



Where Needs Meet AGAPE Love December, 2019

AGAPE MEMBER CHURCHES

Bedrock Church—Franklin County

Bedrock Community Church

Covenant Fellowship

Franklin Heights Church—Rocky
Mount, CrossPointe, & 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

Message from Sue Lipscomb

2019 has been another year of God's blessing and guidance on this ministry. I know each of you, thinking back through 2019, could share a time or a story that happened during the year that blessed you. Only the Lord knows the lives that have been changed for eternity through each of you at Agape.

This year we witnessed the Lord working in Lynchburg with an Agape Satellite under the leadership of Tabitha North. The Lord has been blessing and currently they are so busy that they need to think about more space. What a joy to see new volunteers and member churches excited about working with this new ministry. God is blessing.

Also, the Lord is leading a team, led by Sue Frase, to open another Agape Satellite in Vinton. God is already opening doors and making it so obvious that He is in it and ready to start answering prayers and blessing as this new ministry begins.

We are so blessed at the Agape Center and to witness daily His miracles, large and small, and the lives and families that He is changing. No matter where you are volunteering, Pantry, Clothing, Mentoring or any of the 25+ areas, He is using you and His Presence is there.

Jack and I are so blessed to be a part of His ministry at Agape and to serve along side of each of you. We thank God for you and for your generosity in answering His call to serve Him at Agape. We want to wish each of you a Very Merry Christmas and look forward to seeing what our Lord is going to do through each of you at Agape during 2020!

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord, plans for welfare and not for evil, to give you a future and a hope, Then you will call upon me and come and pray to me and I will hear you. You will seek me and find me, when you seek me with all your heart. Jeremiah 29:11-13 (ESV)



Jack, Facilities Director, and Sue Lipscomb, Executive Director, send their Christmas wishes to all — Volunteers, Clients, and Church Partners.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR!

Festival of Trees—Bedford Welcome Center —through January 3, 2020—Vote for Agape Tree—See Page 5

Annual Agape Linen Shower — Month of January, 2020

Roanoke Valley Gives—March 18, 2020 (More info coming)

Answered Prayer Brings Reconciliation

Joey Brewer and his wife Chasiti have been coming to Agape since 2016 and are the first couple to take the Getting Ahead class together. He is celebrating his eighth year of sobriety from alcohol. And he is still recovering from a serious stroke suffered five years ago.

They've seen God work in many ways in their lives, and continue to look for what God still has in store for them. He says, "I've seen death (with my stroke), and it is scary. I had a lot of resentment toward God, wondering why He didn't just take me. I now see that he has a calling on my life, a purpose, and that is why He didn't take me then. He has been waiting on me to totally surrender my life to Him, so He could fulfill His purpose in me."

One of the most recent ways God interceded in Joey's life involved going through two family deaths in a matter of two weeks. One involved a close cousin, and the other involved his stepmom. Though she had been married to his dad for eighteen years, Joey wasn't really close to her. And he has been estranged from his dad for years, due to severe abuse suffered in the home.

Yet, Joey said, "I have prayed for my dad for a long time, that there would be forgiveness and the broken relationship would be mended. When my stepsister told me about her mom's death this fall, I struggled with a decision of whether to go to the funeral. I wrestled with God. It was almost four hours to drive to North Carolina for the funeral, and I didn't feel right in my spirit about going. However, I heard God tell me I needed to go to the funeral. When I got there, I was blindsided. God showed up during the funeral and answered my prayers!

My dad approached me and said 'we need to get along and I want to fix things.' At first I questioned his sincerity, but when I felt that sense of peace, I knew that the answer I had been looking for had finally shown up. I continue to pray about it. We are staying in contact with each other since then. His health is not good, but we've had good conversations. I know what happened could only be attributed to God."



Joey Brewer continues to seek God and pursue the purpose for his life, with help from his Agape Mentor and Pastor, Bill Griggs. He feels this may lead to being a minister, perhaps pastoring or evangelizing.

See **GETTING AHEAD**, 4



Welcome New Volunteers!

Pete Beck — Pantry
Evelyn Davis — Clothing
John Grantz — Pantry, Furniture
Kimberly Gravely — Store, Clothing
Jim Jones — Pantry
Laurie Lawrence — Store
Laurie Stuckey — Baskets
Paul Stuckey — Transportation Pantry

By the Numbers Served . . .

November 2019
 Families 985
 Individuals 3366

November 2018
 Families 932
 Individuals 3283

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TRANSITIONS: Communications Director

FROM THE EDITOR

It gives me great pleasure to introduce Karen Nikic, who will be assuming the role of Communications Director for Agape, effective January 1, 2020. After spending time here over several years, Karen and her husband Frank made a permanent move to the lake from Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio in 2018. God led them here in order to live out their desire to serve in a greater way, and coming to Agape has given them the opportunity. Frank is one of the Shadow Volunteers in the Pantry, picking up produce from Beckner's Produce Stand during the growing season. Karen serves as Mentor, and also works in USDA and the Store.

Prior to her retirement, Karen spent her career in the electric industry in communications. After retirement, she worked part-time as workshop coordinator for SCORE. (Service Core of Retired Executives) for a few years.

During one of their visits to the lake, Frank and Karen toured Agape; on that tour, Sue Lipscomb, Executive Director, said, "When you move here...". They had not considered moving here full-time until that word, which they felt was coming directly from God. They immediately started making plans for the move, and have been serving actively in their home church, EastLake Community Church, and Agape, since that time.

Karen says, "There was never a question that God sent us here to serve. We have been blessed to have so many ways to serve set before us. We are at that point in our lives where we don't have a lot of other distractions and obligations, and we can be devoted to serving our Lord. Moving here, and working at Agape, have given our lives new purpose." They have been active in their church, and initiated a community-wide GriefShare program last September, which helps individuals deal with the loss of a loved one. They and their team will continue to offer this program twice a year.

Karen will be responsible for the *Agape Newsletter* and all external communications involving the media. There are five local newspapers and one local radio station who regularly publish news about Agape, keeping our name fresh before the community. She says, "I'm looking forward to getting to know Agape and all the volunteers better. The intricacies of each department and client stories intrigue me, and I am anxious to continue presenting Agape to the community."



**Karen Nikic is the new
Communications Director for
Agape.**

For the past five years, I have heard, written, and published what God is doing in this amazing ministry called Agape! It is truly the best 'job' I've ever had. It has been pure joy to be associated with, and often representing, Agape to the outside world. This ministry is the most incredible para-church organization I have personally been involved in, and I commend Sue Lipscomb and the Board for their clear enunciation of their reliance on the Holy Spirit's guidance in all matters. I have grown, and hopefully matured, as I have seen how God works through each individual and each department. In many respects, this non-profit, totally volunteer organization runs more efficiently and effectively than most companies, and this is truly because of God's preeminence here.

I thank all the volunteers for your unwavering dedication to acting on God's leading in your own hearts and for sharing your lives and passions with me over the years for the *Agape Newsletter*. It has been pure delight to walk along-side so many giants in the faith. I am humbled to have served in your presence.

My husband Verne and I continue to feel God's nudging for an involvement in ministry with foreigners (whether immigrants, refugees, or overseas). Even though our next step is still unclear, we are following His nudging to free ourselves of all encumbrances that might keep us from fully being available for that next step.

May God continue to bless each of you and this awe-inspiring gem in our community as you continue to help people turn, or return, to a vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ.

**'Till All Have Heard
Karen Baker**



**Karen Baker is leaving her
post as Communications
Director after five years.**

GETTING AHEAD PROGRAM GRADUATES SIXTH CLASS!



The Fall, 2019 Getting Ahead Program Graduating Class, from left: Ron Cordell, Budgeting Class Facilitator; Glenn Rebman, Co-Facilitator; Bo Norfleet, Kristi Krueger, Karen Selden, Joann Castro, Sheryl Delp, Grace Overstreet, Chasiti Bradbury, Joey Brewer, Jan Hogle, Co-Facilitator. (Not pictured: Doris Overstreet)

Nine Agape clients graduated from the sixth Getting Ahead Program (GAP) on December 9, 2020. The intensive, seventeen session class helps participants take control of their lives and encourages their relationship with Jesus Christ. Jan Hogle and Glenn Rebman co-facilitated the class; budgeting classes were offered by Ron Cordell; and nutrition classes were provided by Amanda Armstrong, Program Assistant, Family Nutrition Program of the Virginia Cooperative Extension.

At the graduation ceremony, each of the graduates shared what impacted them the most during the classes. The major themes mentioned were that the most important resource to have

and continue to build is our relationship with God. The concept of stimulus and response, and that we don't have to be reactive was an important lesson to learn. We can choose our response to what happens to us. And finally, all of the participants were grateful for the class, the friends they made, and the things they learned during the classes. Joey Brewer said, "Most people think of poverty in terms of money, but I've learned that there is more to poverty than finances. There is spiritual poverty, relationship poverty, and these are far more significant to be able to solve." Chasiti Bradbury added, "This program is so worth the effort. We have made very close, deep friendships, and that means a lot for us."



Sue Frase catered breakfast for most of the seventeen sessions, a special lunch at the Equine Assisted Learning (above) and the Graduation reception. Bo Norfleet, one of the GA participants enjoys the selections for lunch at the horse arena.

At left, Bo Norfleet is with the pony Braveheart and below, Doris Overstreet is with the black and white horse, at the Healing Strides Arena in Boones Mill.



Vote for Agape at the Festival of Trees Until January 3

The Bedford Area Welcome Center Presents The 11th Annual



Celebrate

The Bedford Area
Welcome Center
816 Burks Hill Road
(Route 460 at Route 122 adjoining
the National D-Day Memorial)

November 26, 2019
through
January 3, 2020



~ Trees Decorated by Community Organizations and Businesses ~
Vote for your favorites!

Open seven days a week from 9:00 AM until 5:00 PM
Extended Hours until 9:00 PM - December 6, 13, 14, 15, 20

The Welcome Center will be closed Thanksgiving Day,
Christmas Eve, Christmas Day, and New Year's Day

(540) 587-5681 | www.destinationbedfordva.com

Don't miss the 11th Annual Festival of Trees on display at the Bedford Area Welcome Center. A tree dedicated to Agape will again be sponsored by the Bedford Winter Trail. Visitors are encouraged to vote for their favorite tree for only \$1.00/vote.

The theme this year is "Celebrate Love" and the event will run through January 3rd. This is a "don't miss" event! There are 30 area businesses/organizations participating and all proceeds benefit the charitable organizations designated by the businesses. Last year over 3500 visitors participated!

Mark your calendar!

Bring your friends and family!

Make it a part of your Christmas season this year!

Vote for Agape's Tree!

Client Achieves Goals With God's Help!



Key'ana (right) works with her mom, Ann Cole, doing many of the office duties associated with preparing for the funerals.

Ann Cole, an Agape client since 2011, is a graduate of Franklin County High School and earned her RN degree. She worked as a nurse until 2010, when she got interested in learning more about mortuary science. She graduated from a two-year mortuary science program, got her license, and now works as a freelance mortician for eight area funeral homes.

A single mom, she says, "I've always worked two-three jobs to put food on the table, shoes on their feet, and clothes on their bodies. I love what I do, and feel I have God's calling to do this type of work. Since both the nursing and mortician jobs are flexible, I can juggle them both. She says, "I just want people to know that with God's help, they can achieve anything."

Community Involvement Helps

Huddleston Elementary Students Donate Food to Agape



From left: Ms. Keisha Miller, 5th Grade Teacher and SCA Leader; Tyler Hancock, SCA Vice President and 4th Grader; Jordyn Booher, SCA President and 5th Grader; Addison Johnson, 4th Grade SCA Representative; Haley Smith, 4th Grade SCA Representative; Lillian Justice, 5th Grade SCA Representative; Mrs. Kathy Barton, 5th Grade Teacher and SCA Leader. Students not pictured but who also helped with collection are Aubrey Dellis, 3rd Grade SCA Representative; Austin Berger, 3rd Grade SCA Representative; and Ben Cadle, 5th Grade SCA Representative.

The Huddleston Elementary School Student Council Association (SCA) recently held a food drive to benefit a local food pantry. Throughout the year, the SCA creates events, and students who wish to participate in the fun also participate in the service aspect of the activity. About 100 students participated by donating \$1, which was used for purchase of reading books, and one non-perishable item.

Kathy Barton, fifth grade teacher, said, "Staunton River Baptist Church is a strong supporter of the school and provides in many ways throughout the school year, so the students proposed giving the food to the church. The church responded by suggesting they give to Agape, so that the food could be given to the most needy in the community. The students were very excited to be a part of giving to the people in this area."

Training Leaders for Christ Homeschoolers Help



Above, from left, Madison Gray, Landen Gray, Adam Heckman, Conner Johnson, Madison Welch, and Elly Amos package toiletries for clients. Below, Tressie Amos, and Jenny Gallier help serve

Training Leaders for Christ is a homeschool coop in Bedford and Franklin Counties, with thirty-five students who meet once a week for science and enrichment classes. Liesl Amos said, "The coop encourages the students to reach out to the community, and this is the second year the group has come to work at Agape."



Tate Johnson worked in the Toy Department.

From The Agape Book Shelf

Dancing with Max

By Emily Colson



Diane Davis
Agape Book Reviewer

Emily Colson and her husband, Gary, were thrilled when their son Max was born. Like all parents, they thought he was perfect. Soon their joy turned into sadness when Max was diagnosed with acute autism.

A short time later, Gary walked out, leaving Emily and Max alone. She made Max a promise that she would be a mother and father to him. Emily had to learn to walk alone with Max. Gary remarried and had little interaction with Max.

Dealing with a child with autism brings many problems and Emily learned to accept help from others. Her mom, dad, and special friends were very helpful. Her love and faith in God and her church helped her hold it together.

As Max grew and reached his fullest potential, he was a very precious child, filled with love and kindness for others. Emily loved him so much that he was her whole life. The struggles faced raising Max became a blessing to her. She and others saw that Max really was a special gift from God.

One very special moment in their lives was when Max said, "I want to be baptized in Grandpa's pool." Max memorized scriptures, read his Bible and watched Christian videos. He was drawn to the things of God. Pastor Paul said that the Holy spirit speaks Max's language!

The world may label Max disabled, but he is a gift from God. God is agape love in His very nature. Our goal should be to experience agape love in the flesh; to accept and enjoy the dance of life as Emily, Max and all involved in his life learned to do!

WHY I SERVE ...



"My passion as I serve in the Book Department is to see the amazing resources that Agape has been blessed with and to get these into the hands of those, whether clients or volunteers, to be used by God for purposes such as saving knowledge of Christ, spiritual growth, emotional comfort and encouragement, mentoring

helps, educational and pleasure reading. I get goose bumps when I hear about how a special book has helped a Mentor minister to a hurting client! I love the folks at Agape and love to help find reading materials for them."

Bonnie Fiori, Goodview Book Department Director
Volunteer since 2011



Glenn Johnson, Pantry volunteer, was very excited to share his 11 point buck.

The Agape Christmas Store



Assistant Director Karen Jones helped clients select gifts, while her son, Nathan Jones, who arrived from Salt Lake City, Utah for Thanksgiving, kept the shelves stocked with merchandise.



Above: Kayla Dunbar was excited to pick out a gift for each of her two girls, Delaylah, a year and a half, and Kehlani, six months old.

Left: Karen Monday selected a gift for herself, the 'spa' basket which is stocked with items to pamper herself.



VOTE For Agape's Tree



Now Through January 3 at the Bedford
Welcome Center