion, reader, I wish you the best in your own search for community. You have been on a powerful journey, one that will last you a lifetime. I hope that both you and your students have received much from this class, and that they will go on to be powerful members of the body of Christ.

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Bibliography


