

SOUTHERN BAPTIST HISTORICAL
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Nashville, Tennessee

Koinonia Farm, Americus, Georgia

October 18, 1956

"Please let me know if there is anything I can do." Hundreds of you have said that in your heart-warming letters. Knowing that it was no idle gesture but a sincere offer of help, we have had a sense of security and power and a determination to hold on. Certainly through your love we have felt His everlasting arms. Perhaps it is through people like you that God reaches out with His strength and might.

Many of you have put your love into deeds and made it real by sending gifts to help in the emergency. As we reported in our last letter, you have completely restored the dynamite damage done to our market. We have had considerable extra expense due to other reasons, such as moving the camp to Tennessee, hauling goods because of the boycott, and devoting much time to fighting the legal battle and to increased office work. This has put us in the hole, but here again you have kept it from being over our heads.

Were we content merely to hold the fort, it would not be necessary now to let you know if there is anything you can do. We feel deeply, however, that it is God's will not only that we stay here, but that we move forward. In times of darkness, the light must shine with ever-increasing intensity. It is God's great compulsion.

His compulsion is not only upon those of us at Koinonia; it is upon the children of Light everywhere. As partners in the common struggle, we therefore call upon you to:

(1) Look about you. Is your family, your church, your community free from prejudice, greed, injustice, the war spirit? If not, you can help us tremendously by bringing the spirit of the Christ to bear upon your situation. Perhaps someday there will be a Koinonia in your community. Will the reaction be different from that of south Georgia?

(2) Join us. We desperately need men and women - families - to help us live the brotherly life and to bear testimony to God's love, truth and justice. God is calling such people together. Apart from each other we are often powerless; our lives appear futile; our witness almost obscured. God has made us for fellowship, for life in a fellowship, in a brotherhood of believers. The world simply has no match for the humble togetherness of the Christ's followers. We invite you, we urge you, to consider this way of life for yourself. We shall be very happy to correspond further with any of you about it. Please do not come without first writing. (It may be good to remind you that Koinonia is only a part of a world-wide movement toward church-community. For those of you who are far removed from Koinonia, it may be more convenient to contact a community nearer by. We can supply you with addresses of both home and foreign groups if you desire them.)

(3) Work with us. If you are undecided at the moment about joining such a movement, perhaps you can come for a few days, weeks or months as helpers. We can use carpenters, painters, doctors, dentists, brick-layers, day laborers and general farm workers; in fact, almost any kind of willing hands can be put to productive labor. We especially need some help putting up buildings. While here, all your needs--food, clothing, lodging, etc.--will be provided by the Koinonia on the same basis as it provides for its regular members. We pay no wages. Again, contact us before coming, because space is limited.

(4) Make regular gifts. We urgently need two more houses. Families are waiting to come, but we have nowhere to put them. We have the will and the skill to build, but not the materials. For \$2000 we can erect a comfortable, durable house to take care of one family. If you have ever seen some of the shacks in which Negro tenants live in South Georgia, you won't hesitate to give sacrificially and generously. Other things also press upon us. We seem to have been thrown into the midst of the world's great anguish and its wrong. For example, yesterday a fine young Negro, Johnny H---- about 30, whom we have known for several years, dropped in.

"I want to ask you about the law," he said.

"What's your trouble?"

"Well, all this year I been workin for Mr. Billy W----. I work hard, too. Drive his tractor, chop cotton, pick peanuts. He pay me \$12 a week straight time. I got a wife and three chillun, and we squeeze by till my wife had 'nother baby. She had a heap of trouble and had to go to the hospital. When she got out I owed \$167. Mr. Billy wouldn't advance me no money, so I promised to pay them \$5 a week out of my \$12. I done paid it down to \$63 now and was going to finish it up from my 5-acre peanut patch Mr. Billy let me work on the side. Last week we thrashed them peanuts and look like we got bout 2 tons. He loaded them on the truck with his and took them to town. When he got back he said my peanuts wasn't much good and didn't bring nothing much. He told me I still lack \$54 makin 'spenses and payin up. I told him I was gonna have to move and git me a job somewhere else so I could pay up my hospital bill, cause I couldn't live on \$7 a week with winter comin on. Den he said I co uldn't move till I paid him his money, couldn't git a stick of my furniture out of the house. It all belongs to my wife and he ain't got no mor'gage on it. I want to ask you can I go to the law and make Mr. Billy let me have my furniture? He even got all our clothes cept these we got on."

"Yes, perhaps you could go to court," we said, "but you have no records and he has none. It would be your word over against his, and he's white and you're black."

"Yes sir," he said, his voice heavy. "I understand that."

There was obviously but one solution - to pay Mr. Billy the \$54, which we did. Maybe you want to help with the hospital bill, for Johnny has another one coming up soon when his wife returns for an operation.

THIS IS NO ISOLATED CASE. SLAVERY HAS NOT BEEN ABOLISHED. Yet it is also true, thank God, that not all farmers in this section are "Mr. Billys".

Another example: A brilliant student, a senior in a Georgia University, has taken a very strong stand on the race question. She's of the calibre our state needs. Now her home life is threatened. Without support from her parents she can't afford her last two quarters. But she must. It will take about \$600. We have already sent the first instalment, and have assured her that we'll see her through. If there are others, would you like to know about them?

(5) Loan to us. Each year we borrow 12 to 16 thousand dollars for seed, food, fertilizer, machinery, etc., and pay 8% interest on it. Anything under this rate would be a saving for us and equivalent to a gift from you. (For credit references, you may contact the Citizens Bank, Americus, Georgia, with whom we've done business for 14 years.)

(6) Buy from us. If you are traveling U.S. highway 19 to Florida, stop at our Roadside Market, 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ miles South of Americus on the East side of the highway. Signs advertising it have been repeatedly torn down, so you'll have to be on the look-out for the Market itself. It is open from 10 a.m. to 6 p.m. You might also wish to order from us by mail unless the postage runs it up too high for you. We assure you our products are of the highest quality, and as low as we can make them consistent with that quality. Some things you might be interested in are : home cured country ham, 73¢ lb.; hickory smoked slab bacon, 45¢ lb.; smoked country sausage 59¢ lb.; home-made peanut butter, 38¢ lb.; stone-ground whole corn meal (yellow or white), 6¢; stone ground whole wheat flour, 10¢; Raw peanuts in the shell, 25¢; raw peanuts shelled, 31¢ roasted shelled peanuts, salted, unbleached, 35¢. It's too early yet to say what the price of pecans will be, but we'll have papershells for around 50¢ and small ones for about 35¢. (Actually the small ones have a better flavor but sometimes are harder to crack.) We'll have cured, hickory-smoked turkeys, fat hens, and beef tongues. The prices on these items fluctuate, and we can't quote them definitely, but they shouldn't run as high as country ham. Oh yes, popcorn, 15¢ lb. These prices do not include postage. Would some of you mind checking these prices, plus postage, and see how they compare with prices you have to pay at your local market? We do not want you to buy from us unless we can deliver goods to you at a favorable price.

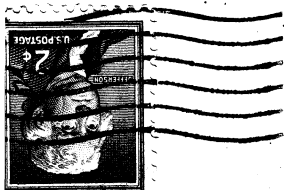
(7) Call on us. We want to offer ourselves to you to be of service in any way we can. Should you be travelling in this area, please consider our home yours. Send to us foreign students or others who might be travelling and wish over-night (or longer) lodging. We can accept a limited number of invitations for speaking engagements with groups interested in this Way of Life. For any help we might render, call on us.

(8) Pray for us. The experiences of the past few months have taught us how little strength we have on our own and how much we need God's Spirit to create in us the right mind, the loving heart, the forgiving attitude. We know that the struggle is by no means over; that God can use us only as we become increasingly surrendered to His will. From our hearts we ask you to pray for us, and not for us only, but also for those who set themselves against God's truth, God's life, and God's love. There is no heart which can ultimately resist the divine invasion of love.

~~In~~ the light of the summer's difficulties, it has seemed wise to us not to have our interracial children's camp here next summer but to have it again in cooperation with Highlander Folk School in Monteagle, Tennessee. Possibly we can use the camp facilities here for some kind of adult fellowship program. Would you be interested in coming for a week for more of intense Bible study, etc. for several hours each day and then working with us on the farm and in the fields several hours, together with some relaxing recreation? Let us hear from you. We'll see what we can work out. In the next letter we'll give you more news. Peace to you all.

---from all of us at Koinonia

Mr. & Mrs. O. K. Cunningham
1407 Boston
Springfield, Missouri



KOINONIA PARM-KT 2
AMERICA, GEORGIA

