

# KOINONIA PARTNERS

route two -- americus -- georgia 31709

summer newsletter

1974

SEC-AR 35

Trying to get this newsletter written to you this morning has been a bit of a challenge. First, there was a call from a brother in the state mental hospital... deeply fragmented from being unable to fit anywhere in our society...wondering if we could help...and we wonder, too. And Betsie Benson...who has beautifully given herself to the children in Koinonia Child Development Center for the past three years...popped in to say, "Shalom" as she leaves to serve with the Catholic Worker in New York City. Two black brothers dropped by, and we talked about housing for poor families here in Sumter County...and in the background are the sounds of farming and construction of homes.

What do these bits and pieces "say"? They speak of people who are trying to be faithful to loving God and neighbor. It's an awesome task at times...and we're sure you must feel it in your life just as much as we. To try to follow Christ in suffering love and servanthood is difficult...for to be a disciple of Christ is to risk everything for God's Kingdom. Christ illustrated this in a parable saying that God's Kingdom is like a jeweler who sold everything to buy a fine pearl...because he wanted it. That's risk! And of such is discipleship made.

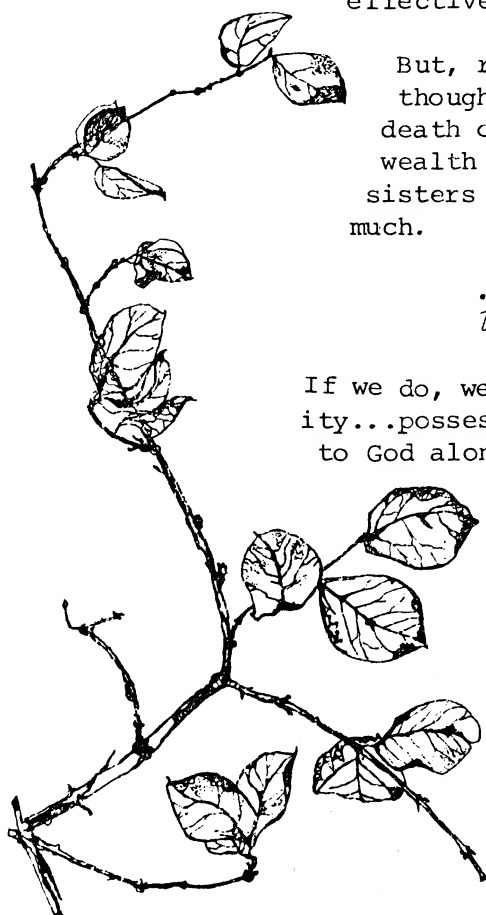
Yet, Christ assures us that discipleship leads to liberation...John 8:31-32.... if you're faithful to my teaching, then you are my disciples, and you'll know the truth and the truth will liberate you. It seems, then, that the doorway to human liberation is faithfulness to the teachings and Spirit of Christ...not effectiveness...not results...but faithfulness.

But, risk everything, we ask? And we shrink back...the thought of giving up long-held traditions...the possible death of dear relationships...to say nothing of giving our wealth as a compassionate expression to homeless and hungry sisters and brothers around the world...it's too much...too much.

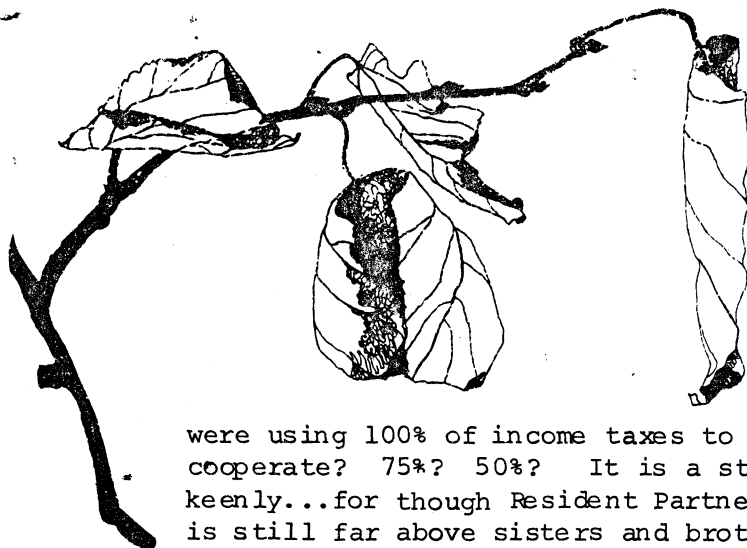
*.....of such risk is discipleship and liberation made. Do we really want liberation?*

If we do, we begin by releasing every present expression of security...possessions, ideas, and relationships,...and securing ourselves to God alone. It's very hard (impossible?) to break these securities while given to old patterns of living...old values...and ways of thinking...because our fear overshadows our compassion. As a friend of ours said recently, "distance makes human suffering seem not to exist." It's true. None of us would allow a child to die in our homes...it's just that our concept of home is too limited. Every day the human family suffers...and some die...as a result of our over-consumption.

*Are we willing to change?...will our fears immobilize us?...can we experience a transformation of heart and mind?*



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These are tough questions...for to give ourselves to new ways of thinking will touch every corridor or our lives. For example, does it seem reasonable that a disciple of Christ would pay for a strategy to oppress and destroy life? Is that not what we do every time we pay income taxes knowing 50-60% \* goes for past, present, and future military efforts? If our government were using 100% of income taxes to pay for systems of death, would we cooperate? 75%? 50%? It is a staggering question...and we feel it keenly...for though Resident Partners live below a taxable income, (which is still far above sisters and brothers in the Third World), we have, since 1969, collected income taxes from employees...should we?

The leaders of Koinonia Partners wrestled with this question last weekend...uncertainty, lack of agreement, and fear surrounded us...and yet we will continue to seek clarity, humility, and courage. The question was raised, "is this a reason for which Koinonia Partners should risk death?...and back came the echo, "what does it mean to be faithful?" Koinonia has been actively against war and actively for reconciliation since 1942...but what does it mean to be peacemakers in 1974? Is "prayer for peace" mere ritual if we are not willing to live and die for peace...which may mean resisting the powers of death?

And the military strategists continue the marriage of God and State. In his recent address to the Senate Armed Services Committee to defend the record breaking \$91.2 billion military budget request for fiscal 1975, Secretary of Defense, James Schlesinger, used this scripture to support the Pentagon's strategy of planned violence based on fear: "Where there is no vision, the people perish." Such use of scripture seems blasphemous. The true nature of military spending is reflected in the words of Dwight D. Eisenhower: "Every gun that is made, every war ship launched, every rocket fired signifies, in the final sense, a theft from those who hunger and are not fed, those who are cold and are not clothed."

These are difficult days...filled with mind-bending questions...and we need your prayers and counsel in an urgent way. And, we must not become faint-hearted. We must remember that "these days" seem difficult because they are "our days". Earlier seeking disciples dealt with staggering issues and answered the liberation-determining question, "whom shall I obey?"...whether in Rome or in pre-World War II Germany. We, too, must face this question with courageous faithfulness to the higher Truths of Love and Life.

*Will we...can we...change our patterns of living and loyalty?  
Will we risk everything to depend on God alone? This is the  
heart of discipleship.....the path to liberation.*

So few answers have we...but it may be in the "dark night of the soul" that we shall come to Light. As Clarence Jordan translated Hebrews 11:1: "Now faith is the turning of dreams into deeds; it is betting your life on the unseen realities."

drawings by  
Janis Pozzi

yours in quest of discipleship,  
Koinonia Partners

\* In contrast to the administration's highly misleading 30%. If interested, please write for detailed explanation.