

"We seek a new spirit..."

Winter Newsletter--January 1974

*"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for,
the evidence of things unseen."*

In a day when data measures goodness and results indicate success, this scripture from Hebrews about faith, hope, and unseen realities is a song in a foreign land. Betting one's life on unseen realities and things hoped for is an alien practice in a land whose solution to social ills is to appoint congressional committees and pour millions of dollars into a vast array of government and private programs. The data is compiled, the results are evaluated, and an endless merry-go-round of new programs begin and die.

We are programmed to think and act on data, technique, and results, but are they evidence of maturing in the faith? The lingering question believers at Koinonia have wrestled with for thirty years is "How might we be faithful?" And we still wrestle with that question. The answer seems to us more a matter of being

than doing. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus speaks to us of qualities such as humility, love, and peacemaking....out of which actions flow. It is not a new legalism he gives us, but the promise of new personhood through faithfulness. His call to us is not to improve technique or to "Christianize" cultural practices. Rather, he invites us to be the evidence of the New Order.

... the substance of things hoped for ... Living in hope means to view each encounter with other persons as ripe with possibility. With that hope goes the awareness that trusting relationships take work and patient nurture, particularly where there has been a history of mistrust and cultural differences such as exists between blacks and whites.

If we live in hope and look for God, each experience sows in our wills a grain of His life that will spring up one day in a beautiful harvest--His Kingdom among us. When seen as small seeds taking root among us, the smallest, most undramatic events and encounters take on new meaning

We'd like to share some seeds that have been sown at Koinonia, not because they're remarkable but because in them lie the substance and evidence of things hoped for.

---Seeds of friendship are planted among people living at Koinonia and those families for whom we've built homes. Homes are built from gifts and non-interest loans from friends around the country and are sold at cost to neighbors in desperate need of decent housing. Larry Stoner, a young Mennonite volunteer from Lancaster, Pa., helps construct these homes. Since he helped Tom and Ethyl Dunning move to a new home in Forest Park Village, he visits the Dunnings quite often and enjoys times of sharing with them.



Ludrell Pope recently conducted a Sunday service for us.



... a spirit of partnership with God and our fellow man."

Ann Zook, a Koinonia resident, and Evie Moore, of Koinonia Village, for months have shared a weekly Bible study. These regular visits have been special times for both women. Mrs. Moore, who seldom leaves her home due to a long-term illness, possesses deep wisdom and faith in God. All of us benefit from these Bible studies as Ann joyfully shares insights she receives from being with Mrs. Moore.



Ann and Mrs. Moore

---*Seeds of trust* are springing up between some people at Koinonia and some members of the white community in Sumter County. This fall, Dr. Richard Stewart, a gynecologist and former Presbyterian missionary, led a group of Koinonia residents and townspeople in a study of the book, On Caring. . . . Peggy Londeree has appreciated her friendship with the staff of the Americus library with whom she worked to present a Laubach Literacy Teacher Training weekend. . . . Joanne Abel has cultivated new friendships through her teaching in Sumter and Macon county schools. One couple in Americus, to whom Joanne is close, recently surprised her by providing the "fixings" for a Christmas party for her third-grade students.

---*Seeds of dignity* are growing out of a Black Studies Program that 12-15 young people from Americus, the villages, and Koinonia initiated last summer. For some of these young people, this was the first in-depth study of their black heritage, including black history, black leadership, and the black arts. The study proved so stimulating to some, that a small group continues to get together for discussion as well as serving various physical needs, such as providing firewood, for their neighbors.



Mildred and Perry
Burton chop
firewood

---*Seeds of fellowship* were sown when Koinonia residents and new neighbors from the villages shared the candlelight and conversation of a Thanksgiving meal this year. We joined hands to bless a meal of homemade soup, wholewheat bread, and pumpkin pie. Money we would have spent on an expensive turkey dinner was shared with the Rosa Peterson family whose home had burned the week before. A time of sharing after the meal reflected the richness of songs heard in many black churches in the South as well as guitar-accompanied songs we sing at our meetings. We felt especially nourished by our neighbors' expression of thankfulness to God for both the joys and struggles of their lives. We celebrate our unity in faith, especially as it is enriched by diversity.

---*Seeds of hope* come to us from a small group of young adults in Colorado Springs who are dedicated to loving God and serving humanity. Some of them have jobs which provide for their simple needs, while all of them try to care for a steady stream of homeless people as well as sharing life with their low-income neighbors. They have boldly challenged the military-church complex of the nearby Air Force Academy to wrestle with the violations to humanity caused by this country's continuing militarism. By giving God's Kingdom visibility, they encourage groups of believers everywhere to give themselves with reckless abandon to unseen realities--joy, peace, and justice.



Clarice and Del

---The lives of Del and Clarice Murray are also seeds of hope. As a retired couple, everything in our culture told them to quit, but they chose instead to look for a place to contribute their special talents. For the past three years, they have spent nine months each year at Koinonia. Del, in spite of an illness that slows his movement and speech, gives himself wholeheartedly to his work as a skilled mechanic while he communicates his love of life and people. Clarice's contagious cheerfulness brightens the office each year during the busy pecan season. We are very grateful for the "retired" couples who have added their experience as well as vitality of spirit during the past few years.

---The seeds of the New Order of the Spirit are contained in the Greek word "metanoia" which Clarence Jordan translated: "To change your whole way of being." Two lives experiencing this process of metanoia are Ron and Margaret Faust, who recently moved to Koinonia with their three children.

In 1971 Ron quit his job as professor of physics at St. Mary's in South Bend, Indiana, feeling there were many people ready to fill that job and too few people serving human needs. For the past two years the Fausts have lived simply on an income of \$3000 while giving their energy and talent to serving others in the name of Christ. They are no longer constrained by the cultural belief that one must do what he or she has been trained to do, but are free to serve in whatever opportunities come their way.

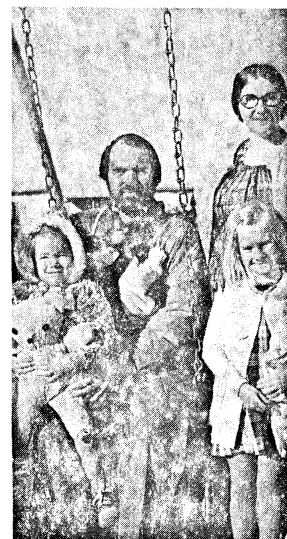
Another family that has undergone changes this year are Linda and Millard Fuller, who left Koinonia last January to serve in Zaire with the United Church of Christ and Disciples. In a recent letter they told us that many of the poor of Zaire need eyeglasses. Millard and an optometrist friend of ours assure us that used eyeglasses, although a less-than-perfect solution, have helped many persons improve their eyesight. If you have useable eyeglasses you no longer need, please send them to us and we will send them to Zaire. We plan to make only one shipment on May 1, so please mail eyeglasses that are in good condition to us right away.

Our life of fellowship here at Koinonia continues to be a special blessing. During times of dryness when the evidence of our sin weighs us down, brothers and sisters strengthen us by hoping when we can't. In love, they shake us out of the arrogance of feeling we are beyond God's transforming power. Your prayers, letters, and visits as we share these joys and sorrows have been an important source of strength for us. . . and to you we are deeply grateful. May these words of Thomas Merton reflect hope for all of us in the new year:

"If these seeds would take root in our liberty, and if His will would grow from our freedom, we would become the love that He is, and our harvest would be His glory and our own joy."

your friends at Koinonia

*Our deepest thanks for all your orders this fall...
We hope you were pleased with the products you received.
We hope you'll use the enclosed winter order blank right away....
Your orders create jobs for our neighbors and a livelihood for us.*



Ron and Margaret
with Sara, Richard,
and Michelle.