



Where Needs Meet AGAPE Love

June 2021

Responding to God's Voice

AGAPE MEMBER CHURCHES

Bedrock Church -
Franklin County

Bedrock Community Church,
Bedford

Covenant Fellowship

Franklin Heights Church —
Rocky Mount, CrossPointe
and Union Hall

Dwelling Place Christian
Fellowship

EastLake Community Church

Flint Hill Baptist Church

Goodview Baptist Church

Halesford Baptist Church

Inner-Faith Fellowship
Ministries

Morgans Baptist Church

Palestine Baptist Church

Radford Baptist Church

Rocky Mount Baptist Church

Staunton Baptist Church

Vitalize Church

Westlake Baptist
Church

Jesus Calling! *Prayers Answered!*

Scott & Frankie are two new Agape clients who individually and as a couple have gone through many trials and tribulations in their lifetime, but their faith and trust in the Lord has grown so strong that it's almost palpable. You can see it in their eyes, you can hear it in their voices. They know they are sinners, they know they are going to continue to struggle, but they are determined to keep doing what is right. I believe they can do it and that they are going to be mighty witnesses for the Lord the rest of their lives.



Currently this couple is homeless and unemployed. Just this past week they visited a local organization seeking help. That organization generously provided them with a pass to the State Park where they could stay for a few days. Their next step, on the recommendation of Scott's mother, was to come to the Agape Center to see if they could get some food. Of course, we said, "Yes, but first you'll need to meet with a mentor." And that's where our story begins.

Scott and Frankie walked into the Pam Sinex's room and spied the *Jesus Calling* book on the end table. Scott commented that he had read the book and said it was incredible — that God really spoke to him the whole time he was reading it. Frankie added, "It's a really, really good one!" Pam jumped right on this and asked if they knew that Jesus is their Lord and Savior. "Oh, yes, absolutely, 100%!"

As the conversation continued, they talked about their love for the Lord. They confessed that they had done wrong in the past, how they have left that behind and are now committed to living the "good" life — a life pleasing to the Lord. Their passion was intense and the presence of the Holy Spirit so evident that Pam called this reporter to say these clients have a story that needs to be shared with others. While they were still meeting with Pam, we exchanged phone numbers. They left Agape with two gas cards (more about that later), food and lots of thank you's and hugs for Pam.

Let's fast forward. About an hour later Scott sent me the following text, "I just saw Pam...please call us with a time today. We can't wait to talk with you!! This will be the best story you have heard in a long time. It's an uplifting and enlightening story. We have been thru the craziest things but the whole time God was present and armed for battle. Not to be tooting our own horns, but we're strong. Lol. Can't wait to hear from you."

Immeasurably more... (continued)

Shortly after the text I met up with them at the State Park. They proceeded to tell me their story. They were both addicts. Scott shared that he had been incarcerated and had served a 7-year sentence that was shortened because of good behavior. While in prison, Scott was handpicked out of a very large group of potential candidates to participate in a 6-month Christian-based course. Scott knew the Lord a little bit before. Here he was introduced to the Bible, got to know about Jesus and what it is to have a relationship with Him. He attended church every Sunday and through classes and workshops during the week surrendered his life to Christ. He felt free before he even got out of prison and had a plan to do things right. However, Satan got back in the picture and in a very short time, he was off track.

Until, 30 days out of prison, the pickup truck Scott was riding in got hit by a drunk driver. Scott was in the middle in the front seat and went completely through the windshield. Every rib in his body was crushed, he was scalped and had a huge gash from his eye around the side of his head. He lay in the hospital in a near-coma state for some time. Scott remembers waking up, having his eye stitched together and feeling totally alone. Today he suffers memory loss, nightmares and post-traumatic stress. That was just two years ago. And that was about the time he met Frankie.

Frankie hasn't had an easy go of it either. She is legally blind and deaf in one ear. She had an unstable and rough upbringing, details of which she has asked not to be included in this story. She knew the Lord at an early age. "I know my Bible. I was saved when I was 11. And I knew I knew Jesus before. I mean, it was since I could talk. I've always believed. I still do. No matter what happens. [a really big sigh] That's the one constant in our lives. It never goes away. That's for sure. 24 seven, whether He answers or not, I know He's listening."

In the two years they've been together, they've had their ups & downs. Early this year they were in trouble again. It's partially why they're in their current situation — homeless, unemployed, but sincerely wanting to break from the past. Scott said, "We're not here for a handout from [Jesus], we just want Him to show us the path, the narrow path, the one less traveled." I asked if they were sharing their faith with others and Frankie said, "It's hard. There's not many because I don't want to know the people we've known in the past anymore. They would expect something, something that could lead us in the wrong direction. I'm done with them. Right now we're on our own. It's a scary step."

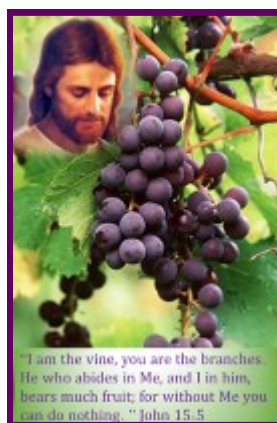
My next question was "What brought you to Agape?" They replied that they had been arrested earlier this year — Frankie for a DUI, Scott for probation things. Frankie was released April 28th, Scott a week and a half later. They quickly found out everything they had before was gone, everything stolen, credit cards, birth certificates even right down to their

cats. With no identification, they are really starting from scratch.

They've been praying and they know their prayers are being answered. Scott reached out a couple of days ago to his mom for money and she said she wouldn't give him cash but would pay their rent once they find a place to live. They still needed a temporary place to stay. The Lord led them to a resource that gave them the park passes. Today (Thursday) they came to Agape for food and gas money so that Frankie could get to Christiansburg Friday to keep a court obligation. Pam asked them what their greatest need is and they said a place to live and employment. After agreeing with Pam that they have Jesus and that's all they really need, the three prayed. Before they left Agape, God provided food and gas cards.

As I was walking up to their picnic bench at the State Park to interview them, Frankie's phone rang and it was a call from her brother telling them he has a job for them that will start the next day. We introduced ourselves and as they were telling me their story, Frankie's phone rang again. This time it was a call from another family member letting them know they can come stay with them until they find a place of their own! God is so good. We (Pam, Frankie, Scott and I) witnessed their most urgent prayer requests being answered that very day. They know without a doubt that Jesus is calling them near to Him. And, though, they may not realize it yet, they are witnessing their trust and love for the Lord to others by their actions and words.

I feel God's presence as I write this. I just finished rereading my draft and hit Save. The **Jesus Calling** book happens to be next to my laptop. I reach for it and it opens to December 30:



"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing." John 15:5

I am leading you along a way that is uniquely right for you. The closer to Me you grow, the more fully you become your true self — the one I designed you to be. Because you are one of a kind, the path you are traveling with Me diverges increasingly from that of other people. However, in My mysterious wisdom and ways, I enable you to follow this solitary path while staying in close contact with others. In fact, the more you devote yourself to Me, the more freely you can love people.

Marvel at the beauty of a life intertwined with My Presence. Rejoice as we journey together in intimate communion. Enjoy the adventure of finding yourself through losing yourself in Me.

Connecting Clients to Christ AND the Body of Christ

Agape Center NRV

An Anointed Parking Lot



“We’ve had quite a few people come to Christ in the parking lot,” explained Kim Bowman, Director of Agape Center New River Valley. “Just six weeks ago, we had two Spanish clients with very young children drive into the parking lot. Because they both had such young babies, I decided not to make them come into the building, so the mentor and a Spanish translator went out to their car. Lo and behold, both the two women **AND** the translator came to Christ!

Kim explained they have a large number of Spanish-speaking clients and have had to reach out to Virginia Tech to find translators, most of whom are unbelievers. “We have this huge opportunity to share Christ with people who we would never connect with otherwise.”

Here’s another example. “One of our mentors, Lucy Copeland, worked with a man who refused to come into the building. He was angry and disgruntled, but Lucy stepped out of the box to come alongside this man and meet him where he was. This went

on for several months. About a month ago, the man told Lucy he had had a heart attack and wasn’t feeling well. She presented the Gospel to him and is confident that he accepted Christ. The very next week, he died of a heart attack.

“It is truly amazing to think that someone would come to a food pantry, have another someone meet them in the parking lot, and leave with their future sewed up!”

*Jan Hogle’s interview with Kim Bowman
May 2021*



*“When God’s people are in need,
be ready to help them. Always
be eager to practice hospitality.”
Romans 12:13, NLT*



Volunteers Working Behind the Scenes

Gift Shop/Baskets

Christmas Elves at Work

It's once again that time of year. Volunteers in the Agape Gift Shop have begun to put together the client "Christmas baskets" for 2021. This year the clients will receive gift bags rather than baskets, saving about \$1,000 in costs.

The Gift Shop "elves" work tirelessly creating a beautiful little gift for each client, magically infusing it with God's love. It's always a feast for the eyes to see row after row of these creations lined up ready to give.

Some items you might consider purchasing to help fill the bags are listed below and are available at dollar stores for \$1.00 or less per item:

Razors (10 for \$1)

Body wash

Hand towels

Small jar candles

Stop by the Gift Shop area with your items. And, please let us know if you or a youth group or other small group from your church or organization would like to join in on the fun of putting these treasures together. The Gift Shop crew of Eileen Hawkins, Mandy Martin, Karen Fusaro and Carol and Jeff Francis will gladly welcome you.

Barbara Roberts, Agape Reporter



A few of last year's elves with Santa and little Rose in front of the shelves of gift baskets: Carol Francis, Lynda Howell, Eileen Hawkins, Amber Dunbar and Ashley Mills



Christmas in June!
Karen Fusaro busy as Santa's Chief of Operations

Prayer Team

Agape Prayer Power

Among the many benefits we receive for being part of Agape is being on the receiving end of prayer blessings. Marion Reed and Grace Cooper volunteer as mentors at Agape Moneta. But that's just part of their role — they are also our Prayer Warriors.

An hour before opening, Grace and Marion are at the Center, walking through departments, talking to department heads to ask what prayer needs they have. The requests are always kept confidential. Sometimes the needs are personal, sometimes the needs are for their clients, sometimes for themselves or others. Often these faithful ladies simply go outside and pray over the grounds.

Periodically they pick a day when the center has no clients and walk through each area praising Father God for each volunteer, praying for safety and unity, and for everyone who comes through our doors.

A prayer box is on the Runners table in the Household Goods area for anyone who wants to leave a prayer request. Marion and Grace check the box before they leave in the evening and they cover the requests immediately. Marion says, "Grace and I are both honored to be called the Prayer Team for such a time as this!" And we who are regularly prayed for say we are the blessed ones. We offer Marion and Grace a heartfelt Thank You shoutout!



Marion and Grace

Both articles by Barbara Roberts, Agape Reporter

Karen Jones: Tours 'R Us and More

You may have met Karen Jones for the first time as she toured you around the Agape facilities. Most likely, she was explaining how volunteers witness Jesus to people in need of encouragement, aid and hope. As Assistant Executive Director, Karen has been inviting prospective volunteers to discover the areas of service in which to use their own special gifts and feel comfortable, while laboring together in God's Agape vineyard.

Karen has been volunteering at Agape for the past seven years. Like some of us, Karen wasn't sure at first where she would fit in so she tried several departments. What kept her coming back every week? "I was amazed at the organization, vision and purpose I found here," she said.

Karen is no stranger to hard work. She is married to Ken Jones, a family doctor, now retired. "We met at Fairfax Hospital in Northern Virginia while I was still in high school. I was only 19 and he was 21 when we married." Karen explains, "At the start we both had a heart for a rural setting. We visited different areas on weekends, and when we discovered that Christiansburg, VA needed a family practice, we went there." Karen stayed home raising her three sons and one daughter until her husband needed help in the billing department at his family practice medical office. She says "They needed to straighten things out because their assistant made a mess of things." She kept that job for about 20 years!

Karen has volunteered at Agape since 2015. "Since becoming assistant director, my favorite part is giving tours. When I give a tour," Karen said, "I share about the Agape Center and its mission statement: 'To reflect God's love by giving of ourselves and our resources as we submit to the leadership of the Holy Spirit to mentor and help individuals turn or return to a Christ-centered life.' This is what sets us apart from other local helping centers. And I love to share some of their stories while giving the tours."

One of those stories involves a mentor's faithfulness and a client's response. Karen explains, "One lady kept coming regularly but her mentor wasn't sure the client was tolerating her as a mentor very well. Then the client abruptly stopped coming. About eight months later she came in and asked me if she could see her mentor. Then she explained, 'Thank you for not giving up on me. I was in prison, and while there I remembered some of the things my mentor had told me. I knelt down right on the concrete prison floor and asked God to come into my life.

I came to see my mentor because I promised God I would do two things when I got out: Get my children back and thank my mentor for praying for me.'"

Karen told another story about a man who came up to a clerk in the store asking for steel-toed boots in his size. "The clerk said she didn't know but would look in the back," Karen explained, "so she went and found a large box of men's boots with the man's size of 10 to 11 steel-toed boots right on top of the pile. When she brought them out, the man started to softly cry, explaining, 'I finally got a job but the boss told me not to come in unless I had those boots. I don't have a paycheck yet and couldn't afford them. Now I can finally go to work!'"

Karen finished by saying, "This is how God works in every department. He does these miracles we don't understand, but this is how He works!"

Pat Hyland, Agape Reporter

Learning how to "Give Back" as a family, they're volunteering together this summer



Margie Glaviano and her grandkids in front of Mount Praisemore (Allison, Karen, Margie, Lauren)



Kevin Akershoek's nieces Olivia & Kylee, Karen, and two of Kevin's children Ben & Tessa will be working in Pantry & Transportation

Radford Baptist Church

The Agape Center began as an outreach ministry of Radford Baptist Church in 2004. Its mission statement was then as it is now: "To reflect God's love by the giving of ourselves and our resources as we labor with the Holy Spirit to mentor and help individuals turn to a Christ-centered life." Many members of Radford Baptist serve in various capacities as volunteers at the Agape Center.

Pastor Karl Hofheinz and his wife Sandy began their ministry at Radford Baptist Church in September 2011. The pastor stated that the strength of the Radford Baptist/Agape connection is the parallel purpose of reaching our community for Christ. Radford Baptist participates in and supports many of the Agape Center's ministries including the Agape Open, Thanksgiving meals, and the Christmas Angel Tree.

Upcoming events at RBC include a Summer Dance Camp, July 19-23. To find out more about the church or the upcoming events, check out their website and/or FaceBook page or call the church office (540 297-5214).



The Hofheinz Family

Snippets from the AECO* Meeting

Welcome New Volunteers!



Valerie Burch – Clothing, Baskets
Henry Clee – Clothing
Debbie Higgins – Clothing
Rebecca Porterfield – Clothing, Baskets
Gracean Ratliff – Clothing
Megan Vess – Pantry, Clothing

By the Numbers...

<u>May 2021</u>		<u>May 2020</u>	
Families	498	Families	623
Individuals	1,628	Individuals	2,057

- **Volunteers Needed:** Mount Praisemore is reaching a new peak. If you or a small group from your church can help hang clothing — even if it's only an hour or two — call the Agape Center (540 296-0609), leave your name, phone number and availability. Lynda Howell, Clothing Lead, will call you to schedule a time. It does not necessarily have to be a day that the Agape Center is open to the public.
- **Agape Volunteer Appreciation Dinner:** Keep September 24th open on your calendar. Karen Jones is heading up the committee for this event. If you'd like to help in the planning of it, contact Karen.
- **SML Charity Home Tour, October 8-10.** The Agape Center is again participating in this community fundraiser. A significant amount is raised for the Agape Center each year. Greg and Susan English have generously opened their home as one of the eight on the tour. The Agape Center will be staffing it the entire weekend. Please consider signing up for one of the timeslots. It is an opportunity to serve our community and meet new people as we support the Agape Center. Training, food, and fun are provided for all volunteers throughout the weekend!

The Agape Newsletter is a monthly publication produced by The Agape Center for volunteers, member churches, and other interested individuals and organizations. Comments may be sent to:

Executive Director: Sue Lipscomb
 sue@agapecentersml.org
 Newsletter Editor: Karen Nikic
 karen@agapecentersml.org

Newsletter Reporters:

Susan Epling Pat Hyland
 Jan Johnston Tina McMillion
 Barbara Roberts Karen Nikic

Published by The Agape Center
 1159 Promised Land Rd.
 (P.O. Box 573)
 Moneta VA 24121

Phone: 540-296-0609