



# New Beginnings

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## Why there is need for Koinonia House®

Betty Jones, of Greenville, said her stepson had been in trouble with the law since he was 15. Even though he tried to go straight his biggest problem was finding support on the outside. "But people do change," she said.

Ohio statistics show half as many people return to prison if they have a support system on the outside. Unfortunately, state programs are being cut next year. According to state corrections director Reginald Wilkinson, budget cuts are forcing the prison system away from rehabilitation.

## Koinonia House® is for every Christian

Koinonia House® cannot be done alone. This ministry is intended to work the way the Body of Christ is intended to work - with all the believers working together.

One Lutheran pastor said it best. "Our church is praying for your ministry," he said.

Being the Church is not

about denominations. It's about working together in whatever way we can to show Christ's love to those we meet. When we do that, people are changed.

The best example of that is J.B. He has been in prison for 26 years for murder. But five years ago he made a commitment to Christ

that not only changed his life, but as many as 300 other men came to Christ in his prison because of his witness.

But it's not just the men in prison who benefit. Everyone involved with this ministry is radically changed as well.

There are several ways that you can be involved with Koinonia House®

## Hands-on ministry by some



Just about the time we were getting overwhelmed with all the work that needed to be done to make Koinonia House® ready for our first resident, Jim Brienbaugh called. He said his home fellowship group would like to help with the work. "Do you need any help?" he asked.

He didn't have to ask twice! He and six others spent a Saturday in October and another in



November wiring the garage and stripping wallpaper and wood trim in the living room.

"You can be a comfortable Christian all of your life," Jim said. "We needed to do more. We needed to reach out to others."

His group has committed to work one day a month to renovate Koinonia House®.

# Kathy's story

For most of my life when I thought of a missionary, what came to my mind was a jungle filled with snakes and spiders in some foreign country far from friends and family.

But two months ago John and I were commissioned as missionaries to the men in the Ohio prison system. That was when we dedicated our house to the Lord and to our ministry of discipling Christian men when they are released from prison.

We want to make a difference in the lives of these men by giving them not just love, but the necessary skills that are needed for them to succeed in their faith and in their jobs as free men.

Christ has forgiven them, but now it's the responsibility of the church to equip them.

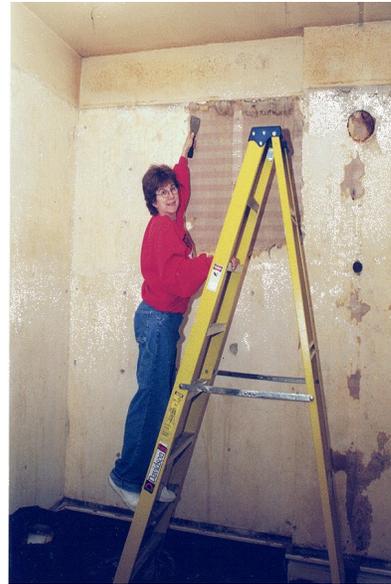
Sure, it's been hard living in Koinonia House® while it's being renovated, but I look at the house the way Christ looks at us. He doesn't

see what we are today, but what we can be when our lives are renovated.

Sure, there are some inconveniences - like dirt on everything, but John and I want to make a difference in the lives of those who are outcasts in our society. We want to give them the same hope that Christ gives us.

But just because we are missionaries in Ohio doesn't mean we haven't had our encounters with wild animals. The neighborhood cats are constantly

getting into our house because of the construction and I



It was Kathy's job to scrape off 100 years of wallpaper in all the rooms.

## Koinonia House® is about Radical hospitality

The one thing that comes through the story of the church of the apostles is they shared everything they had with one another, including their lives.

In Acts 2:44,45 it says, *"All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need."*

That is the sort of radical hospitality that is at the heart of Koinonia House.® But it's not in-

tended only for Christian prisoners when they are released.

Since this is the Lord's house, it has to be open for anyone who has a need - like Bennie.

Bennie is a new Christian who lost his job and had no place to live. In September he moved in with us. We also helped him find a job. More important, we showed him that Christ loved him through us.

Then in November we got a call

from a woman in Chicago we had met recently. She said her son was looking for some direction and needed a safe place to grow in his faith.

"Could he stay with you for a while," she asked.

Of course we said yes. Isn't that what the church is supposed to do? Besides, we can always use the extra help when he gets here. Obviously, there's plenty of work for all who want to help.

## Much done, but so much to do

It has been a very busy six months since we bought Koinonia House®.

Since May we have reshingled the garage and rear entry because the roofs were leaking so badly. But the front porch needed to be rebuilt completely because the rafters were rotten.

A downstairs utility/bath room was added and all the walls and ceilings in the living room, dining room and front

hall were replastered.

But the most important project was the rewiring. The entire electrical system from the



basement to the attic had to be redone to bring it up to code. But the real reason was safety. The electrician found six places where faulty wiring had nearly started a fire.

Finally, to help reduce heating costs, we added a new wood stove. Although it was a lot of hard work rebuilding the chimney, it was worth it because the stove should heat most of the house with the free wood we have been given.

## It all depends on your help

Although it seems like all we have done is work on Koinonia House®, the truth is there is much to do yet. Our first priority is to finish the living and dining rooms by January. That means new wood flooring, trim, rugs and furnishings.

We hope to have our first resident from Marion Correctional Institution by February. We have already had one prisoner apply



The living room had to be gutted, so everything is needed including furniture.

and two more have expressed interest.

### It takes money

The problem is money. Although Koinonia House® national ministry has helped us, and some friends have offered donations, there is simply not enough money to start this ministry.

Although we have been able to save money by doing nearly all the work ourselves or with volunteer help, at least another \$20,000 is needed to finish the project.

More important, it will cost about \$50,000 per year to maintain the Greenville Koinonia House®. To do this we need the support of individuals and churches who want to see real mission work done.

### Everyone can benefit

But supporting Koinonia House® is not just about us. Everyone involved with this



The kitchen needs cabinets, flooring and a ceiling. Estimate are \$5,000-\$10,000.

ministry has been changed by it. Whether it was scraping paint, visiting the prison or giving a donation, Koinonia House® is a life-changing opportunity.

Being involved has changed us — and it will change you.



442 E. Third St.  
Greenville, Ohio  
45331

937-547.6337  
graham@wesnet.com

**JOHN GRAHAM  
RESIDENT DIRECTOR**

*Building a bridge to the future*

**We're on the web!  
Koinoniahouse.org**

## **Christ really can change even a prisoner's heart. Ask Vernell**

If Christ hadn't changed her life, Vernell Young would still be addicted to drugs, in prison or even dead.

"I saw a lot of frustration, trauma and helplessness living with about 1,000 women in Marysville prison," she said. "I didn't want to live like that. I started praying."

While in prison Vernell began to turn around her life. And the first thing she did was to begin working on her education.

Through an extension program she was able to get an Associate's degree. Then following her re-

lease, she completed her Bachelor's degree.

But Vernell said she never could have done it without support from her family and her church. She estimates it took her about five years to really feel like she could make it on her own on the outside.

Although she worked as an educational advocate in Cleveland, the Lord had other plans for her.

This fall she entered seminary to get a degree in minis-

try. She also plans to open the only other Koinonia House® in Ohio. But unlike the Greenville house, she will have women living with her.

"She's a tremendous success story," criminal defense attorney Joan Synenberg said. "I think Vernell Young shows it shouldn't be a life-sentence for every lady who goes to jail."



*Vernell Young was once a prisoner. Now she is a seminary student.*

*-from the Cleveland Plain Dealer-*