



**March 25, 2024**

### **Walking By Faith**

“Consider the lilies, how they grow; they neither toil nor spin... And do not seek what you are to eat and what you are to drink, and do not keep worrying. For it is the nations of the world that strive for all these things, and your Father knows that you need them. Instead, seek his kingdom, and these things will be given to you as well.” Luke 12:27-31

In 1984 my wife and I were living in upstate N.Y. I was not happy with my job and felt that I was compromising my Christian values there. My feeling that something needed to change further crystallized when I heard a quote by Clarence Jordan, founder of Koinonia Farm in Americus, Georgia: “Fear is the polio that prevents our walking by faith.”

The speaker offering the quote was Ted Swisher, former Coordinator of U.S. Habitat Affiliates, whom I originally met in 1975 while serving as a construction volunteer for the Koinonia Housing Program. Hearing him speak once again in Syracuse, N.Y. felt like God’s hand on my shoulder gently inviting me to walk in faith in a new direction.

A month later, I received a copy of Habitat for Humanity International’s newsletter. The lead article announced a Project Director’s Training Program for Habitat affiliates. Although I was very intrigued by the possibility of joining a full-time Christian housing ministry, I was anxious about giving up our full-time jobs, our friends, our home, and moving to Americus, Georgia. I began to get cold feet, thinking this potential move might not be a responsible thing for a father and mother to do with two young sons, two and five years old. There were no guarantees about future employment following the completion of the Project Director Training Program. It seemed like a foolish thing to do at the time.

The final nudge came on Sunday, April 1<sup>st</sup>, when Lynne and I heard our minister preach a sermon entitled, "On Being Fools for Christ's Sake." That sermon convinced us we were heading in the right direction. We pulled up stakes in September 1984, putting our house up for sale in Cortland, New York, resigning from our jobs, selling most of our possessions, and moving to Americus Georgia, where I spent six months in training to become a Habitat Affiliate Project Director. Our family was provided with a modest apartment and a \$60 weekly check payable to the local Piggly Wiggly Supermarket! My father paid our health insurance bill for one year, and our former church as well as family and friends, supported us financially and spiritually during our stay in Americus. Living on faith was both challenging, intimidating at times, and rewarding. Not only were our material needs met, but our spiritual needs were also met through the experience of working full time in a Christian housing ministry and living in community with others. I served as Project Director for Pinellas Habitat for Humanity in St. Petersburg, Florida for eight years, and then spent 21 years managing affordable housing programs in north central Florida. The once risky decision to walk by faith in a new direction evolved into a challenging but fulfilling career of service helping others obtain safe, affordable housing and new beginnings. As you may imagine, I was elated to learn that St. Andrews Presbyterian Church formed STAMP and has dedicated itself to making neighbors in Benzie County warmer, safer, and drier. That is when I knew I had found my new church home. I am honored to be a part of this loving congregation, serving its neighbors, and growing in faith together.

~Written by Tom Webster

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