

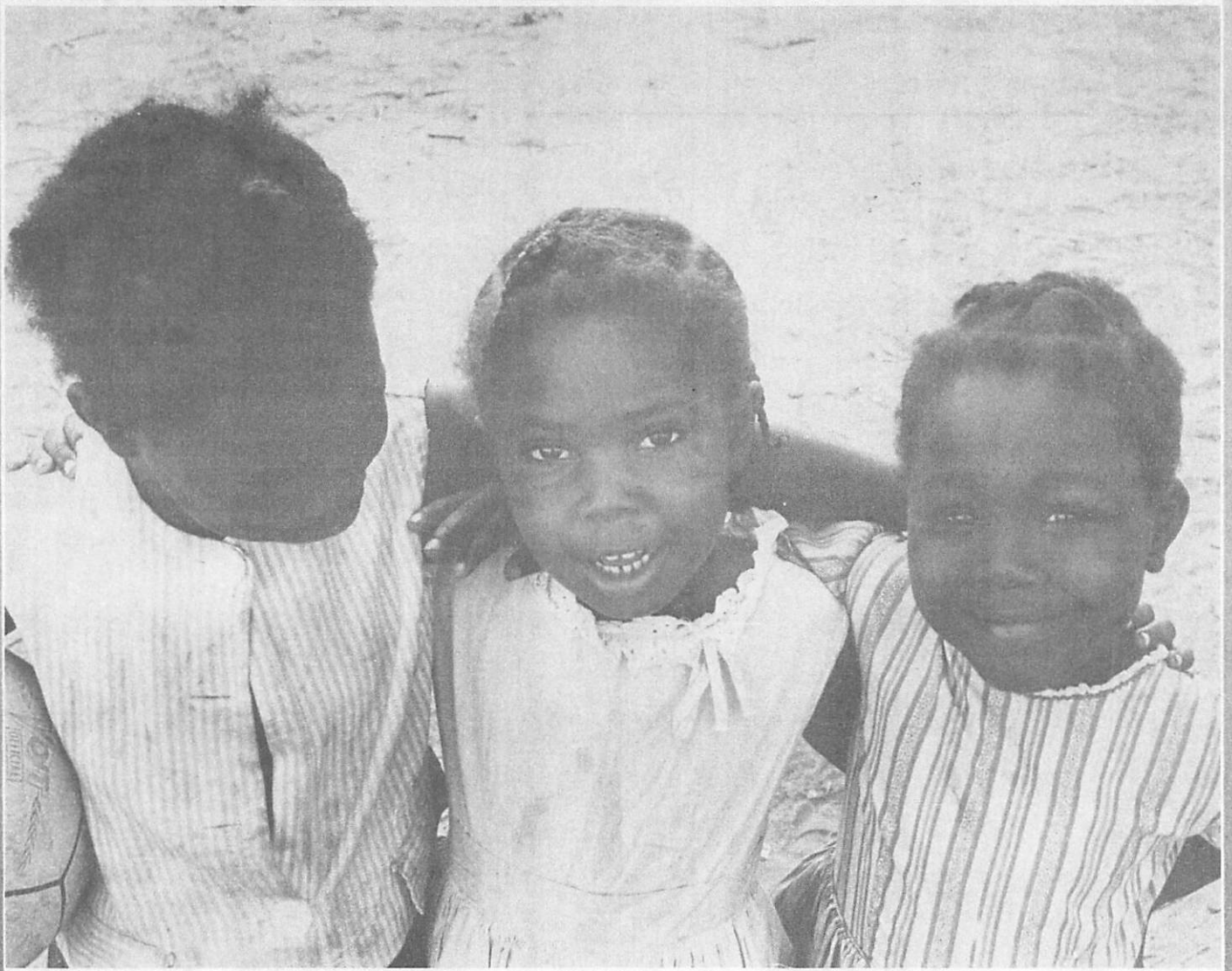
the DELTA MINISTRY

A Project of the National Council of Churches in Mississippi

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Good tidings of great joy . . .

... which shall be to all people

He has shown strength with his arm,
he has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts,
he has put down the mighty from their thrones,
and exalted those of low degree;
he has filled the hungry with good things,
and the rich he has sent empty away.

Luke 1:51-53

It is common for us as Christians to relate Christmas to Good Friday and Easter. The crucified and triumphant Lord Jesus Christ of spring calls forth from us the story of the lowly baby Jesus of winter. Our joyous celebration of birth is tempered by the awareness of the agony of death and of the miraculous possibility of rebirth.

In the Delta Ministry our faith and our work are also constantly interplaying between seeming contradictions.

The joyous events we experienced are tempered by the knowledge of the death, both spiritual and physical, everywhere around us.

And yet the tragedy of life in Mississippi is always tempered by the gifts of joy.

A mother comes to the Delta Ministry office. In her arms is a baby which dies in the next few hours. Malnutrition. Lack of professional medical care. Oh, God! How many must die like this?

But in Tent City smiling children play their recorders, having learned music from a retired longshoreman who came to the Delta to share his humanity with fellow workers who hoped to organize. Oh, Lord! Thanks be to you for visiting the low and the hungry!

At this time of year our perceptions are heightened of the exaltation of the low, the filling of the hungry, and the scattering of the proud.

We send you, our brothers in mission and service everywhere, our greetings of love and justice.





With "fixings" provided
 by Delta Ministry,
 the people of Tent City
 cooked a great Thanksgiving
 turkey dinner
 It was the first
 Thanksgiving dinner
 most of the children had ever had;
 the men had always
 had to work on that day,
 and there was not enough money
 for fancy food anyway



WORTH NOTING

For hundreds of plantation Negroes, fear of being told to leave their homes (shacks) is a constant reality. And now that the cotton season is over, many families are being told they are no longer needed. A concerted effort is being made by planters to complete the mechanization of cotton production in time for next year's crop; by next spring, thousands of families will be homeless, marking the end of a century-old process whereby the labor of Negroes was the basis for growing cotton. (No room at the inn!)

Tents are going to be needed to help house these evicted citizens. Tents approximately 12 x 32 are very expensive and hard to find -- even second-hand ones. If you know where we can get such tents, or can help solve this problem, please let us know.

Many friends have volunteered to help make Christmas brighter for the 25 young children at Tent City. We will, of course, distribute any gifts which come -- but are suggesting that some of you may want instead to contribute a small sum toward playground equipment which could be used by all the children most of the year. (See picture below.) We hope that the children of neighboring plantations might also make use of the equipment.

If the money arrives in time, the swings, slides, etc., will be installed before Christmas.

Demand far exceeds supply in the strikers' co-op production of modern cedar Nativity sets. Approximately 300 orders for the set have come in via word-of-mouth advertising; leaders of several denominations are encouraging the families to begin producing for next Christmas, promising wide publicity for the venture. This is another step in the strikers' efforts to become wholly self-supporting.

Meanwhile, students from the University of Pennsylvania are giving up their Christmas to help build the long-awaited community center at Tent City. It will serve as a place of worship, shelter, cooperative work projects, freedom rallies, health and sewing classes, and union meetings. The students have raised \$6500 to add to money already raised for the center.



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