

"We seek a new spirit..."

Spring Newsletter 1974



Is it possible for a New Spirit to emerge in this country to prevent the fragmentation of our lives by competition, alienation, and greed, and self-interest? We think so.... and live in that hope. This New Spirit is characterized by cooperation, deep concern, compassion, and a new awareness of the human family.

Koinonia has been a means for many people to express concern--some through continual prayers for our lives here, others by living and working here at the Farm for periods of time, and others by their contributions to the Fund for Humanity. The sharing of these spiritual, human, and material resources is making Partnership a reality. The Fund could not meet the needs of people in this area without your contributions and non-interest loans. Because we want to link people-with-people, we accept no money from the federal government or corporation foundations. Rather, we appeal to those who are anxious to share in a personal and direct way with those who have unmet needs.

You may have wondered who provides capital to the Fund for Humanity.

Here are some examples: After his wife died, one partner in the midwest moved to a smaller house and sent the excess money from the sale of their large house to the Fund. Friends of the deceased woman increased this memorial sufficiently to build a home for a Sumter County family. One young couple asked friends to give gifts to the Fund for Humanity rather than buying them wedding presents . . . and one young man recently gave \$10,000 to the Fund, anonymously, without fanfare. Another couple from California wrote, "We've managed to save \$500 from our subsistence style of life, we want to make a non-interest loan for the year we'll be studying in South America. A retired minister and his wife made an \$11,000 non-interest loan to the Fund back in 1970, and each year they convert \$1,000 to a gift. Letters of encouragement come from a professor and his wife who save \$40 each month to send to the Fund. One of our dearest friends here in Sumter County (a mid-wife and employee in the bakery) makes regular contributions from her small income, saying: "Koinonia has helped me, now I want to help some." A seminarian wrote recently "the only value I see in a surplus of money is that you can share it to help create opportunities for others." And he did.



People....all kinds of people.... without regard for age, background, financial status, or skin color.... willingly share with others in need.

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



What, then, happens to the capital that is given or loaned to the Fund for Humanity?

Since our livelihood comes from the sale of food products, the Fund has no administrative salaries, and administrative expenses run less than 2% of total giving. The Fund helps meet physical and spiritual needs in many ways...it helps create learning opportunities for eighteen preschoolers in the Child Development Center. And the Fund provides capital to start rural-based industries which provide a sense of dignity for unemployed people in the local area. Although it hasn't happened as much as we had hoped, we want to make more land available to dispossessed black farmers who want to continue farming. The Fund also makes small loans to our neighbors in times of crisis. In trying to look beyond the needs of this country, Funds for Humanity have been started in Zaire and Ghana, Africa. You may be aware that people from Koinonia travel to churches and colleges around the country to share ideas about the Kingdom and to conduct intensive discipleship training sessions at other places and here at the Farm... these communications are made possible by the Fund for Humanity. The Fund also provides capital to publish books, pamphlets and records which communicate the liberating ideas of the New Order.



During 1974, the majority of the tax-deductible gifts and non-interest loans given to the Fund will go toward construction of homes for our dispossessed neighbors. Because Fund for Humanity money is an expression of compassionate sharing and partnership with people of Sumter County, no interest is charged. (Current interest rates would demand monthly payments of \$115, which is out of reach for most of our neighbors.) The homes, which cost about \$10,000 to build, are sold on a 20-year, non-interest mortgage...with no interest charge added, each family's payment is about \$45 a month, which flows back into the Fund. Thirty-four families have moved into new homes since 1969, and four more will move in April. These 1,000 square foot cinderblock homes are being built in a beautiful forested area with recreational facilities for the children. We hope to complete ten or twelve homes this year with the volunteer labor of six young men from around the country along with two local black men who are learning construction skills.

* * * * *



We realize the danger that our descriptions of opportunities created by the Fund will sound as if we at Koinonia are "helping" the people of Sumter County. The very nature of Partnership is not of one person doing something for another, but a sharing back and forth--an interdependence. In Partnership, the "thems" become people with wisdom, love, and laughter to share. In an interview with Carol Brink, a resident of Koinonia, Ethyl Dunning, who recently moved to Forest Park Village, talks about her past and about her life at Koinonia. In so doing, she teaches us much about love and reconciliation.



Carol: What made you decide to move to Koinonia?

Ethyl: Because I was living in a barn and out-of doors. Actually, I'll tell you like it is. The shack we were living in wasn't fittin' for us to live in--and actually, I don't see sometimes how we survived.

C: How many people were living there with you?

E: There were five children, excusing me and my husband. We had lived there a long time working on the farm--I say mostly as slaves. We were farming for this white man, living in his old house--actually wasn't fittin' to live in, and if anything went wrong with the house, you had to try to patch it up yourself.

C: Did he pay you any money, or did you get part of what you grew?

E: He furnished us so much money a month, not weekly, but monthly. Sometimes that was \$30 or \$40 a month to buy food for that month, and it had to last from first to first.

C: But that's like no money!

E: Well, I'm telling you, that's the way sharecropping was.

C: What happened to the profit--how did you split that?

E: All right, you know they say you were sharecropping, but you know you weren't, cause you didn't get half of it. If you made 10 or 12 bales of cotton, and maybe 9 or 10 tons of peanuts, he sold that. Sometimes after everything was settled up, you would clear sometimes \$400, sometimes \$300, sometimes nothing. I'm telling you really the way it was.

C: I don't see how you existed on that.

E: Well, honey, many of us have existed on that. Most times when you got through harvesting your crops, you didn't clear nothing, then you had to get out and look for you a job. Me, myself, I used to work for white people all my life as a cook.





C: Was this kind of arrangement standard for a lot of people?

E: Um huh, because actually, most of the colored people were handicapped. They didn't have nothing to do no better or get no better place to stay, so they had to live on a white man's place. You mostly had to do what he said do, or either move, and you didn't have no where to go. You know, that's one of the reasons I say that everyone who's living at the Koinonia should really have a testimony, because its just a blessing from God.

C: Does your husband miss farming? Seems like after farming all his life, going to work in a factory would be hard. Would he still enjoy farming if he could do it for himself?

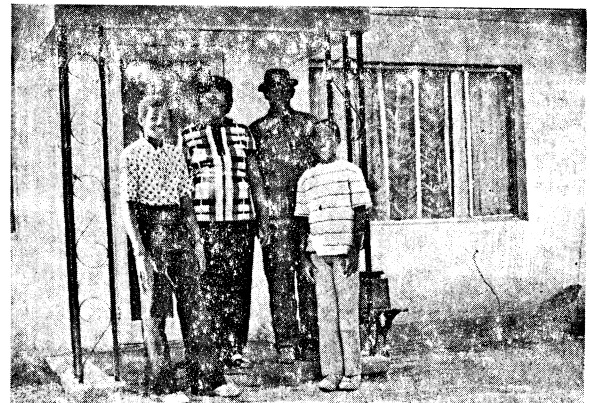
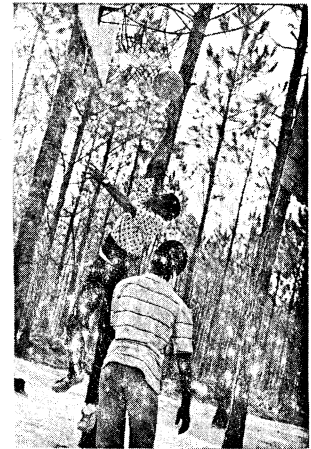
E: Oh, yes. If he had his own land, because he knows all about farming and enjoys it.

C: How did you come to have a home here?

E: After praying to my Maker to direct me, because I was out-of-doors with hardly no shelter. I was even ashamed to have company where I lived at. It really wasn't presentable. I prayed to the good Lord to direct me somewhere to a decent home. And I told the Lord that I really didn't like a town to live in and I really loved the country. Talking with different friends about Koinonia who had visited, they told me to come and try at Koinonia. I went to church as I do each Sunday, had service, and me and my husband had already talked it over on Saturday night. We left service and went to the Koinonia farms. . . didn't know nobody by name, just went. Ladon Sheats greeted us, and we told him what we were interested in. He said, "You know, I've heard of you all, the Dunnings." That same Sunday my husband asked if it would be all right to make a down payment right then. And Ladon said, "of course." We paid him \$300.

C: Was there any difficulty with your family or friends about your moving to Koinonia?

E: I had a hard time after the white people found out I was moving to the Koinonia farms. Our water was cut off. We had to go two miles to get water for three months before we moved. Each night my husband come in from work, I'd save all kinds of cans and jugs, and we'd pack the booster of the car and drive two miles to haul us water. For three months I couldn't wash at my house, but the Lord abled me to survive. My children went to school clean and decent like other people's children. I didn't have a quarrelsome word with those people. When I see them now I smile and speak to them.



Reginald, Ethyl, Tom, Anthony Dunning.

C: That makes me wonder how you must feel about white people.

E: Well, since I moved here I look back and wonder how I got over it, then I think in turn that our Maker brought me over. I wasn't bitter whatever. Oh, the Lord works in mysterious ways. If you trust him, he'll bring you over. Sometimes the way might look dark, but just keep on trusting. Everybody who lives here should be proud and have a good word to say about Koinonia.

C: I guess each of us should have a good word to say about God first of all.

E: I'll tell you, it was God that brought them that first came here. That's something that gives me consolation, 'cause I feel like there's somebody at Koinonia that is Christ-like and is doing the real work of the Lord. If we can't live down here with one another, we need not think we're going to make it in the Kingdom, 'cause this is the dressing-up room. There's no dividing. Have you ever read in the Bible where there's going to be a 'viding there? You ain't seen that no where--everybody's the same.



"Through one Spirit we all--whether white or Negroes, laborers or white-collar workers--were initiated into one Body, and all of us had one Spirit breathed into us."
(1 Cor. 12:13 CPV)

We've all been taught that all human beings deserve equal rights; but as members of God's family, we know the truth goes deeper than that. We are not only equal, we are part of each other--we are One. None of us would allow a child to starve to death in our home or intentionally prevent a poor family from having a decent home. Yet when such needs are removed from us--whether half-way around the world or in the next town, we forget that our selfishness, refusal to love, or over-consumption may cause brothers and sisters to suffer. We live in the hope that your life and ours will reflect concern for others in all we do...and we hope the Fund for Humanity might be a symbol of our compassion and Oneness.

If the Fund for Humanity serves to remind you of our unity with others, we encourage you to send a contribution or a non-interest loan today. . .

. . . and let us thank God together for his abundance and mercy to all of us.

your friends at Koinonia

P.S. Please note the enclosed food, books, and crafts information. The sale of these products provides needed jobs and is our means of livelihood. And, if you would like to introduce Koinonia Parters to friends in your area, we have a 20-minute slide presentation with narrative. Write Carol Brink and give her your choice of dates.