AGAPE UPDATES



COMPLETION OF THE HOUSE RENOVATION PROJECTS - BRUTYANS' HOUSE

ern North Carolina Conference, William Haddock's team from North Carolina Conference and Wanda Watts' team from Western North Carolina Conference did a great work using their time on the construction effectively and productively. But the conditions of the houses all the three families lived in (especially the Brutyan and the Hovhannisyan families) were awful. That's why none of the teams would be able to complete it in the limited time of their stay in Karabagh. The team members carried out as much construction work as the time allowed them, the rest of the work was continued by the fami-

lies with the help of the AGAPE staff members.

All three teams - Mark Barden's team from West-

The Brutyan family met the New Year and the Christmas in the newly renovated house - beautiful, clean, nice and full of light, full of God's light that the team members brought into their lives transforming those drastically... Thanks to that transformation the parents and their children will not live in a bombed shell of a house, where all the family members shared only one







the family under the roof. Here is what they wrote on their Facebook page: "The Brutyans' family congratulates all members of "AGAPE" organization for Christmas and New Year, wish them

bedroom and feared that the back wall of the house would

collapse any moment leaving

health, many years of happiness and love in new 2016 year. Due to your efforts today we celebrate New Year in a totally repaired house. Special thanks to the AGAPE staff."

Special **THANKS** to the great team under the leader-

ship of Mark Barden, to Linda Erlandson, Cameron Beals, Richard LeDuc, Jillian Lewis and Jane Hazelman for the great support and wonderful work! Here are the amazing

"When we give cheerfully and accept gratefully, everyone is blessed." <u>Maya Angelou</u>

and unbelievable fruits of vour hard work and tremendous efforts!!!





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October-December 2015

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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

BABAYANS' HOUSE COMPLETED

The dinning room



Babayans' house was renovated by the second team arrived from North Carolina Conference under the leadership of William Haddock. The team did a great work using the time at the work site effectively and efficiently.

Sarmen the father of the family and Rena his wife met in Berdzor - years after both had to leave their homes in their native villages to survive the occupation



and slaughter by the neighboring country after the ceasefire of 1994. Sarmen's mother was killed, Rena's family lost many relatives. Some were lucky to survive and find themselves in Armenia and Russia. Rena's family lived in one of the communities in Armenia not far from Yerevan, but later decided to move to Berdzor - closer to their home in the lost lands of Karabagh.



Rena's parents' house was one of the first houses to be renovated by Project AGAPE in 2009. Their father Valery didn't believe his sons would ever marry because of the awful conditions of their house. After his house was renovated in 2009 by one of the teams from WNCC his hope in better future for his family was restored and he was lucky to celebrate the wedding of his elder son lvan - Rena's elder brother in a newly renovated nice house. Unfortunately the stress of war and fear for his family put their seal on his

a newly renovated nice noise. Onfortunately the stress of war at health and he died in 2012 at the age of 62 after the third heart attack. He didn't see the marriage of his younger son Arthur, the two firstborns of his two sons and the birth of Gor - his younger daughter Rena's son. Now seeing all his six grandchildren running, playing and filling his house with the sounds of joy and life, one can only imagine how much blessings Valery pours from above to those who helped his family in need.

Sarmen and Rena lived in a house with only one bedroom sharing it with their two little kids - their daughter Rouz-

anna and their son Gor. Their kitchen and the bathroom where in awful conditions. They were not able to use the bathroom to take shower, so they had to use the one in their parents' house the whole time.

Thanks to the efforts and hard work of the team from North Carolina Conference their house was renovated unrecognizably. The team made a dividing wall in the middle of the only bedroom turning it into two - one for the parents and the other for the kids. The kitchen and the bathroom were capitally renovated. A tile maker was

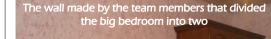
hired to complete those. The water pipe was replaced and now there is a running hot water in the bathroom and in the kitchen. The

AGAPE staff helped to complete the renovation as much as could. The house looks so nice, clean and healthy for the growing kids and their parents. Another renovated house, that transformed lives and gave hope for healthy and better future thanks to the efforts of William and Jean Haddocks, Grace Hackney, Jane Millen, Robert Fletcher, Jennifer and James Appisai, Annette Brewer and Courtney Jennings! "We would never be able to do this till the end of our lives. We don't know how to thank them for what they did for us... The only thing we can do ask GOD continuously to pour his blessings on them. We'll do that every time we touch and use the "product" of their amazing love towards us..."

"People of God are always people who care about other people and it always comes at some cost." – <u>D'Andre Lampkin</u>







Parents' bedroom



HOVHANNISYANS' HOUSE

The dinning room and the kitchen







by the team from Western North Carolina Conference under the leadership of Wanda Watts in September. Again a miraculous gigantic work and an efficient-effective use of time by the team and again an amazing outcome of such tremendous work... This was the house in the worst condition: the photos and the descriptions in the previous newsletter give a complete picture of its condition. And the titanic work carried out by the team of only seven was described much as well. Wanda Watts, Jack Johnson, Elizabeth Van Meter, Rusty Watts, Mona Kita, Rose Cox and Beth Carlton - all did a great work. Only God knows how many tons of stone blocks, sand and other construction material the team members had

Hovhannisyans' house was renovated

to carry to the house, how many buckets of construction waste were taken out by them after demolishing some old parts of the house, how many tons of concrete the team

members had to mix. The house was in such condition, that the work seemed endless... Even a bet between Shiraz and his brother from one side and the AGAPE staff members from the other side didn't help much to finish the work by the Christmas and the reason was the injury Shiraz - the father of the family got while helping his wife to clean the collapsing window in the basement where the family lived prior to the renovation of the house. The window glass broke and wounded Shiraz badly cutting his right wrist. They called to AGAPE office in the midnight (instead of 911 or emergency service (2) and Gig took him to the hospital in Stepanakert as they told in Berdzor hospital that it was too serious needing neu-

rosurgery and the fingers might not work any more. He had a 3+ hours surgery in Stepanakert. So, there could be no word about the bet. But there is a progress, but slower than expected as his brother has to work mainly alone when the AGAPE staff was busy with distributions.

The family's joy is endless even on the background of the tragic loss of their newborn daughter prior to the team's arrival in September of 2015 and the injury Shiraz had because of the old window. "I still cannot believe this is real... I even don't want to move there, as I have a feeling it's a sweet dream and may disappear any moment. Our gratitude is as big as the love the team shared with us, it's endless...", says Christina every time when she sees the AGAPE staff members.

Their middle son's - Arsen's

joy is obvious, he runs in the newly renovated rooms, hides under the new kitchen sink (it is good he doesn't try to do that in the oven of the new gas stove ⁽²⁾). The reaction of a child who has never seen a lavatory was sadly amazing: "What a big pot!" he said when he saw it...

The team had a tremendous impact on the lives of this family giving them hope in their hard times. "They are all in our prayers ... daily, hourly, continuously! May God bless their lives as much as they blessed ours, many times more than that...", says Christina.

We are each made for goodness, love and compassion. Our lives are transformed as much as the world is when we live with these truths. Desmond Tutu









AGAIN DISTRIBUTION





As it was mentioned earlier in one of the previous newsletters this year for the first time since the early years of the Project's existence 4/four 40 foot containers were sent to Project AGAPE with different important first necessity goods to deliver to the needy families of Kashatagh region.

The first 40 foot container arrived on January 13th. 2015. the second came on January 22nd. then the third arrived on May 27th and the fourth was received on August 24th. The goods in the first three shipments were distributed to the socially vulnerable families of Berdzor and more than 100 villages of Kashatagh region in the first 6 months of the year, as July, August and September were reserved for the three building teams who renovated three family houses. The container received in August was distributed in the months following September as the last building team from Western North Carolina Conference came in September.

From October to December (and partially in August): 543 socially vulnerable families/2198 people (there were also refugee families from Syria among those families, who received aid from Project AGAPE) from villages received new and used clothing, new shoes, new and used bedding, school supplies, soft and hard toys, canned food, new and used coats, new hats and gloves, clothing accessories, new shoes, sewing supplies and a sewing machine, household supplies, hygiene supplies, suitcases worth of \$99,168. By the way, it was amazing to see the joy of some families who got those suitcases, as

A little boy living in the village of Vardut who has diabetes received

Many words of blessings were told as always by the people, who received aid, in the address of those, who sent all the goods very much needed by them. "God bless those, who sent these, what we would do without their

The Department of Social Security of Kashatagh region received office sup-

insulin syringes donated by Wanda Watts. This was the second time she donated thousand insulin syringes to the boy. In 2014 she donated 500 of those.







plies.

they didn't have any place to store their things.

The little girl in this picture knew that her mother was coming to get clothing for her, so... she decided she would hide in the village bus and ... go with her mother to ask for a gift on her birthday... Mother found out she was in the bus only in Berdzor. When the AGAPE staff asked her what she would like to get as a gift on her birthday, she told without thinking - "A box", she meant a Christmas box. She received two of them as it was her birthday and was very happy for that!

This is a picture which was taken accidentally: what do you think is in

this woman's hand? Yes, it's money, but ... she doesn't pay for what she gets. It's the opposite ... she receives a financial aid to be able to get back home. Naira was from one of the villages and after getting the aid she told she would not be able to pay the bus driver to take her back home, so she received a financial aid to pay the bus driver to take her and all the goods received from Project AGAPE home.

Another picture you may wonder about: what's this picture about? This is a table made of several boxes with clean cover on it which is used for the lunch while Project AGAPE staff works in the warehouse during the distributions from early morning till late night ... sometimes midnight. No one is able to leave the warehouse for lunch, when about hundred people are waiting outside to get aid. So this is where all the AGAPE staff members eat on foot while serving hundreds...





BLANKETS FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE CHILDREN'S HOME





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Michelle Shrader gave me vour contact email from Myers Park UMC in Charlotte, NC. I am part of a sewing ministry that is forming at the church. We have decided to create a quilt for each child at the orphanage in Armenia for a Christmas gift

to send them. We also wanted to make them a little more special and have their names put on the quilts for them. I wanted to see if you could send a list of the children's first names, their age next to their name and whether they are male or female. This would definitely help us make these quilts very special for them for the holidays!" This is from e-mail sent on September 14, 2014 by Susan Gardner Scott, who is a member of the "Quilting Ministry" at the Myers Park UMC. Some e-mails exchanged helped to provide the wonderful ladies of the project with the needed information to start the project. They received even individual stories to know how and why these children were in the orphanage. They wanted to pray for them while working on the quilts and keep them in their hearts while finishing those guilts up. Many church members at the Myers Park UMC like Dennis Savell and almost everyone who have been to the orphanage were curious when the kids would get the blankets and were looking forward to seeing their faces on the pictures when receiving those. Eventually the kids at the orphanage received their blankets. They were so happy to get the beautiful and colorful blankets having each child's name sewn on each individual quilt. Each blanket had a different design and different colors. When the kids received the handmade quilted blankets they were happy, but seeing their names on the quilts was the biggest surprise ... "That was obviously a wonderful labor of love for those boys and girls by those ladies in the "Quilting Ministry". May those boys and girls enjoy those handmade quilted blankets for many years! Just know they come with love from the ladies who made them," this is what one of the church members wrote in his e-mail about the blankets.

AND MAY THOSE WHO MADE THE BLANKETS WITH LOVE AND PRAYERS BE BLESSED **RICHLY & IMMEASURABLY**

ONE OF THE FIRST KIDS OF THE CHILDREN'S HOME



Meet Armenuhi Alexanyan ... one of the first kids of the Children's Home. It was her mother - Mania Alexanyan, who in 1994 approached the first director of Project AGAPE Charles Davis, handed him the youngest of his 7 kids and told: "Please take him and care about him, I have no means to do that ... " This was one of the main incentives to start the project of the Children's Home in Berdzor, at that time a dead town torn apart after the war and the ceasefire.

During the distribution in fall one of the AGAPE staff members approached Nara Melkonyan in the midst of the stressful work and told: "There is a woman in your office and she wants to see you. I explained we are very busy, but she insists on seeing you in the office. She is with a child". The first thought was, is it emergency? What had happened to her? Hurrying there Nara saw a tall woman with a smile on her face and a nice boy in her hands. "Hello," said Nara, "what's the matter, is the child ok?" "Hello, sister Nara. Do you remember me?" said the customer "invading" the office. No, she didn't remind anyone whom Nara could know ... "I am Armenuhi, from the Children's Home. You used to sit with us on the porch at the outside balcony and talk with us every time you came." Yes, of course, still have a picture with her, but ... she has changed so much. "Where you the one who cried the whole time?", asked Nara laughing after hugging her. "No, it was one of my sisters."

It was so touching to see her again and know how she lives. And it was amazing to see her grown, married, with her son, who was not her only child. She has five children. How many lives like Armenuhi's were touched, changed, transformed by Project AGAPE !? It's hard to count... One thing is obvious, many families would not survive without the help of this God's Project, would not get hope in their day to day struggle ... Project AGAPE is making a difference in the lives of thousands of people and Armenuhi is one of them, indeed.

THE CATTLE **PROJECT IN** PROGRESS



The Cattle Project started in 2006 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. This practice of "Passing on the Gift" ensures project sustainability, develops community and enhances self-esteem by allowing project partners to become donors. The project requires a continuous monitoring of the cows given to the beneficiary families and their calves, based on specified monitoring and evaluation system. It is a time-consuming process of a visit to each beneficiary family to check the barn the cow and the calf are kept in, their health and hygiene condition and nutrition. In 2015 17 more families received pregnant heifers and cows making the total number of the families involved in the Cattle Project 137. The 7 of the cows were bought and delivered to the families and the 10 heifers were passed-on by the families to new beneficiary families in different communities in and around Berdzor.

When Hovoyan Anush and her husband were called to Project AGAPE office in Berdzor to get a heifer for their 7 children, the AGAPE staff couldn't even imagine what picture they would see after awhile. The family came and they were asked to wait at AGAPE office till the heifer was brought up to the AGAPE Center. The father of the pass-on family called and told if they were on the car, it would be easier for them to go and get them. Anush and her husband had asked one of their villagers to ride them to Berdzor on his little Niva, so no one believed the heifer would fit there. But .. they left and ... came back with the heifer in the back and ... Anush's sleeping son on the front sit of the Niva. Please look at the two bictures on the top and, blease, tell, what it reminds you... And, please... do not cry...

"Giving is an act of generosity. Giving is sowing a seed. The seed will produce great harvest of fruits."

Lailah Gifty Akita

Naghash Nazaretyan



This page is dedicated to those devoted staff members of Project AGAPE who are not with us today physically, but who continue to stay in our hearts and thoughts. These last two years were tragic for the AGAPE staff. It lost one of the previous staff members Yura Karapetyan (heart attack) in 2014 and three of them - Hasmik (cancer), Gegham (heart attack) and Naghash (brain tumor) in 2015.

Naghash was one of those AGAPE staff members who stood at the very roots of AGAPE's existence and operation in Armenia. He was hired by the Project temporarily starting from 1993-1994 to transport the visiting teams on his own van when it was needed. He became a full time permanent staff member from July of 1997 to June 2012. During those 15 years of his hard work he was not only a driver but a great helper for the AGAPE staff in all the projects doing things far beyond his responsibilities - he was a great driver, a perfect welder (his only minus - he always refused to wear a welding mask ⁽²⁾), a good builder helping the teams in the construction projects, he was the person on the staff who could perfectly manage arranging a crowd of people waiting to get aid - people would be calm and behave themselves when they saw him at the gate... They called him Uncle. This list of his virtues can go on and on. He was a multi-skilled proficient master of anything he would agree to fix and make starting from mechanics to construction. But most of all he was a devoted person with high human values, that counts much.

Gegham Geghamyan was with Project AGAPE starting from September of 2005. He and his wife Lusik were hired because their children - the

daughter Nubar and the son Varuzhan who were students at the AGAPE Christian Education Center. Knowing them and observing their good manners one can only imagine who were their parents. And they turned to be wonderful people like their kids, who both got higher education becoming - Nubar a Musician and Varuzhan a Linguist in Oriental studies receiving his Master's Degree in Saint Petersburg. The AGAPE staff members knew Lusik also from the Children's Home where she was a teacher helping the children to prepare homeworks. Lusik was with the Project not for a long period of time from 2007-2009. Now she works at Berdzor kindergarten as she thinks her calling is to work with children. Gegham worked till May of 2009. Another wonderful and devoted staff member with so many virtues and skills.





Hasmik Grigoryan started her work at Project AGAPE from July of 2009. She didn't work for a long period of time because of her health issue: she had a breast cancer surgery, but

the cancer continued to metastasize and she decided to quit. She was a wonderful cook, a very good person and a devoted staff member. Hasmik and his husband Yura Karapetyan another AGAPE staff member also raised two wonderful children. Their son David and daughter Lilit who were former students at the AGAPE Christian Education Center got higher education and became good specialists in their chosen fields - Lilit as a specialist of English Language & Literature and David as an Engineer.

Yura Karapetyan - Hasmik's husband was with the Project from May of 2009 to July of 2010. In this short period of time he became a dedicated AGAPE family member pleasantly carrying out not only the duties of night watchman, but working shoulder to shoulder with the AGAPE staff in all projects - delivering distributions, helping teams, arranging the warehouse, etc. He left for Russia in July of 2010 with hope for better income to meet the growing needs of his two children - Lilit and

David, who were students at that time. He didn't succeed much in Russia doing seasonal construction. Coming back he would visit AGAPE office from time to time with a box of cakes prepared by his wife Hasmik for his former coworkers. Yura cared so much for his wife Hasmik, who had breast cancer and always feared to lose her. How he could know that his heart attack would take him earlier than the metastasized cancer would do that to his wife...



WE REMEMBER ALL OF YOU AND CHERISH THE WONDERFUL MEMORIES RELATED TO EACH OF YOU!!!

Brief Summary of Completed Projects & Their Costs

2015 was another productive year for Project AGAPE. 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.

CATTLE 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. In 2015 17 more families received heifer turning the total number of the beneficiary families into 137. The total cost of the expenditures on Cattle Project in 2015 was \$15,500.

HOUSE RENOVATION PROJECT

Three more houses were renovated in 2015. One team from North Carolina Conference and two teams from Western North Carolina Conference did a great work making an unbelievable changes in the lives of Brutyan, Babayan and Hovhannisyan families. The total cost of House Renovation Project in 2015 was \$33,817.

HUMANITARIAN AID DISTRIBUTION PROJECT

There were four shipments sent from North Carolina in 2015 - The first 40 foot container arrived on January 13th, 2015, the second came on January 22nd, then the third arrived on May 27th and the fourth was received on August 24th. The total of 2,628 families/9,198 people became the direct beneficiaries of this project. The overall cost of humanitarian aid distribution in 2015 was \$358,776. The cost of the container clearance and transportation from Yerevan to Berdzor was \$6,276.

PROJECT OF CHRISTMAS SHOE BOXES

The children of Kashatagh region got acquainted with Christmas Shoe Boxes only during the Christmas event in 2009, after the first 255 boxes arrived in the last shipment of 2008. This was the beginning of the most expected by the children of this region project of Christmas Shoe Boxes. Children always look forward to the next Christmas event to receive their only gift in that Holy Season. In 2015 for the first time all children in Kashatagh region received Christmas Shoe Boxes worth of \$125,760.

CHRISTIAN EDUCATION CENTER

The Christian Education Center (CEC), which was one of the important projects of 1998 continues to actively function in Berdzor. The purpose of this after school program was to provide opportunities for enriching the religious, cultural and educational life of the community. The CEC fully served its purpose, but in 2012 the CEC was temporarily closed due to the financial difficulties that Project AGAPE faced. Thanks to the efforts of Bishop Hope Ward's team who provided Project AGAPE with funds to reopen the CEC the classes started again from September the 1st of 2013. The sad silence of the CEC building is over and after the schools the CEC building is full of children involved in different groups. In 2015 there were 83 children involved in 6 different groups. The expenses of the CEC in 2015 including the purchase of new monitors for the computer lab were \$3,686.

AGAPE HOSPITAL AND FINANCIAL AID TO SOCIALLY VULNERABLE FAMILIES

Project AGAPE continues to assist the hospital in Berdzor paying the supplement to the Head Doctor's salary and supporting him in meeting the needs of the hospital. There were many families who applied to the project for financial aid mostly to solve some health issues and meet food needs. The total cost of all together including the Head Doctor's salary was \$5,893.

Brief Summary of Completed Projects & Their Costs

2015 was another productive year for Project AGAPE. 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 PEO-PLE in the face of the UNITED METHODISTS of NORTH CAROLINA who care about them and their children living in those awful conditions.

PROJECT NAME	NUMBER OF FAMILIES / CHIL- DREN	\$ VALUE
Cattle Project (includes the salary of the Veterinarian)	17 families/ 87 People	\$15,500
House Renovation Project	3 families/13 People	\$33,817
Team Expenses	10000 + population of the region	\$20,047
Humanitarian Aid Distribution	2,628 families/9198 people	\$358,776
Includes Stop Hunger Now meals		
Container Clearance, Related Expenses & Transportation	The above mentioned families	\$6,276
Christmas Boxes' Project	5376 children	\$125,760
Christian Education Center	83 children	\$3,686
Supplement to the Salary of the Head Doctor	10000 + population of the region	\$1,260
Financial Aid to Socially Vulnerable Fami- lies	21 families/87 people	\$4,633
TOTAL		\$569,755

PROJECTS TO HELP, PROJECTS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES



HUMANITARIAN AID: Donate Clothing, New Shoes, Blankets & Bedding, Hygiene Supplies, Food, School Supplies, Medical Supplies & Sewing Supplies. <u>Mattresses & Chairs</u> are asked for a lot.

CATTLE PROJECT: Buy a Cow





HOUSE RENOVATION PROJECT: Join or Support a Building Team

CHRISTMAS SHOE BOXES PROJECT: Send a Christmas Box to a Child

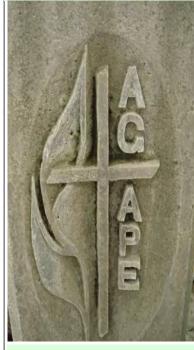


Fellowship of 1000 Name: Address:

E-mails: Contribution: Date: Mail to: JOIN FELLOWSHIP OF 1000: Support the AGAPE Orphanage, Education & Training at the CEC, Local Priest, Head Doctor at the AGAPE Hospital

You'll always discover the joy and hope that come with making a difference

"Paul writes not about brotherly or human love (philea), but divine love (agape); that is, a love which only the Spirit can impart to the human heart" (Rendell 59)





An outreach ministry of the Western North Carolina and the North Carolina Conferences THE UNITED METHODIST CHURCH Another year passed full of projects, interesting events, overwhelming feelings and change, another year of charity for the people of Armenia and Karabagh, for your sisters and brothers in faith through your love and compassion... The activities carried out by Project AGAPE are incredible in their size and scope, are unbelievable in changing the lives of your brothers and sisters living in the small mountainous country known as Armenia and in changing your lives, because:

 You know that Divine Love always has met and will always meet every human need

 Love is the force that ignites the spirit and binds teams together

 You have learned in life how to love people and use things instead of using people and loving things

YOU are a little pencil in the hand of a writing God who is sending a love letter to the world...