



Where Needs Meet AGAPE Love

January 2021

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

A Note from Sue:

2020 is in the rearview mirror — **Praise the Lord** — what a year it has been for all of us. Agape had to make some pretty major adjustments in order to remain open but thankfully we did not miss a day even though for a period of time we operated with limited services. Beginning Feb. 2nd we will be once again back to a full service ministry...applying all the covid-19 guidelines!



What a blessing it has been to see God at work during very difficult times and to hear the stories, not only from our clients but from our volunteers as well, as to how the Lord provided and brought them through the covid-19 episode.

An extra special shout-out and **THANK YOU** to all of the volunteers who have been willing and able to continue throughout the year to minister to our clients through Mentoring, Pantry, Store, Transportation and all of the supporting departments. Your role at Agape along with all of the 300+ volunteers make a huge difference in the lives of over 800 families throughout our region not only for immediate needs but for eternal needs as well. God is changing lives and we praise Him for his ministry at the Agape Center in Moneta as well as Lynchburg, Roanoke/Vinton and the New River Valley.

Jack and I are so blessed to be a part of Agape and to serve our Lord alongside each of you! We thank God for your generosity in answering His call to serve Him.

Sue

KEY DATES

Linen & Towel Shower: **February & March**

Roanoke Valley Gives: **March 10, 2021**

Agape Open Golf Tournament: **May 22, 2021**

Never Too Old, Never Too Young to Serve the Lord

Rose, Our Youngest Volunteer

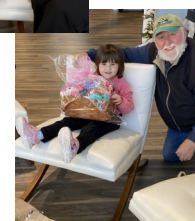
Would you believe Little Rose, Eileen Hawkins' granddaughter, started coming to Agape when she was three months old! The last couple of years many of us have seen her grow from a shy little toddler holding her grandma's hand during our prayer time to a still little but bold volunteer who makes sure everyone between the gift basket area and the Gift Shop knows when it's prayer time. She hears the announcement and takes off on a charge. If it looks like you might not be coming, she'll grab you by the hand and bring you along. And when prayer starts, she bows her little head and prays fervently along with the rest of us.

This little wise one understands what Agape is all about. Rose loves Jesus, she loves the people she works with and she especially loves helping others. This past Christmas season she was a true blessing in the Gift Shop, kneeling in the big high chair at the window handing Christmas gift baskets to clients. She even assisted some children in selecting a toy in the Gift Shop. When they came in the door, Rose would take them directly to the appropriate age area and give them her insight on what would be a good choice for them. She's Santa's (or "Ho-Ho" as she calls him) favorite little elf! I wouldn't be surprised if she's the lead elf in Santa's workshop!

Most of the year, Rose works behind the scene as do many of our volunteers. She is, indeed, an important member of the Gift Shop team. She often helps her Nanny with the "slightly-used" toys they take home to clean. At the Agape Center, she often helps sort the gift items and is currently helping put Easter gift baskets together, counting out 12 plastic eggs for each basket, along with other goodies.

Santa and I met with Rose recently to get to know her a little better. She told us that she goes to Goodview Pre-K, she loves horses and other animals, she'd like to be a "doctor vet" when she grows up. Her actual name is Rosalina and sometimes she's called "Rosie-Posie."

Before our interview that day I happened to mention to a certain runner that I wanted to take a book and a toy for Rose to the interview. Well, that turned out to be a pretty little basket of goodies that brightened Rosie's day when we met. It was only fitting as she so very often brightens our Agape days with her sweet smile, willingness to help, and wisdom beyond her years.



Giving Back through Music



Christina & Rhonda Lee Vincent, Grammy-winning bluegrass singer & songwriter, at Rocky Mount's Harvester Music Center, Jan 2020

Christina Kovach: Blessing Others with Song

Christina Kovach has a big heart, a beautiful voice, and a shy, humble demeanor. What do you do when God has blessed you in this way? You set aside your shyness, you focus on the Lord and you let Him lead you in His ways. Christina is so unassuming that when the pastor of her church heard she was going to

meet with Laurie Stuckey and me to tell us about her gospel singing ministry, he asked if he and his wife could come along. He wanted to make sure that Christina not only shared how she is touching others through her music but how she tunes in to the needs of others.

Christina lived in Floyd VA for 18 years and came to love the music its famous for. While there she learned to sing bluegrass country music and how to play the fiddle. A little over ten years ago, after moving to this area, she became familiar with the Gospel Café in Roanoke. She desperately wanted to overcome her struggles with stage fright and singing there helped her to gain confidence.

Over the years as she struggled trying to understand life while being around folks singing gospel music, she knew they had something she didn't quite grasp. When she was a little girl, her mom had taken her and her sister to church where her mom sang and played a little organ. As she grew into a young woman Christina had taken some wrong turns, had lost some loved ones and was feeling a bit empty. At about the age of 28 she told the Lord that if He was real, she needed Him to save her. From then on, she still had struggles in her life but she knew He was always there, He had never left even when she was doing things God didn't approve of. Now Christina knows that she is still learning and it's still a struggle, but she's walking with the Lord. She knows who she can go to for help.

Three years ago a fellow musician invited her and a friend to his church – Gethsemane Baptist Church in Boones Mill. Christina has visited other churches over

the years but hadn't found just the right one until she felt truly at home at Gethsemane. Pastor Dwight Hayes had been praying for over a year for a vocalist to join their church. In time, Christina started practicing with the other musician and shortly, thereafter, started singing regularly. Pastor Dwight says that she has an uncanny sense for suggesting just the right music to go with his message or to speak to someone's heart.

Pastor Dwight was quick to interject throughout our conversation that Christina is always looking to see how she can help others. He said that if Christina sees a person in need, she will grab hold of that person and try to help them in some way or other. Oftentimes, it is someone that society rejects for whatever reason and Christina reaches out with the love of our Lord. She has the gift of discernment. She understands their hurts, their pains, their needs and does whatever she can to help them – whether it's connecting them to a resource or simply listening. She is active in the church, getting members involved in projects, extending a welcome to those outside the church, organizing hikes, etc. Gethsemane Baptist Church takes on Samaritan's Purse Operation Christmas Child as a project throughout the whole year each year. Christina took the project one step further this year and asked the people coming to the Gospel Café to help fill the shoeboxes. With the addition of the 50 boxes she brought from the Gospel Café, they were able to fill 177 boxes this year. Not bad for a very small church with a big heart.

Christina started coming to the Agape Center a little over a year ago. She has received food, furniture, clothing, etc., but Christina says what she gets the most out of is the mentoring and prayer. She says it helps to be in conversation with different mentors, hearing their stories, sharing with them and having them pray for her. She shares her love of gospel music and has even sung a song or two. While waiting to go to USDA or see a mentor, Christina has engaged a fellow Agape client in conversation, has called their attention to something on the tv monitor a time or two or has quietly graced someone with a song if the Spirit moves her. Christina understands what it is to have someone speak to your heart, whether it be through acts of kindness or the words of a song. Just like all us volunteers, Christina is sharing agape love in every way she can.

Christina says, "Music is one way of giving back. I pray that the Lord will bless me with songs to share in the heart of Franklin County and surrounding areas."

Why I Volunteer at Agape

From the heart of Sherry Jones



Agape came into my life after a 5-year journey that my family and I had caring for Mom and Dad. Mom had Alzheimer's, which worsened in 2013 until she passed in 2016, and Dad passed in 2018 with renal failure. Taking care of loved ones with failing health does not give one much time for other things.

As I began to adjust to our new normal without Mom and Dad, I felt that familiar desire to serve God in my local church. Mom instilled in her family from my childhood that service to the Lord through service to others was important and rewarding. I wanted to get back to that kind of service again.

In April 2018, 2 months after Dad passed, my husband and I were at a Wednesday night service at EastLake Community Church, which is a sponsor church for Agape. I had never heard of this place until a sweet person named Sue Lipscomb sat down at our table during our fellowship time. We began talking and I expressed a desire to find some way to serve the Lord through our church. She told me about Agape and we scheduled a tour for the following Tuesday. She took me through the different departments with the last one being the pantry. I fell in love with the pantry!

It was the perfect match for me because I love food and the thought of any family not having enough to eat was heartbreaking to me. Since I was still working part-time, I started volunteering two Tuesdays a month that April.

Now retired and three years later in my newest role as a pantry floor supervisor for the Tuesday client days, I have seen the need and the gratefulness of our clients

many times. I still get tearful when I walk outside where we load the clients' groceries into their cars. I watch our loaders interact with our clients and think we may be the only light and smile they get that day. The groceries that we load into their cars may be the only food they have had for a few days or even longer or it may give them peace of mind that they will have something to eat for the next couple of weeks.

Agape is a beautiful place that God has created. I am so happy to be a part of His Kingdom's work here.

Isaiah 58:10 "Feed the hungry, and help those in trouble. Then your light will shine out from the darkness, and the darkness around you will be as bright as noon." (NLT)

"Go home to your family, and tell them how much the Lord has done for you and how merciful he has been to you."

Mark 5:19

Sharing "God Stories"

— a note from your newsletter editor

Everyone enjoys stories — and Agape volunteers and readers of this newsletter, especially, enjoy "God stories." In fact, sharing how God has touched the lives of our clients and how He is working in our lives affirms our very reason for being here — the desire to show others the love of Our Lord through our words and actions. When we share a God story, it not only gives God glory, but points others to Him.

The best person to pass on a God story is someone who has heard it first-hand or experienced it themselves. The telling or writing of it while it's fresh makes it more real. It's easy to lose some of the details and, more importantly, the heartfelt emotions and words behind the story when it's told to someone else and that person tells someone else and on down the line until the story is put on paper by somebody else.

It's not uncommon to shy away from sharing a story if it means having to write it. That's understandable. It's easy to get hung up on grammar and sentence structure and all those things our English teachers taught us. What's important is the story itself — the story of God working in a person's life — sharing a story of God's hope.

If writing isn't your thing and you have a story to share, speak it into a text or record it using an app on your phone or other device. Then send it to me --- or set up a time to meet with me — and either I or another writer will take it from there. Be sure to include details such as the person's name and confirm that you have the permission to share the story. It's nice, too, if you can snap a photo of the person whose story you're sharing.

The 2020 Christmas Store and the Angel Tree Program

Christmas was really hard for a lot of clients this year. A lot of people came in with nothing to give to their kids and no decorations. A lot work in restaurants and have not worked in months. One woman said she had to move in with her mother because her husband lost his job and then her mother lost her job. The woman shared that she had to pay the bills with her check and so there was nothing left for Christmas. She was very grateful for the toys as was everyone who received some.

Our community was generous though. 1800 toys were collected. 1361 toys and 920 client gift baskets were given out.

In addition, Eileen Hawkins, who along with Karen Fusaro oversees the Christmas Store, said, "We gave out about 300 bags of gently-used items, including gifts for grandmas to give their grandkids who would have had little or nothing. It was truly a blessing to be in working in the Christmas Store, so many God stories, so many blessings!"



Welcome New Volunteers!



April Bayse – Clothing
Brenda Burgess – Store Clerk
Kathy Davis – Clothing/Clerk
Kathleen Hamlin – Data/USDA
Sylvia Hassett – Clothing
Kayla Jamerson – Clothing
Cindy Kemp – Store Clerk/Pantry

Charlie Kemp – Pantry/USDA
Tina McMillion – Store Clerk
Kelly Milam – Christmas Store/Toys
Leslie Muses – Pantry
Rachel Stovall – Pantry
Phoebe Truman – Clothing
Tina Williams – Christmas Store

By the Numbers...

December 2020

Families 819
 Individuals 3,104

December 2019

Families 852
 Individuals 3,763

Important Upcoming Events

5th Annual Linen Shower



The Agape Center needs your help
with linens for our clients
Gently used or New Linens
Towels – Washcloths – Sheets

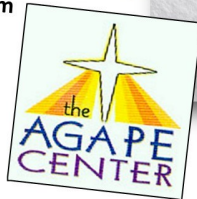
Date: Feb – March 2021

Drop Off at Agape
Tues & Thurs 10am-4pm
1st & 3rd Sat. 9am-12pm

Agape Center, Inc.
1159 Promised Land Road
Moneta VA 24121

Donate online:
Agapecentersml.org

Cash Donations to purchase Linens
P.O. Box 573, Moneta VA 24121

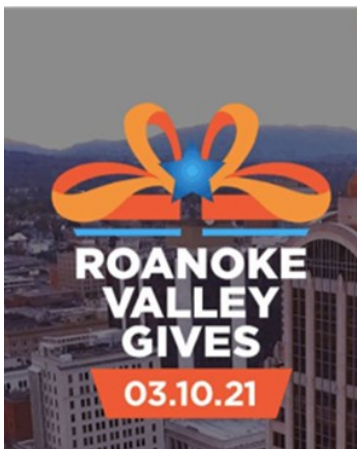


Additional DROP-OFF Locations:

EastLake Community Church
1201 Timberwood Lane, Moneta VA
LuLu's Closet
17980 Forest Rd., Forest VA

SAVE THE DATE

Agape Open
May 22, 2021



Roanoke Valley Gives (RVG) is our annual 24-hour online fundraiser run by the Community Foundation Serving Western Virginia. Over 150 charities (including the Agape Center) throughout the Roanoke Valley participate in the Give Big Day campaign each year. Since 2018, the Agape Center has enhanced services for our clients and building improvements for our volunteers with the donations collected and with RVG's incentive prizes that we've won.

In 2018, the Agape Center purchased the walk-in refrigeration unit from funds collected through the RVG campaign. In 2019, we bought a forklift to expand our storage space vertically. Last year, the money collected went to complete our security system (including intercom capability throughout the building) and to finish the heating and air conditioning in the Household, Linen and Book departments.

We understand that many of our donors recently contributed on our behalf to the Capps & Community Charity Challenge. We appreciate your generosity. For those who were not able to donate at that time, the RVG is an opportunity to make a difference in the lives of those in our community who need food, clothing, household goods, and the Word of the Lord in their lives. Thank you for your consideration.