

1993

2019

26 years in service



January-June 2019

It's hard to say how many times we have heard this words: **MY CHILD COULD NOT SLEEP ALL NIGHT KNOWING THAT TO-DAY WILL GET THE CHRISTMAS BOX...** Again and again and again... And it's easy to see the proof of those words on the face of each child getting the Christmas box. They are happy! They are joyful! They want to sing and dance and entertain as today is **THE DAY**, the day to get so much awaited Christmas boxes. That day was on January 12th, on Saturday. Usually the Christmas event takes place after January 6th. The Armenians celebrate

Churches remember the Visit of the Wise Men to Jesus; but some Churches, like the Armenian Apostolic Church, also celebrate the Baptism of Jesus (when he started his adult ministry) on Epiphany. Usually the Christmas events at AGAPE Center take place in the first weekend following the Christmas in Armenia, so that there are no classes in schools not to "jeopardize" those, as we know

that kids would not go to school on that day regardless

Christmas on January 6th - the old Christmas. The Epiphany is also celebrated on this day, the Epiphany which means the revelation that Jesus was God's son. Epiphany is now mainly the time

of what time we start the Christmas event. Usually children come to AGAPE Center starting from early morning on that day. They **JUST CAN'T WAIT** to get their Christmas gifts 😊

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GOALS OF PROJECT AGAPE

Develop humanitarian and benevolent activities
Provide housing and livelihood through partnership with Fuller Center for Housing & Heifer International
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

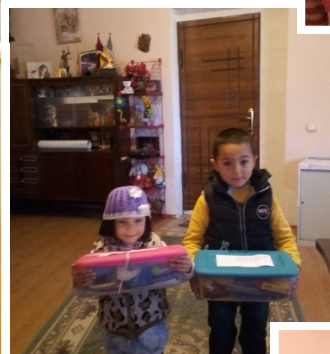
-AGAPE Christian Education Center

b. Through partnering with: local Armenian community

c. Through partnering with Armenian Apostolic Church

FEBRUARY - DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTMAS BOXES CONTINUES

Collage of pictures that
speaks a thousand words
& the most important
word is: THANK YOU !!!



MARCH - DISTRIBUTION OF CHRISTMAS BOXES CONTINUES IN REMOTE VILLAGES



Village mayor from a close village has used his old van to drive his village people so that they get Christmas boxes.

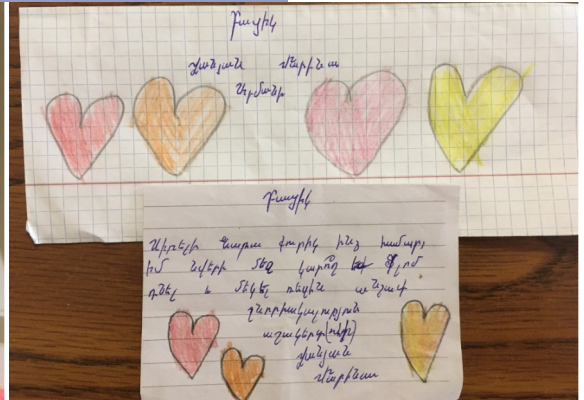
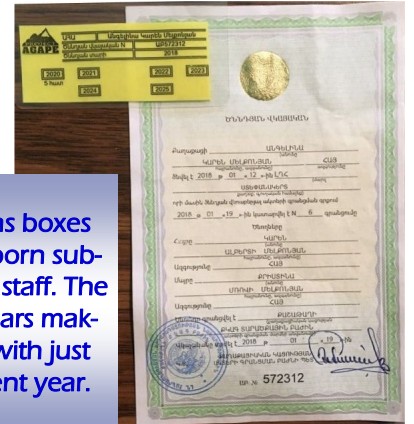


People from the village gathered to get Christmas Boxes for their kids



After the Christmas event when most of the children of Berdzor get the Christmas boxes, Project AGAPE continues to deliver the Christmas boxes, first of all to the kids of Berdzor who for some reason haven't taken part in the Christmas event, or they have but haven't stayed long enough to get the Christmas boxes knowing that they can come and get their Christmas boxes any time they want with the cards they have received for that purpose. After that people from the nearest villages come and get Christmas boxes for their children. Usually it takes two months - January and February - to complete delivering Christmas boxes to the kids of Berdzor and close villages of Kashatagh region. And then Project AGAPE staff starts going to remote villages to deliver Christmas boxes to the children there. Depending on the weather, the condition of the roads and some circumstances, by the end of March-beginning of April all the kids of the region get their Christmas boxes. But for the newborn children this continues all year round, so that the families get necessary and so much needed and appreciated supplies in the boxes of Infant to 2 years old category to care for their kids. This is a long and time-consuming project, but the items in the Christmas boxes serve the children and the family members even longer not only being a source of joy for all the children and their families, but supporting the family with school & hygiene supplies, providing the kids with warm socks, hats and gloves in winter time. This is an amazing project and the one that almost 5000 children of the region just cannot wait to start during every Holy Season. When parents hear the stories of how much love is put in those boxes by the United Methodists of North Carolina, they understand why the same thing bought from store does not give as much joy to their children as the gifts in these Christmas Boxes... THANK YOU !!!

When a child is born parents get 5 Christmas boxes with important supplies to care for the newborn submitting the birth certificate to Project AGAPE staff. The AGAPE staff makes a card for the coming years making it easy to get Christmas box every year with just punching a whole on the square with current year.



The Ford truck loaded with 800+ Christmas Boxes in the afternoons so that the AGAPE staff could leave for remote villages early in the mornings

The letter sent by Vanyan Marina with her mother says: "Dear sister Nara, would you please send markers and hair bands in my Christmas box? Boundless thanks!"

MARCH - HOUSE RENOVATION COMPLETED



While several members of Project AGAPE staff were delivering the Christmas boxes to the children of the region, some other staff members were working on the renovation of the family house started by a building team from WNCC in October of 2018. It took the staff and the local workers hired to do the work requiring special skills almost 5 months to complete the work as the season the renovation took place



Mariam - Lilia's daughter - made a big poster of her BIG FAMILY & painted a picture for the WNCC team and the AGAPE staff



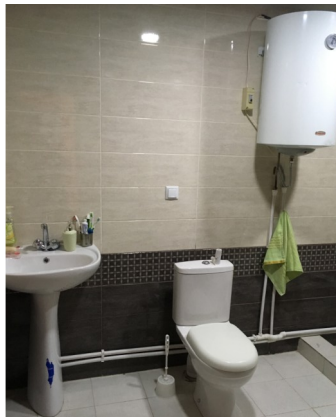
Lilia cries with each piece of furniture & appliance being delivered to her house

was not favorable for construction activities. And, eventually, in March the work was completed. The only appliance the family had was an old soviet era almost 50 years old small refrigerator that served more as a storage place than a refrigerator, as it didn't operate. The team provided enough funds to buy all needed appliances and furniture, as very limited furniture pieces that the family had just collapsed while moving from place to place during the construction works. Every time a truck shipping the appliances and later the furniture pieces first for the living room and then for the kitchen stopped at the house Lilia - the mother of the family - started crying. It was so touching to see Lilia's reaction to each piece of appliance and furniture being brought into the house. A wonderful housewarming party was the final chord of this house renovation. Transformation of lives like this happens only thanks to people like YOU!

THANK YOU!



Lilia's treat on the day of housewarming



MARCH & APRIL: WOMEN, MOTHERHOOD & BEAUTY MONTH CELEBRATION



Another collage of pictures, but this time of Mothers getting gifts, and ... getting those from their children! It may sound weird, but Armenians celebrate a whole month of Women, Motherhood and Beauty. And here is the story behind that: During the Soviet time March 8th - International Women's Day - was an official day celebrated in Armenia and all the countries of the soviet camp. But historically Armenian Apostolic Church has celebrated April 7th as the day of Motherhood and Beauty. In the course of disputes over which day to keep after the independence the consensus turned to be a month-long holiday in Armenia & Artsakh, dedicated to mothers and women. It starts on March 8 with celebration of Women International Day, and ends up on April 7 on Mother's Day. During the entire month mothers, sisters, grandmothers, girlfriends and wives receive gifts.

One of the shipments had nice small boxes with jewelry donated by the Armenia Apostolic Church in Charlotte which has about 15-year history of collaboration with the United Methodist Church of North Carolina to support Project AGAPE. On Saturday March 30 Project AGAPE organized a Flash Mob - a great surprise - for many mothers of Berdzor: After everyone gathered at AGAPE Center, kids were asked to follow the AGAPE staff to the warehouse and mothers to wait at the basketball court. All the kids (one child from a family) received a Christmas box (Female 13-18) and a box with jewelry in the warehouse. After all children received those the AGAPE staff and the volunteers helping them instructed the children to run to their mothers, pass the gift to them, hug and say: "Mom, Happy Mothers' day. I love you." One should see the excitement of all the mothers seeing the kids running to them, giving the gift and saying the magical words. All the mothers were so touched and grateful for the wonderful surprise that no one has ever seen in Berdzor until this event...

Please watch the video of this Flash Mob at: <https://www.facebook.com/nara.melkonyan.7/videos/2345399755481561/>



APRIL - MAY: GARDEN PROJECT STARTED

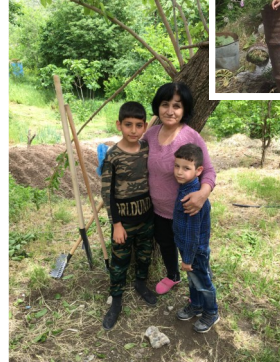


There were projects carried out in the following areas changing the lives of the people living in Kashatagh region, once again giving them HOPE for the future and eventually confirming once again, that they are not alone in the world and THERE ARE KIND PEOPLE in the face of the UNITED METHODISTS of NORTH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

One of those is the AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT with 3 SUBPROJECTS: Cattle Project, Chicken Project and Garden Project.

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. Along with another Agricultural development project – the Chicken Project – it helped over 276 families to become independent and self-sustainable. Many families, who received a cow, make dairy products for their families and those who are more successful and have turned a cow into a farm of 6 to 30 cows, sell their products or barter those for various first necessity food or other items for their families. And the same about the Chicken Project which has a shorter history as it has started just three years ago, but the success stories have already been evolved as the beneficiary families have already benefited from this project through the products – eggs, chicken meat – produced by hens, and also through the organic fertilizer that the chickens produce moving around and fertilizing the soil adjacent to their houses. This helped some families to start gardening activities, but many of them complained about the need of the necessary tools to

process the soil and the seeds that are not available in the area or are very expensive compared with other places due to the unique geo-political location of the area where Project AGAPE serves. This prompted starting another agricultural project called Garden Project, which was carried out thanks to the grant received from MP UMC World Outreach Committee, providing 30 families with agricultural tools and seeds. By the end of the year 30 more families will become beneficiaries of this project. The Garden Project is just what families in Berdzor needed, as the assessment showed that there were many families who wanted to start gardening, but the lack of tools and expensive seeds were an obstacle for them. A greenhouse will be built in the scope of the Garden Project to provide the families with seedlings.



MAY-JUNE: RENOVATION OF THE WAREHOUSE & THE OFFICE

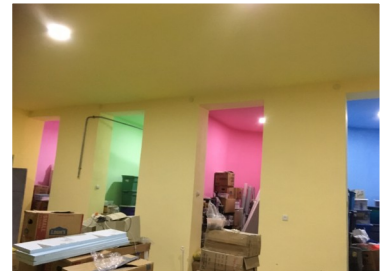
BEFORE



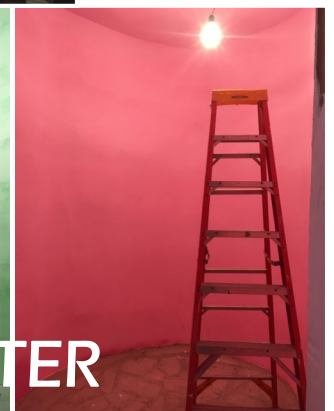
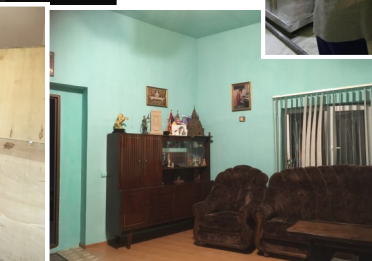
It took Project AGAPE staff a couple of years and funds donated by Wanda Watts' building team in 2018 and Elkin FUMC earlier to turn the warehouse into a nice and clean place first making the basalt-base mosaic flooring in 2018 and then renovating the black walls in 2019. Using this building as a warehouse since 2000 there have been numerous attempts to paint its dark burnt walls, but every time after painting the walls the soot started showing up again under the paint after a while. And the staff had to spent uncountable days of distribution working in the depressing atmosphere created by the dark walls of the warehouse. Finally, after this capital renovation, the warehouse became a clean, nice and cheerful place to spend as much time as needed to meet the needs of the socially vulnerable families and deliver the Christmas boxes to the thousands of children of the huge region in three or four months.



AFTER



Kids of the neighborhood are helping to clean & arrange the warehouse stuff after the renovation



BEFORE

AFTER

THE DOORS OF PROJECT AGAPE GUESTHOUSE ARE ALWAYS OPEN FOR GUESTS OF BERDZOR



After many battles during the war of Artsakh, after Shushi's brilliant victory, finally, Artsakh forces entered Berdzor (former Lachin) on May 18th. Thus, the blockade was broken and Artsakh joined the Republic of Armenia through the land. Food, fuel, medicines and other necessary goods were transferred to Artsakh through Lachin humanitarian corridor. The "road of life" was opened and Artsakh was connected to the homeland.

Berdzor (Lachin) was liberated on May 18, 1992.



The children of the dance studio would have to spend night in this bus if not Project AGAPE hosting them

On May 18th, people in Kashatagh were celebrating the 27th anniversary of the Liberation of Berdzor. A dance studio, named "Artsap" had been invited from Abovyan (a city near Yerevan) to join the celebration. After the ceremony, AGAPE hosted the little dancers and their group leaders, as the kids had no other place to stay in. They were very grateful !!!

TRIBUTE TO LAURA BADALYAN



On April 7th, 2019 a sad message appeared on Project AGAPE facebook page:

"I am writing this sad news with mourning heart: after 5-months struggle against cancer and overcoming it our dear Laura died today: her kidneys and liver gave up not being able to fight high levels of bilirubin..."

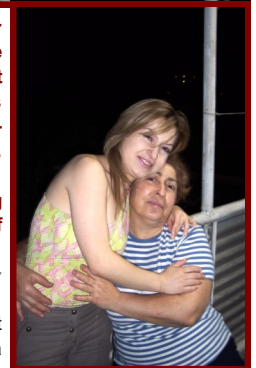
Laura Badalyan had been with Project AGAPE since 1994. A wonderful cook and an amazing person.

She was diagnosed with lymphoma in September of 2018. Project AGAPE Board of Directors and many individuals donated funds to cover the chemotherapy expenses of Laura's treatment. Funds were donated also to special Go Fund Me website started for Laura. The kind people of North Carolina donated enough money to fully cover all the 6 chemotherapy treatments the first of which was in September 2018 and the last one was on January 3rd 2019, and other medical expenses. She got her treatment in Yerevan. Regular visits to Laura after each chemotherapy showed how well she was recovering and how the "previous Laura" was getting back. After the last chemotherapy on January 3-rd she looked great and when she heard about the possibility of going to Berdzor again, her eyes shined. The analyses were amazingly good and the computer tomography showed she was 100% cancer free. But, unfortunately, some type of hepatitis that was in her body distorted the nice picture causing liver failure. As one of her daughters described citing the words of doctors, her liver looked like a mesh... The words of condolences were endless from North Carolina, from the team members visiting Armenia & Artsakh in different years. Those words describe Laura very well. Here are very few of those:

Betty Jo Allen So very sorry to hear this. She was a wonderful woman; so kind and giving; talented in many ways, not the least of which was baking and decorating beautiful and delicious cakes. May she rest in peace.

Nancy Fisher Saddened to hear this news, but feeling so blessed for time shared with Laura. My heart aches for her sweet daughters and precious grandchildren. Such a gracious hostess in her home and a gifted chef with the eye of an artist for Project AGAPE...so humble with her servant's heart! Prayers for peace and comfort for all who loved her.

Harry Moorachian Laura is one of those people in life you are really happy to have met; time with her was time well spent; Christian spirit was ever-present in your conversation. Now she is with our Lord in heavenly comfort. May her family and friends accept her passing with



complete understanding that she has surely entered God's Kingdom.

Ann N. Overcash Our thoughts and prayers are with her family and the AGAPE family. We will always remember her for her wonderful hospitality and the delicious food that she so lovingly prepared for our team.

Jackie Steele My heart is broken. Such find memories of the time spent with her family and all the delicious food she prepared for us. Lifting up prayers for her family and all the Agape Family. Let us know if there are any needs for the family or memorials. God Bless All.

Linda Williams Erlandson So very sad for all of you. All who have come to know her through AGAPE will greatly miss her. She took such great care of us. Love and prayers go out to her family and to her AGAPE family.

Richard LeDuc Saddened by Laura's passing. She was one of the sweetest, kindest humans I have EVER met!

Steve Taylor Nara, I send love and lift up prayers for this deep loss. Laura always extended such love and gentleness to all who encountered her. She cared for us well and provided such wondrous hospitality. Prayers for her family and for you, her extended family.

Charlene Kammerer This breaks my heart too. Laura was such a generous and loving woman of faith. Her cooking and servant's heart was such a gift of love. I will be praying for her family, her AGAPE staff family, and her extended family through AGAPE. May she Rest In Peace. She will never be forgotten!

YES, SHE WILL NEVER BE FORGOTTEN