

1993

2019

## 26 years in service

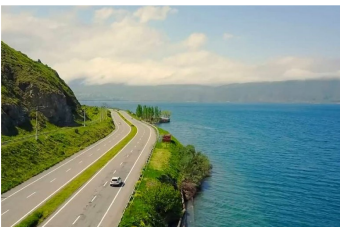


July-December 2019

## JULY BUILDING TEAM ARRIVAL

The only Building team of 2019 arrived from North Carolina on July 13th. The team was from WNCC, but it could be called a joint team of WNCC & NCC, as one of the team members was from NCC. After a day of rest in Yerevan accompanied with visits to the Art park and some sightseeing in Yerevan the team left for Artsakh.

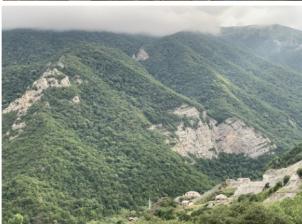
The July team was the first one to take the new road going to Artsakh through the north-eastern areas of Armenia. It was a smooth and nice ride on the newly paved road with the nice view of Lake Sevan - the largest body of water in Armenia and the Caucasus region. It is one of the largest freshwater high-altitude alpine lakes in Eurasia and the second highest biggest in the world. The lake is situated in Gegharkunik Province, at an altitude of 1,900 m (6,234 ft) above sea level. The total surface area of its basin is about 5,000 km<sup>2</sup> (1,900 sq mi), which makes up 1/6 of Armenia's territory. The beautiful nature and the nice restaurant at Lake Sevan for having lunch made the ride enjoyable regardless of the extra 50 km (31 miles) added to the regular trip.



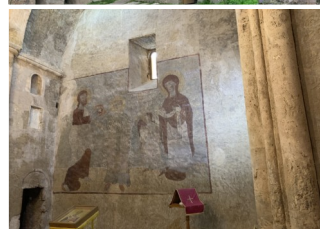
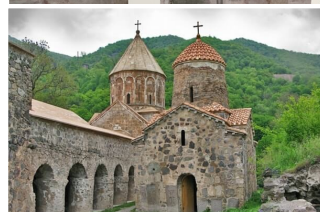
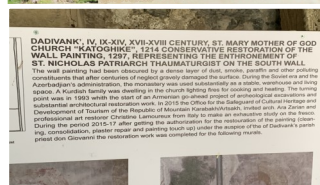
Restaurant at Lake Sevan



Eating cooked corn on the cob



Some nice stops along with visiting the monastery made the journey interesting and, hopefully, enjoyable and memorable for the team members.



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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



# RENOVATION OF THE CHILDREN'S HOME

After an orientation day the team started the renovation of the Children's Home. The excitement of the children was indescribable...

Since 1995 when the Children's Home had been launched by Project AGAPE in partnership with the local government there were some minor renovations done by different teams arrived in different years, like renovation of the kitchen, the playing room, the separate laundry house, but the Children's Home building needed a capital renovation and the building team from North Carolina started it in July of 2019. The AGAPE staff, local plasterer-painter hired to do the work requiring special skills and the volunteers from community, most of whom were the members of those families whose houses had been renovated by Project AGAPE in different years, helped the team as much as possible. All the windows and doors were changed. The floor was replaced by a new laminate flooring. The walls were painted in order to look fresh and nice! The children at the Children's Home were excited to help the team members to accomplish their work! All the slides, swing sets were repainted at the playground. The iron fences of the balconies were painted, too. It was really a great celebration for the kids to have a wholly renovated place to live! Their excitement was so big that it was difficult for the AGAPE staff and the volunteers not to let them move the heavy frames of old and new windows and doors. They helped as much as they could.

The Children's Home is a three-story building: the kitchen, the dining room, the playing room and the big storage area are on the first floor. The classrooms where the children do their homeworks, are on the right side of the second floor and the administrative rooms are on the left side. The bedrooms are on the third floor - boys' bedrooms are on one side and the girls' bedrooms are on the other side. The biggest challenge of the renovation work was to organize and plan it so that not to jeopardize the daily routine of the Children's Home. The task was fulfilled well, even when the school year started in September and the renovation continued.

The team did a great work and left enough funds for not only completing the renovation of all the rooms, but also for buying mattresses for all the beds, as the old mattresses were worn out, and also for replacing the old water heaters-boilers, which also provide heating in the winter time through heating system. With good assessment the AGAPE staff was able to buy 15 brand new bunk beds with new mattresses for the children instead of buying only new mattresses.

The atmosphere in the Children's Home was joyful and amazing: the Holy Spirit was present there, because the Holy Spirit is God's power in action. Is there an action more Godly than helping orphaned children? The answer is up there - in the HEAVEN...

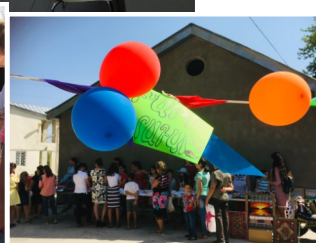
Thank You!



Volunteers helping the team



# VBC & FAREWELL PARTY AT THE CH

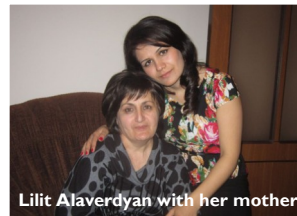


Many children of Berdzor especially those who attend the Christian Education Center know that the visit of the AGAPE teams assumes also a great time of fellowship embodied through participation in Vacation Bible School. The renovation of the Children's Home was not the only activity of the team: they organized a Vacation Bible School bringing all the necessary supplies for the program from North Carolina with them. It's hard to describe the joy of the children of the Christian Education Center who had several days of interesting and joyful experience of Vacation Bible School. The visit of teams also assumes a fun time during the exhibition-sale of the art works that kids learn to make during their classes at the Christian Education Center. So, the end of July and the departure of the team were preceded by a beautiful exhibition and dance show. Kids represented their hand made works: pictures that they have drawn,

clothes that they have sewed, different beautiful embroideries and accessories made by the kids. The team members happily bought many of those items to take back with them as souvenirs from Armenia and Artsakh: Is there a souvenir more precious than the one made by hands of children?! This time a competition of the best work in each group was announced and the team members were the juries. It was hard to choose the best art works among the embroidered articles, paintings and nice dresses

made by the students of the CEC. At the end of the exhibition the best students of different classes received gifts - a Christmas box in July! The students performed beautiful Armenian dances inviting the team members to dance with them. It was a great day both for the team and for the kids.

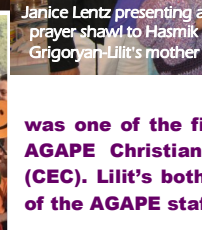
Thank You



Lilit Alaverdyan with her mother



Janice Lentz presenting a prayer shawl to Hasmik Grigoryan-Lilit's mother



2019 was a year of great changes for the children of the Children's Home: the first change was related to the appointment of the new director - Lilit Alaverdyan - in February who was one of the first students of the AGAPE Christian Education Center (CEC). Lilit's both parents were part of the AGAPE staff one time, but Lilit and her brother David had the painful experience of losing parents early when they were very young. Lilit and David were among the students of the CEC who were baptized during the opening ceremony of the CEC by Archbishop Pargév - the primate of Artsakh diocese - at Berdzor church, and whose Godfather was Richard Bryant - one of the five AGAPE Board members visiting Armenia and Artsakh at that time.

It's very hard 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 interesting gifts that the team members had with them for the kids made the cheerful atmosphere even happier filling it with good spirit radiating both from the team members and the children. On the last day before leaving for Yerevan the new director of the Children's Home Lilit and her husband Igor prepared a farewell party for the team members to express their endless gratitude for the unbelievable support that the team members showed to the children through Project AGAPE making their home nice and cheerful. The nice poster at the stairway near the entrance door of the Children's Home framed by the pictures of all the kids of the CH printed by the NCC May 2018 building team co-leader Jane Leechford gained even a deeper meaning with all the changes that took place at the Children's Home in 2019...

THANK YOU!



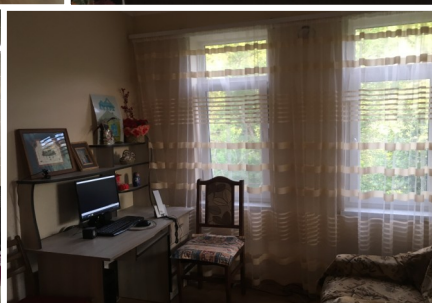
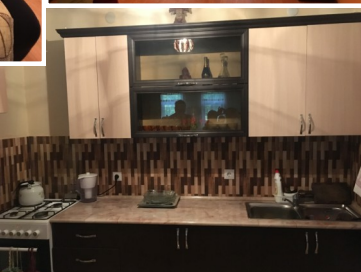
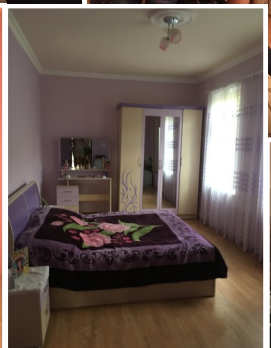
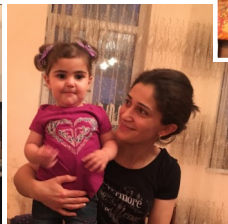
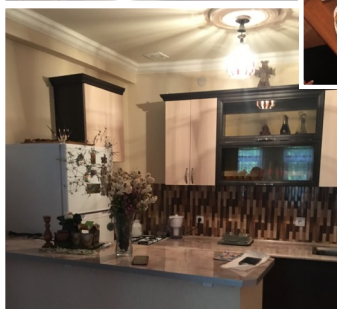
# THE MISSION CONTINUES OR CULINARY BREAK



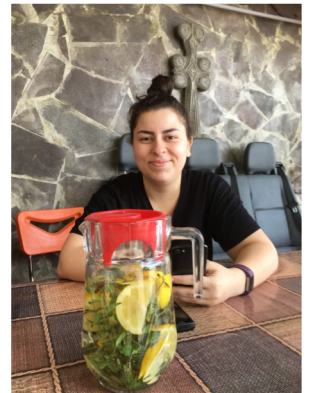
Even with the super-busy itinerary the team managed visiting the family whose house was renovated in October of 2018 to see first hand all the amazing transformations taken place in that house. Wanda Watts who was the team leader of the building team working on Lilia Avanesyan's house could not keep her tears when she saw the amazing changes which took place thanks to her team's great work and support. Mariam - Lilia's daughter had painted a nice picture copies of which she had given to the team members a year before with gifts to express their gratitude, but she had used the original picture to make a nice poster with pictures of the team members calling it "My Big Family." Lilia's hospitality with



homemade pastries, cookies and big cake was the way to show her endless gratitude, but her shining eyes and glowing face told more than anything else...



Meet Mane Ayvajan, our temporary cook for the July team. Mane is currently doing her Master's degree at the International Business School in Hungary, Budapest, specializing in International Management. She is also doing internship in the UN Refugee Agency as a procurement intern. Making tasty dishes is her hobby and favorite thing to do during free time. She was a great help and the food she made was really tasty!! The July team members loved her dishes so much, that they wrote about it in their memory books placing several pictures of her tasty and beautiful food!





# AUGUST - DISTRIBUTION OF HUMANITARIAN AID

In the first half of 2019 Project AGAPE received two containers - one from North Carolina Conference in April full of 3920 Christmas Boxes which arrived just in time to continue the distribution of the Christmas Boxes in the rest of the communities of Kashatagh region., and the other from Western North Carolina Conference received in May, which contained different first necessity goods for the socially vulnerable families. Besides the Christmas Boxes there were bedding, clothing and accessories, household supplies, health and hygiene supplies, school kits, sewing supplies in the containers. The third container of 2019 was received in August and it had 2472 Christmas boxes and the rest were mainly first necessity goods that together with the similar items of the second container of 2019 were delivered to all the families of 44 northern villages of Kashatagh region. New and used clothing and accessories, bedding, new shoes, hygiene supplies, household and kitchen supplies, school supplies,, suitcases were delivered to the families.

A young lady got married (her brother was killed by an azeri sniper when serving in the army and their family was in such a condition, that everyone thought something would happen to their psychic, her mother hasn't left her house since that time...). The AGAPE staff packed an entire dowry for her in a couple of suitcases that were in good condition - new bedding, pillows, blankets, towels, household & kitchen supplies - all new things, she told that her parents would never be able to provide her newly created family with all those things...

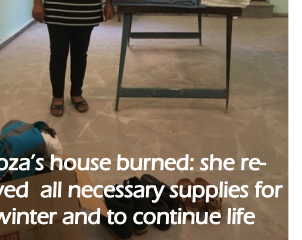
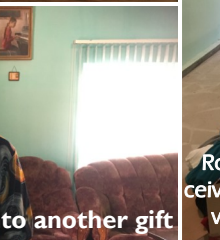
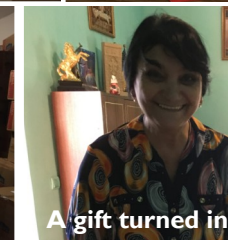
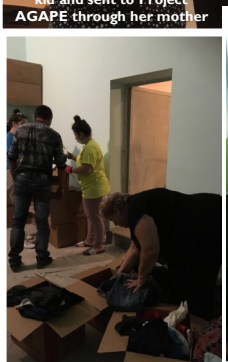
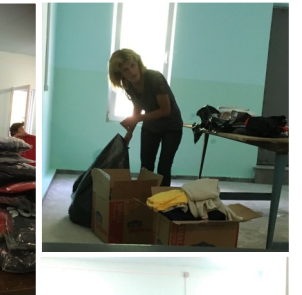
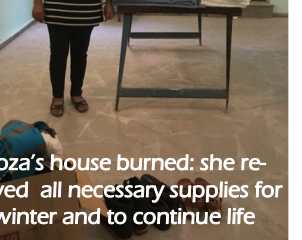
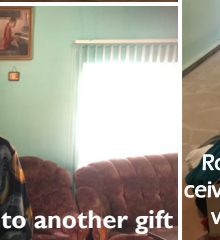
The sewing supplies were mostly for the kids of the Christian Education Center, but some families who earlier had applied with request to get yarn received it, and one of them later came to AGAPE office to show the amazing, nice shoes she had knitted and crochet for newborns and toddlers: she made such beautiful shoes and bows, and she gives them as gift to other people. "A gift turned into another gift" - this is how her action can be described. The gratitude of all the people was endless!!!

A THANK YOU card made by a kid and sent to Project AGAPE through her mother

A gift turned into another gift

Roza's house burned: she received all necessary supplies for winter and to continue life

THANK YOU





# SEPTEMBER - CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CENTER



Computer class and the graduates getting certificates



The Christian/Children's Education Center (CEC), which was one of the important projects of 1998 continues to actively function in Berdzor. From 1998 up to now the CEC has provided opportunities for enriching the religious, cultural and educational life of the community playing a huge role in its development, providing classrooms for Christian Education and Bible teaching with accommodations for Sunday School, VBS, Music, Art, Dancing, Sport, Computer, Chess and other after-school educational and vocational activities. For these 21 years the CEC proved to be the most efficient place for the children's, teenagers', young adults' after-school provision, and even for adults, as many of them received sustainable knowledge and skills that helped them to adapt to the constantly changing social-economic factors faster and easier. Different kind of trainings, especially the Computer and TEFL classes helped them to become more sociable, to find jobs based on skills and knowledge from the CEC. Most of the trainees were able to get jobs after those trainings. Most of the children of Berdzor and even adults learned their first computer skills at the CEC. The classes continued until the cold weather forced to stop those till the next summer. But the installment of the centralized heating system in spring of 2019 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 providing sufficient funds for that purpose. During those years the two-story building hadn't had any capital renovation, so it took a long time to complete the renovation of the building started at the end of 2017. The renovation was completed by May of 2018, after the building also received a natural gas line and a centralized heating system was built to make it possible having classes during the cold season. This was an incentive for the Board of Directors of Project AGAPE to support the CEC with funding for having classes all year round instead of only 4-6 months in a year, when the weather was warm.

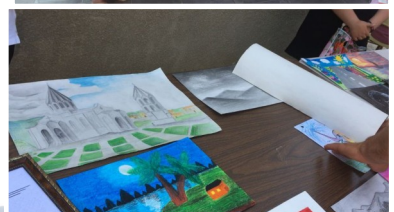
**big  
Thank  
You!**



Beautiful quilted blankets, bedding and many other items are a big support for their families.



All the nice things made by the students of the CEC



Children make nice dresses and bags for themselves and for their family members.





# OCTOBER: TRIP TO NORTH CAROLINA - WNCC

Yerevan-Doha-Miami-Greensboro



The first meal in NC with Allan, Laura &amp; Ashley Van Meters



Leaving out of a suitcase



North Carolina and the United Methodists of NC both conferences welcomed me with open arms and open hearts as always. This was my 10th trip to North Carolina to meet congregations helping the Project and to tell about how Project AGAPE helped the families in Kashatagh region of Karabagh. This was a trip full of interesting meetings with the UM church members supporting AGAPE, with mission team members who had visited Armenia in different years and who were planning to visit in the future, multiple speeches in NC & WNC and participation in Project AGAPE Board meeting. The trip was as memorable as other trips, the only difference compared with the first trip in 1999 was the abundance of friends who wanted to host me and/or who surrounded everywhere I went. There were the total of over 100 presentations in different United Methodist churches both in North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences. There were some special meetings and events like meeting the Bishop of North Carolina Conference Hope Morgan Ward and visiting Bishop Charlene Kammerer at Lake Junaluska, who was so supportive of Project AGAPE for many years, I met also new people who were interested in helping



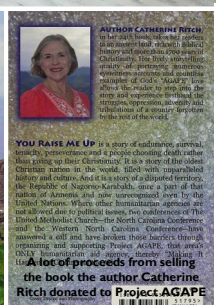
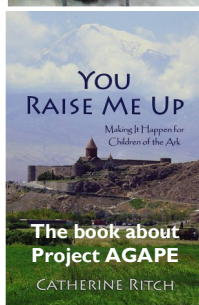
Bishop Kammerer's special dinner with Jamie Armstrong &amp; Mark &amp; Barbara Bardens while hosting me



Would never imagine to meet someone like Mary Hettinger who came to Armenia &amp; Artsakh in 1998



Happy to see Lori Anne Bowen healed, safe and sound



My favorite cheesecake



AGAPE. This trip, as many other trips before, was a great experience for me and hopefully helped more UMC members to learn about Project AGAPE and continue to support the people that the Project serves. The first month of the trip - October - was itineration time in Western North Carolina Conference. It was a true blessing to see old friends and to meet and know new people. Here are some messages received from different people:

"Your message meant so very much tonight. Thank you so very much for traveling from Armenia to our small town. You are a blessing to those of us to whom you spoke and to your countrymen! May God bless you and your work and multiple all donations."

"I sure feel that not only me, but our church family, have had our paths cross for God's purposes. I am excited to see what His big plans are! I miss you my new sweet friend!"

Some of the churches made videos: Forest Hill UMC live streamed the speech and here is the link to it: <https://www.facebook.com/foresthillumc/videos/1951124401657789/>



# NOVEMBER: TRIP TO NORTH CAROLINA - NCC

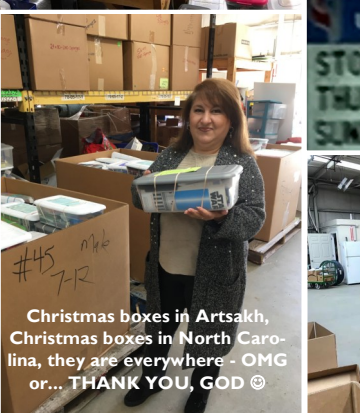
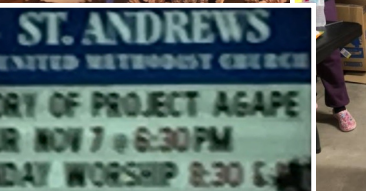
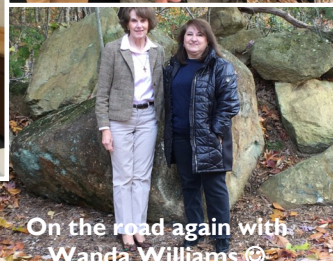
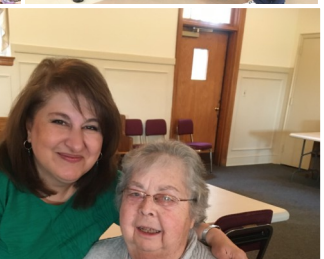
November was the month of itineration in North Carolina Conference. Again meeting old and new friends, again numerous speeches in United Methodist Churches, again hours of traveling from place to place. But more importantly, wonderful people whose kind, positive vibes and warm welcome made it possible to be on the go for two months...

There were some special meetings and events, like taking part in Pilgrimage in Fayetteville - an annual large scale UM youth event of the NC Conference of the UMC, which has been bringing thousands of youth together for over 27 years for a weekend full of youth-led worship, leadership, conversation, celebration and love. Being on the stage with Bishop Hope I had the opportunity to say THANK YOU to thousands of 6th to 12th graders and their mentors who were active in sending Christmas Boxes to thousands of kids of Kashatagh region every year. Ellen Beasley - Director of Youth Ministries at Saint Andrews United Methodist Church in Garner, who came to Armenia and Artsakh in May of 2018 with a building team - was one of the organizers of the event in 2019.

Another memorable event was spending a couple of days with volunteers at MERCI warehouse to work on the Christmas boxes for Armenia, to see the devotion and dedication of elderly and kids helping at the warehouse.

I would like to use the opportunity to thank all the people, who were so supportive by hosting me, transporting to all the churches and places for itineration, to all the churches inviting me to talk to their congregations, to both - North Carolina and Western North Carolina Conferences, for everything they have done and continue to do to help Armenians survive in their hardships... THANK YOU &, I will only add, MAY GOD BLESS YOU hundred times more than you bless the kids in Artsakh through the only Christmas gifts they receive, through everything you share to make the lives of your Christian Brothers and Sisters bearable, not to lose the last thing they have - HOPE!!!

Nara Melkonyan, Country Director of Project AGAPE in Armenia.



Christmas boxes in Artsakh, Christmas boxes in North Carolina, they are everywhere - OMG or... THANK YOU, GOD ©

On the road again with Wanda Williams ©

Visiting the first director of Project AGAPE Charles Davis

Pilgrimage

The sign with my name on the chair placed by Ellen Beasley



# DECEMBER - PROJECTS CONTINUE



December was the month of continuing some projects, completing others and starting new ones.

One of the started and completed projects in December was the reinforcement of the Staff house balcony wall which overlooks the stairs going down to the Christian Education Center. Every day tens of children use those stairs to go to the Christian Education Center to attend different groups there. It was becoming more and more dangerous, so reinforcing it could not wait any more. It took the AGAPE staff several days in December to make concrete and using reinforcement bars make a strong wall to keep the balcony from further damage. The weather was still warm and perfect for such project, so the AGAPE staff used the favorable weather to complete this project.



Another project was providing funds to renovate the roof of the Sonasar kindergarten. The condition of the roof was awful: the wooden skeleton was in better shape, but the old asbestos cover was almost gone, so the funds provided by one of the Board members – Wanda Watts - helped to buy the metal tin and renovate the roof of the building.

We need to recall a fragment from November newsletter of 2018 for the next project, citing Allan Van Meter's words: «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 felt 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.” The funds provided by Allan Van Meter and donations from Archdale UMC added later helped to put laminate flooring in five classrooms, paint the walls, buy chairs for teachers, purchase a new set of computer and processor for the school. In December the school was provided with 4 new wood stoves bought and brought from Yerevan to heat the school in winter time.

The agricultural development project continues providing more families with cows, chickens and agricultural tools and seeds.

And, the last task in December was to get ready for distribution of the Christmas boxes in January and the following months.

The new tin roof of Sonasar kindergarten



Taking the wood stoves to Sonasar school



New chairs for teachers

The Christmas tree at the AGAPE center is ready for the Christmas event



One of the cows of the Cattle Project who chose to deliver the calf at the entrance door of the mayors office



The N200 cow given to a family with 3 one-side orphans

