

1993

UPDATES

2018

PROJECT AGAPE

25 years in service

The team leader Wanda Watts and the family members



October-December 2018

OCTOBER - BUILDING TEAM FROM WNCC

Another family was blessed by a building team which arrived on October 4th under the leadership of Wanda Watts. The team spent a day in Yerevan to rest after the tiring long trip and left for Berdzor, Artsakh on the next day. On the way to Berdzor the team visited the Khor Virap monastery or, as the teams used to call, the Saint Gregory monastery and then the Noravank monastery. The wonderful team of 9 people did a miraculous work starting the renovation of the family house. The team started the hardest work - cleaning the deteriorated plaster off the walls which were in awful condition, taking off the old windows and doors, feeling in the kitchen floor with small rocks to prepare concrete base for putting tiles on the floor, building the sheetrock ceiling, and ... mixing and mixing and mixing concrete for the local mason to build new walls replacing the crumbling ones. The joy of Lilia - the mother of the family and her only daughter - Mariam - was indescribable, they didn't believe this was something happening in their life. Lilia hadn't had any happiness in her life to cause her such a joy: she and her family had to go through the war of 1988-1994 and escape one of the most gruesome pogroms, later called Maragha massacres, committed by the Azerbaijani military against the Armenians living in the village of Maragha (Artsakh) on April 10th 1992. The attack on the village was not conditioned by a military necessity, but was primarily aimed at exterminating its peaceful civilian population becoming

the continuation of the series of such massacres in other Armenian villages, towns and communities. Lilia's family was fortunate to survive that massacre, and later moved to Berdzor to start a new life here. Lilia married, had one child, but even in relatively peaceful conditions her life was still harsh as the housing conditions were awful plus to the divorce she had to go through. The renovation of her house was something she couldn't even dream of. She kept saying, that it seemed a sweet dream that could disappear any moment after she woke up.

Unfortunately, 2 team members - a sweet couple and wonderful people had to go back soon just a couple of days after starting the work, as they got a call from North Carolina saying that the husband's sister had died in a car accident... It was a shocking news for everyone on the team, the AGAPE staff and especially for Lilia's family...

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GOALS OF PROJECT AGAPE

Develop humanitarian and benevolent activities

Provide housing and livelihood, launch and support self-sustainable projects

Develop intentional spiritual partnership with those who travel to Armenia

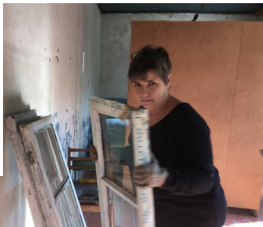
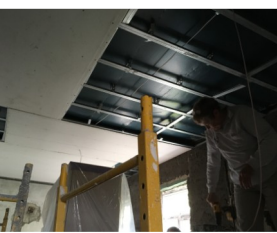
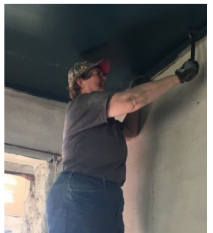
Stand with Armenian people in their service to God;

a. Through partnering with:

- AGAPE hospital
- AGAPE Children's Home
- AGAPE Children's Education Center

b. Through partnering with: local Armenian community

c. Through partnering with Armenian Apostolic Church



OCTOBER - Joint Celebration Team from Both Conferences



Originally the itinerary of the teams for the entire period between October 4th - October 19th had several trips from Berdzor to Yerevan airport and back to Berdzor, and that's on the same day, but the tragic death of one of the building team members' sister in North Carolina added an extra trip - unexpected and sad one to the itinerary. The route Berdzor-Yerevan airport-Berdzor became everyday routine for some of the AGAPE staff members.



The WNCC work team handled this sad news with great courtesy and while the team was working on the House renovation project, another team visited - a joint celebration team of North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences to take part in the celebration of Project AGAPE's 25th Anniversary. The joint celebration team arrived in Yerevan after the midnight on October 10th and was taken to Berdzor straight from Yerevan airport.



But taking part in the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Project AGAPE was not the only activity of the celebration team: they organized a Vacation Bible School bringing all the necessary supplies for the program from North Carolina with them, visited the children of the Children's Home with the members of the building team.



It's hard to describe the joy of the children of the Christian Education Center, and harder to give in words how much the children of the Children's Home enjoyed a happy time spent with the team members playing games and entertaining. The colorful balloons made the cheerful atmosphere even happier filling it with good spirit radiating both from the team members and the children.

And the children of the Christian Education Center had several days of interesting and joyful experience of Vacation Bible School. On the last day of the VBS a pleasant surprise was awaiting the kids: each child received a package of gifts with a framed photo of the child taken on the first day of the VBS, and they didn't know what it was taken for. All were nicely surprised, but also sad that the VBS was over and the team was leaving soon...





PROJECT AGAPE 25th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION



It was like yesterday when Project AGAPE started its humanitarian activities helping people of Armenia and Artsakh after the devastating earthquake, a destructive war and the collapse of the economy following the fall of the soviet regime. It was like yesterday, 25 YEARS AGO...

On 13th of October people of Kashatagh were celebrating something very special: it was the 25 Anniversary of Project Agape – a project which had guided people of Kashatagh since its establishment. On October 13th of 2018 Project AGAPE organized a great celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Project AGAPE, the lifesaving activities of which were crucial especially for this region, where no other international and/or foreign humanitarian aid goes. The celebration day was preceded with thorough preparations.

Important people from North Carolina, seas away, had come to take part in this big ceremony. The day was cold and foggy, but the warmth coming from the hearts of all the participants had created an unbelievable atmosphere: the divine spirit was hovering at the AGAPE Center.

The celebration ceremony was opened by the Lord's prayer that a CEC group of children said. Father Atanas who has been the religious father of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Berdzor and Kashatagh since 1997, was also invited to say his word of gratitude to those people, who have been part of this divine project for 25 years. Nara Melkonyan, director of Project Agape, expressed her greetings and congratulated all on the occasion of Project Agape's 25th anniversary. "Once Archimedes said: *Give me a firm spot on which to stand, and I shall move the earth*", said Nara Melkonyan, "25 years ago Project AGAPE was that "firm spot" for the people of Kashatagh. Project Agape has been a cornerstone for the reestablishment of this region after the war. Everyone in the region has felt the generosity and help of this project. Not any statistics can show the gratefulness, but the smiles of these children." said Nara Melkonyan. Then Father Atanas started his speech with a prayer, blessed everyone and said, that Agape means "love feast". Christians used to have dinner with one another. Father Atanas added that our nation will never forget this charity. We are all Christians and we should be united to spread kindness all over the world, so that no evil is done and for the Christian Spirit to prevail in the world.

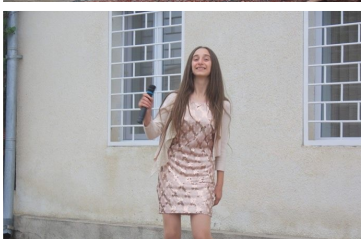
Bishop Charlene Kammerer started her speech with wishing "Peace and Grace" to everyone. Then she added that it was an honor for her to be present at that ceremony and to see the outcome of their work. Charlene said that it had been 25 years since 2 Christian Churches got united as one in God's love. Words of gratitude were told to Nara Melkonyan, country director of Project Agape. As a sign of God's love, Nara Melkonyan was presented with a small statuette "Holy Family".

Further on, Allan Vat Meter, the chairperson of the AGAPE Board and Jaye White - Director of Outreach Ministry - presented the job of Agape, fulfilled during these past 25 years. Among the biggest projects were the Orphanage, which is situated near the Agape Berdzor Office, the hospital in Berdzor and the Children's Education Center, which plays a great role in the lives of Berdzor children. Another important project fulfilled by Agape is the Cattle Project, which helped many people to get cows and generate their "daily bread". The House Renovation project helps people of Berdzor to live in normal housing conditions. And the most fascinating project, which brings smile to the children of Berdzor, is the Christmas boxes project! Right after the New Year and Armenian Christmas celebration on January 6th, all the kids in the region of Kashatagh are given Christmas boxes full of many gifts. Project AGAPE has also supported the construction of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Berdzor completed in 1998.

Different speeches were followed by beautiful performances of the kids from Berdzor's Art School and the students of the AGAPE Children's Education Center, who presented the dresses they had made calling it composition of "Four Seasons". "For 25 years Project AGAPE has served the people of Kashatagh in winter and summer, in spring and fall, through multifaceted projects, changing the lives of the families and making their life better, and giving an opportunity to the talented kids of the region to show their talents. Now the sewing group of the CEC will present the composition called "Four Seasons" to show the dresses made with their own hands." said the young girl who conducted the program.

There were many among the invited people of Berdzor who wanted to express a word of gratitude to Project AGAPE for the big support throughout those 25 years, but the time didn't allow everyone to do that. Only two representatives said very touching words of gratitude and one of them presented a nice cake with the flags of the Republic of Artsakh and the USA. The Deputy Governor of Kashatagh presented Project AGAPE with a Certificate of Honor for the Project's invaluable input in the development of Kashatagh region.

It's sad to say that the celebration was not open to all the people of the region, if it was open there would be no place for all at the big AGAPE courtyard to fit. The ceremony was closed again by the Lords Prayer, but this time in English, and the kids of the English Language group said it. There was a reception after the 25 Anniversary Celebration. The guests of the ceremony from Berdzor - the heads and representatives of different governmental departments of Kashatagh with whom Project AGAPE had cooperated during those 25 years, from Stepanakert and Yerevan were invited to the table to have refreshments and congratulate each other, and then the children came



"grabbing" something to eat, and then leaving to go outside and play. This was truly a great celebration!

Credits to Ani Ayyajian

NOVEMBER - PA Chairperson Allan Van Meter Continues the Visit



At the Epidemiology & Hygiene Inspection Station



Allan Van Meter with Sonasar mayor, his wife and sister-in-law at AGAPE office



88-year old Mother of the mayor

Several days later after the celebration of the 25th Anniversary of Project AGAPE's activities in Armenia and Artsakh all the team members of the building and celebration teams left for North Carolina, all except Allan Van Meter - the Chairperson of Project AGAPE, who stayed for a while to meet the Primate of the Artsakh Diocese of the Armenian Apostolic Church Archbishop Pargév, to get acquainted with more people in the town of Berdzor and in Kashatagh region, and to learn more about the conditions they live in and the problems they face. He also helped the staff and the plasterer to continue the renovation of the house started by the building team. Here are some fragments from Allan's facebook notes:

"On Thursday morning, October 25, I visited the Hygienic and Epidemiology Inspection Station of Kashatagh. Director Armida Aroushanyan and her staff were so nice and hospitable. We saw the facility where their group tests the water and food supply sources in the region of Kashatagh. Then, in the afternoon, I went on walk into Berdzor to see the War Memorial. This memorial honors those who lost their lives during the war with Azerbaijan in the early 1990's."

"Late Saturday morning, we left for Stepanakert, this time to visit with Archbishop Pargév Martirosyan. He is the Primate of the Artsakh Diocese for the Armenian Apostolic Church. Then we traveled to a Tigranakert Castle near the Republic of Artsakh and Azerbaijan border."

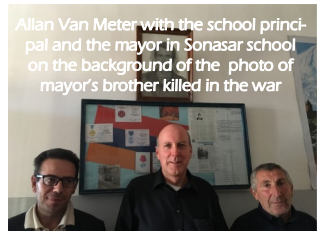
"Sunday Morning, October 28, we left for Sonasar, a small village of 22-25 families. This village is only 22 miles or so away from Berdzor. But because of the road conditions, it took us over 1:30 to get there. We had a wonderful meal with the mayor, Andranik, his wife, Lida, and sister-in-law, Aleta. A few others came by including the principle of the school. The first picture is of Andranik's 88 year old mother and I. She was amazing."

After lunch, we proceeded to tour the school. You will notice the wood stoves that have been placed in the classrooms now that winter is approaching. Also, there are pictures from the school children and Armenian Grammar Chart. Please look at the rooms as well. The mayor and principle asked if Project AGAPE could fund the placing of draperies in the windows, a few pieces of school furniture, a new computer, and the supplies to repair two or three the classrooms. Archdale UMC, you graciously took up

an offering to help with my expenses while in Armenia. I sincerely THANK YOU from the bottom of my heart for your generosity. I mentioned before I left that any funds left over would be turned over to the Project to help the people in Kashatagh. I believe the funds you collected will be more than enough and I am thinking about making a donation with the unused funds for the school in Sonasar." After the school, we toured the town offices, including the mayor's office, the small clinic, and a community room. Outside of the offices there was a cemetery and what appears to be the ruins of an ancient, small church. There were several dogs that followed us, enjoying our company. Lida told us the dogs did not belong to one family per say, but to the town and its protection."

Allan Van Meter left for North Carolina on November 6th, after a productive time spent in Armenia and Artsakh.

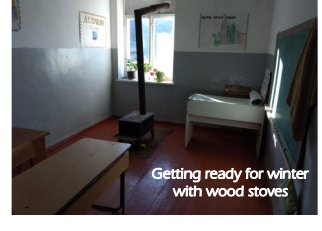
Credits to Allan Van Meter



Allan Van Meter with the school principal and the mayor in Sonasar school on the background of the photo of mayor's brother killed in the war



The desperate condition of the school classrooms



Getting ready for winter with wood stoves

DECEMBER - PROJECTS CONTINUE

December was a month of continuing all the projects started in different months of the year. Some of the AGAPE staff members continued the renovation of Lilia Avanesyan's house started by the building team, some helped to get ready for the distribution of the Christmas Boxes in January and the following months, the Children's Education Center Continued the classes in the newly renovated CEC building with a centralized heating system, several families received cows. The gratitude and thankfulness of all the families who became beneficiaries of different programs of Project AGAPE in 2018 was endless and boundless.



BIG THANKS TO ALL THE UNITED METHODISTS OF NORTH CAROLINA WHOSE DEVOTION AND DEDICATION IN THIS 25 YEARS TURNED THE REGION DESTROYED BY THE WAR, WITH THOUSANDS OF RESETTLED REFUGEES AND DISPLACED PEOPLE, INTO A NICER AND BETTER PLACE THROUGH COUNTLESS HUMANITARIAN HANDS ON, HANDS UP & HANDS OFF PROJECTS.

THANK YOU!!!

Brief Summary of Completed Projects & Their Costs

2018 was another productive year for Project AGAPE. There were projects carried out in the following areas changing the lives of the people living in Kashatagh region, once again giving them HOPE for the future and eventually confirming once again, that they are not alone in the world and **THERE ARE KIND PEOPLE** in the face of the **UNITED METHODISTS of NORTH CAROLINA BOTH CONFERENCES** who care about them and their children living in those awful conditions.

AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT / SUBPROJECT OF PROVIDING FAMILIES WITH COWS/HEIFERS

The Cattle Project based on established unique practice of Heifer Project International of "passing on the gift" continues to contribute to the agricultural development of the region essentially changing the lives of the families involved. In 2018 16 more families received cows/heifers turning the total number of the beneficiary families into 196. The total cost of the expenditures on Cattle Project in 2018 including the salary of the Veterinarian was \$15,508.

RENOVATION PROJECTS - FAMILY HOUSE, CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CENTER AND AGAPE WAREHOUSE

Two more houses were renovated in 2018. Two teams - one from North Carolina Conference and the other from Western North Carolina Conference did a great work making an unbelievable changes in the lives of Sargsyan and Avanesyan families. The total cost of the House Renovation Project was \$29,442.

Funds were provided to build natural gas line stretching to the Children's Education Center and to the Guesthouse and install centralized heating systems in those two buildings for about 100 students attending the CEC, the teams visiting from North Carolina and the guests of the region being provided with lodging at the guesthouse. A centralized heating system was built in the staff house which originally was not included in the estimated funding. The entire AGAPE center - the central courtyard, the CEC courtyard and the basketball court were paved and improved through installing/building a new basalt ground. The total cost of all those projects was \$35,530.

WATER FILTRATION SYSTEM CONSTRUCTION

The local administration's efforts to improve the water supply system in Berdzor failed as after the construction of the new water line with scarce means the quality of the water got worse. A decision was made by the AGAPE Board to provide funds for installing a filtering system at the AGAPE Center. After assessments and negotiations with one of the filtering companies getting the filters from the US, a filtering system was installed at the AGAPE Center. The water filtering system was installed in one of the rooms of the main AGAPE office building and the filtered water flows to the AGAPE Center providing all the buildings - the guesthouse, the main office building, the Christian Education Center and the staff house with super clean filtrated and enriched with important minerals water. Anyone in the town can come and get filtered water if they want and many in the neighborhood do that. The water analysis of the filtered water showed that its quality is similar even to the distilled water. The total cost of this project was \$7,205.

HUMANITARIAN AID DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

There were four shipments sent from North Carolina in 2018 - two from North Carolina Conference and two from Western North Carolina Conference. The goods of the shipments were distributed to the socially vulnerable families of Berdzor and several villages of Kashatagh region. The total of 520 families/2,100 people became the direct beneficiaries of this project. The overall cost of humanitarian aid distribution in 2018 was \$84,118. The cost of four containers' clearance and the partial transportation from Yerevan to Berdzor was \$4,246.

PROJECT OF CHRISTMAS SHOE BOXES

The children of Kashatagh region got acquainted with Christmas Shoe Boxes only during the Christmas event in 2009, after the first 255 boxes arrived in the last shipment of 2008. This was the beginning of the most exciting and expected by the children of this region project of Christmas Shoe Boxes. Children always look forward to the next Christmas event to receive their only gift in that Holy Season. In 2015 for the first time and then in the following years all the children in Kashatagh region received Christmas Boxes. More than 5,000 children received 8,289 Christmas Shoe Boxes worth of \$105,376. This number includes the Christmas boxes delivered to the newborns who usually receive 3-5 Christmas boxes and the Christmas Boxes of those children who, for some reason, missed getting those in the previous year or years. And the number of Christmas Boxes sent by both Conferences made it possible doing this!

CHRISTIAN/CHILDREN'S EDUCATION CENTER

The Christian/Children's Education Center (CEC), which was one of the important projects of 1998 continues to actively function in Berdzor. The purpose of this after school program was and is to provide opportunities for enriching the religious, cultural and educational life of the community. The CEC fully served its purpose, but in 2012 the CEC was temporarily closed due to the financial difficulties that Project AGAPE faced. Thanks to the efforts of Bishop Hope Ward's team who provided Project AGAPE with funds to reopen the CEC the classes started again in 2013 and continue thanks to the continued support of the Edenton Street UMC in Raleigh. The sad silence of the CEC building was over and during the summer vacations and starting from September after the schools the CEC building was full of children involved in different groups. The classes continued until the cold weather forced to stop those till the next summer. But the installment of the centralized heating system will make it possible to continue the classes in the cold weather as well. The AGAPE Board has made a decision to operate the CEC all year round starting from 2019. In 2018 there were 71 children involved in 6 different groups. The expenses of the CEC in 2018 were \$2,221.

AGAPE HOSPITAL AND FINANCIAL AID TO SOCIALLY VULNERABLE FAMILIES

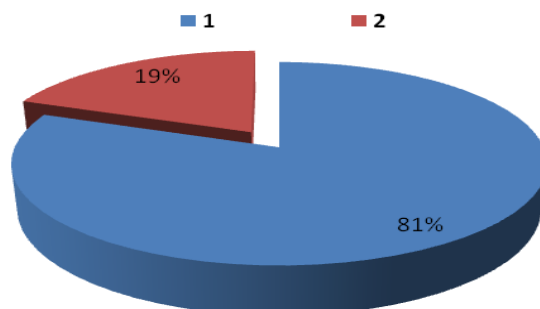
Project AGAPE continues to assist the hospital in Berdzor paying the supplement to the Head Doctor's salary and supporting him to meet the needs of the hospital through the provision of medical supplies. There were many families who applied to the project for financial aid mostly to solve some health issues and meet food needs. Among them was loved by many teams AGAPE staff member Laura Badalyan, who was diagnosed by cancer in September of 2018. The total cost of all together in 2018 including the Head Doctor's salary and financial aid to help Laura Badalyan was \$16,516. The financial help to Laura Badalyan continued in 2019.

Brief Summary of Completed Projects & Their Costs

2018 was a productive year for Project AGAPE. The projects carried out in the areas mentioned below continued to change the lives of the people living in Kashatagh region, once again giving them HOPE for the future and eventually confirming once again, that they are not alone in the world and **THERE ARE KIND PEOPLE** in the face of the **UNITED METHODISTS of NORTH CAROLINA** who care about them and their children living in those awful and stressful conditions under the threat of aggression at any moment.

PROJECT NAME	NUMBER OF FAMILIES / CHILDREN	\$ VALUE
Cattle Project (includes the salary of the Veterinarian)	16 families/80 People	\$15,508
House Renovation Project	2 families / 10 People	29,442.00
AGAPE Center several 4 buildings' centralized heating system construction, two buildings' natural gas line construction and AGAPE Center pavement	71 and more children of Berdzor & guests of the region visiting on different special occasions	\$35,530
Water Filtration System Construction	Children of Berdzor attending the CEC and/or playing at the playground, the neighborhood families, the AGAPE staff, the visiting teams and guests	\$7,205
Team Expenses	The above mentioned families & children	\$23,618
Project AGAPE 25th Anniversary Celebration	Children of Berdzor attending the CEC and/or playing at the playground, the beneficiary families, the AGAPE staff, the visiting teams and the honorary guests from NC, Stepanakert, Yerevan	\$3,687
Humanitarian Aid Distribution	520 families/2,100 people	\$84,118
Christmas Boxes' Project	5000+ children/8,289 CBs	\$105,376
Container Clearance, Related Expenses & Transportation	The above mentioned families & children	\$4,246
Christian Education Center	71 children	\$2,221
Supplement to the Salary of the Head Doctor	About 12000 population of the region	\$1,260
Financial Aid to Socially Vulnerable Families (includes the Financial Help to Laura Badalyan)	20 families/101 people	\$16,046
1. ACTUAL COST OF COMPLETED PROJECTS (ACOCP)		\$328,257
2. ACTUAL BUDGET SPENDING (ABS)		\$78,828
GRAND TOTAL		\$407,085

ACOCP vs ABS



PROJECTS TO HELP, PROJECTS TO TRANSFORM LIVES

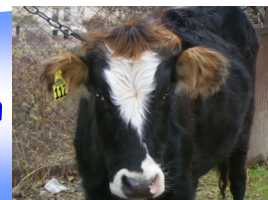


HUMANITARIAN AID: Donate Clothing, New Shoes, Blankets & Bedding, Kitchenware & Household Supplies, Hygiene Supplies, School Supplies, Medical Supplies & Sewing Supplies. Mattresses & Chairs are asked for a lot.

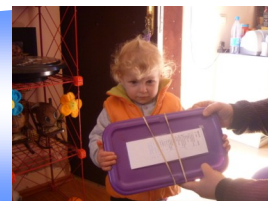
2xC PROJECTS (Cattle Project & Chicken Project): **Buy a Cow or a Chicken**



HOUSE RENOVATION PROJECT: Join or Support a Building Team



CHRISTMAS SHOE BOXES PROJECT: Send a Christmas Box to a Child



Fellowship of 1000

Name:

Address:

E-mails:

Contribution:

Date:

Mail to:

JOIN FELLOWSHIP OF 1000: Support the AGAPE Orphanage, Education & Training at the CEC, Local Priest, Head Doctor at the AGAPE Hospital

You'll always discover the joy and hope that come with making a difference

"Paul writes not about brotherly or human love (philea), but divine love (agape); that is, a love which only the Spirit can impart to the human heart" (Rendell 59)



**American
Great
Armenian
Partnership
Efforts**

Another year passed full of projects, interesting events, overwhelming feelings and change, another year of charity for the people of Armenia and Karabagh, for your sisters and brothers in faith through your love and compassion... The activities carried out by Project AGAPE are incredible in their size and scope, are unbelievable in changing the lives of your brothers and sisters living in the small mountainous country known as Armenia and in changing your lives, because:

- » **You know that Divine Love always has met and will always meet every human need**
- » **Love is the force that ignites the spirit and binds teams together**
- » **You have learned in life how to love people and use things instead of using people and loving things**
- » **YOU are a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world...**

An outreach ministry of the Western North Carolina
and the North Carolina Conferences
THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH