



Agape Today



New goal to add 50 new foster families by 2020!



This year marks 50 years since the incorporation of Georgia Agape. On August 8, 1968 Georgia Agape was founded by members of the church as an answer to the needs of the community. This startup would be in the planning stages for two years until 1970 when Georgia Agape began providing services to the most vulnerable among us.

In honor and celebration of our incorporation and 50 years of service in 2020, we are launching our 50 by 50 initiative. For the next two years, each month via our website and communications, Georgia Agape will be requesting two unique items monthly to help with serving children and families. We are asking our many supporters to help us in this milestone feat. Each item will assist us in meeting our 50 by 50 goal of 50 new foster families by our 50th year! We are so excited to meet this goal and to be able to serve that many more children.

Most of the items to be collected are essential items needed for foster home approval. This will include items foster families need to provide care and will lessen the burden on the families. The collected items will also help Agape retain families by providing gifts that may cater to school supplies, date nights, and family activities. With over 15,000 children in the care of the state, there could be no more perfect time to grow our Agape family. With your help, we are sure to meet and exceed our goal.

Also, we will celebrate our wonderful foster and adoption families. It is no easy task to take in children from unknown circumstances. However, with caring, love and a Christian environment, all children will have an opportunity for a great life.

The Agape staff will be working on expanding workshops and trainings on all sides of the Metro Atlanta area and the Board of Directors will be our ambassadors for the larger congregations to get the word out about this 50 by 50 initiative. They have already added a Board-sponsored Back to School event that assists our foster children and family members with school supplies. Here is our first three-month list of items:

October: Fire extinguishers and first-aid kits

November: Family activity certificates (movies, zoo, aquarium, museums, center for puppetry arts, etc.) and family-friendly restaurant gift cards

December: NEW toy donations for playroom and Sponsor activities registration (ie, karate, dance, sports)

If you are interested in donating items monthly, please reach out to us in the Agape office. Our point of contact for the first year of this mammoth initiative will be Kimberly Hardy-Johns who can be reached at (770) 452-9995. Check our Agape website at www.georgiaagape.org for our ongoing initiative requests. 🍌

Racquelle Grant, Executive Director

Will you?

If your heart is pulling you towards serving families via foster care or adoption, there is a great need. Please contact Sharalyn Donald, our Resource Development Coordinator, at sharalyn@georgiaagape.org or via phone at (770) 452-9995.



F O S T E R P A R E N T S P O T L I G H T

Gaylon + Sherrie



Gaylon and Sherrie Rogers, who attend the Shaffer Road congregation, have been foster parents for Georgia Agape since June 2013. They have served numerous children in their home. The majority of their foster children were placed with them at birth and remained with them long-term. We asked Sherrie to share some of their experiences with us.

Sherrie, what first inspired you and Gaylon to become foster parents?

Sherrie: We met a family who were foster parents. When they told us about working with the children and families, it inspired us to do it.

We sort of know how it feels. I was adopted and had to deal with the knowledge of my birth family, lived with the “why me” question, and Gaylon lived with another family for his early years.

What is the most rewarding aspect of being a foster parent?

Sherrie: We love seeing the children move on to permanent homes.

What is the most challenging aspect?

Sherrie: Ironically, seeing the children move on to permanent homes! Even though it is a positive thing, it is really hard. You know you’re doing a good thing and you know you are taking care of these children, but it doesn’t make it easy. It’s even difficult to talk about it now.

A highlight that you’ve experienced as foster parents?

Sherrie: After all the kids we’ve had in our home, it’s amazing that all of their birth parents still keep in contact with us. We get calls, get invited to birthday parties, and get pictures of the kids all the time. We get to see them lose a first tooth and see them grow up. We feel like part of their family.

Our first baby in our home was adopted when he was two years old. He was adopted into a family with an eight-year-old brother and an older sister. Every time we went to visit, his brother would look at us odd like, “Are you here to take my brother back?” We joked that he was keeping an eye on us!

What advice would you give to someone who was on the fence about becoming a foster parent?

Sherrie: Think about the child first rather than yourself. Think about the good you can do. Give it a try before you say no and it will be rewarding.

What is something that surprised you about foster parenting?

Sherrie: How many children there are who need homes. Once you get involved, you pay more attention to the news and then you see the need. These children become a part of you so quickly and there are so many out there who still need homes. We take care of younger children, but there is a need for homes for older children.

My husband jokes that he didn’t expect to be a godparent to this many children! But it’s nice to be a part of their birthdays, Christmas and other events. We joke that we’re not going to be able to afford any more! 🍌

For more information about our foster care program, please contact Sharalyn Donald, our Resource Development Coordinator, at sharalyn@georgiaagape.org or (770) 452-9995.

On the Go?



Are you interested in receiving our newsletter electronically? If you have Adobe Acrobat

Reader, you can download and print a .pdf version or read directly from your desktop or mobile device. Please send an email to: admin@georgiaagape.org.

IT IS TIME



I recently celebrated my five-year anniversary of being a member of the Georgia Agape family. I have truly been blessed by participating in work that is so fulfilling and yet so challenging at the same time.

Less than a week after starting my role in 2013, I attended Agape's annual Celebration Banquet to honor our families. I sat with foster parents and other church members whom I had never met, broke bread with them, listened to the enlightening words of the speaker and watched a video (an annual tradition) of a foster family, describing their work as parents of innocent children in out-of-home care. I was in awe! My heart was so full at the end of the night after meeting so many people with varying ties to Agape: foster parents, children in foster care, donors, board members, church members, supporters and more. I felt honored to be a part of this very large extension of the church, with the sole goal of serving children and maintaining families.

I often think back to that night. How I watched the video of the foster parents and saw the mom tear up as she described a major accomplishment of a foster (now adopted) child in her home. My eyes teared up for her. I wonder if I hold the same zeal and commitment to this cause today that I held five years ago. I wonder if the many people in that room still hold that fervor.

Not long ago, I had a conversation with a foster parent who stated that she "just decided" to become a foster parent. There was no pomp and circumstance to her decision. It was just her ability to see a need and to know how God could help her address that need. You have heard the numbers recently, that there are over 15,000 children in foster care in Georgia, and our need is greater than ever. Foster parenting may be one of the biggest challenges that many will face. Parenting is hard. And the difficulty is compounded when caring for children with trauma histories. It's very easy to stand aside and wait for others to answer the call.

Like the foster mother mentioned above, we need foster parents to "just decide" to do it. We need our current foster parents to decide to think outside the box and welcome a child in their home whose history may be just a little outside of their comfort zone. We need those donors, church members and other supporters to just decide to be open to how God can use them in this ministry. This doesn't necessarily or only mean becoming foster parents. It simply means being open to communicating with Agape about how to expand our village.

It is time for all of us to think outside of ourselves and think of the children and families. It is time to say "yes" to the process and reach out to others. It is time for us to remember our enthusiasm of day one. 🍌

LaQuisha White, Director of Social Services



Parenting is hard.

And the difficulty is compounded when caring for children with trauma histories. It's very easy to stand aside and wait for others to answer the call.

Agape Ambassadors

Church-based Volunteers to Provide Support for Parents



Children in foster and kinship care are God's children. In response to the need to care for them, many families in our churches choose to become foster families, allowing children from hard places with a safe, nurturing and Jesus-centered place to find refuge and be loved. These families live out the Gospel in the vulnerable lives of these children while exposing their families, friends and church community to an opportunity unlike any other. But, while not everyone is called to be a foster parent, this does not mean the Church does not have an essential role to play in the lives of these foster families and the children they are serving. You are either called to bring children into your home or you are capable of serving those who do. These children are God's children and, therefore, our responsibility within the Church.

Georgia Agape has developed a volunteer program called "Agape Ambassadors" in which we can work in partnership with churches. This partnership will help our congregations practically serve kinship, foster and adoptive families within their body and, in doing so, participate in their calling to care for God's children. Each church will have an individual or individuals who will serve as a volunteer liaison between Agape and the congregation. Free training will be provided where the Agape Ambassador will learn more about Agape as well as learn unique and diverse ways that the congregations can practically serve kinship, foster, and adoptive families within their body. Then, through their Agape Ambassador, each church will become more aware of the resources Agape has to offer to provide for these families. Our Ambassadors will also support the objectives of our 50 by 50 initiative, described by Racquelle on page 1.

Agape will be reaching out to our congregations to partner with potential ambassadors. Those interested in joining hands with us and serving as ambassadors can contact me at sharalyn@georgiaagape.org or via phone at (770) 452-9995 to learn more about this exciting new venture. 🍌

Sharalyn Donald, Resource Development Coordinator

Thank you!

Our celebration banquet in September was a wonderful evening! We are grateful for Collin Atnip of Atnip Photography who took pictures at our event and James Hutcheson for filming our video presentation. Our thanks to our generous sponsors!

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Our Earnest Request

2018 Annual Thanksgiving Appeal

The annual special collection to support the work of Georgia Agape will be held on Sunday, November 18th, this year. Some congregations have their collection date earlier or even later. Donations are received all the way through December 31st.

Our annual appeal is an opportunity for you to partner in the work of helping children who reside right here in Georgia. Agape has set an ambitious goal to raise \$320,000 this year in the Thanksgiving Appeal held statewide. As you consider participating, think of the children and families Agape serves who depend on the support of all of us. Join us to make this a banner year for Agape!

Attention Federal Employees!

Please remember Agape in the 2018 Combined Federal Campaign which is about to begin. Contributions can be designated to Georgia Agape by using our agency number, 64733, on the form. Tell your friends and co-workers about Agape and the tremendous service we provide to the community! 🍌

appeal

[uh-peel]

noun

an earnest request for aid, support, sympathy, mercy; entreaty; petition; plea.

in Loving Memory

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MEETING HIM AS *family*

When God describes himself, one of the images he chooses is father. And when he revealed himself on earth, he appeared as son as well as brother.

So, God takes the initiative, revealing himself to us, and it is in the closest possible human relationship we know: not employer to employee, not politician to constituents, not as ruler to subjects. We meet him as family: father, brother, bridegroom. Other descriptive terms just augment this relationship of intimacy: physician and counselor.

On the other hand, we don't have to work at revealing ourselves to God. He knows the number of hairs on our head (Luke 12:7). And he knows the frustration you faced this morning, even the one you will never share with anyone.

I'm convinced he wants us to be like the children in the story found in Mark 10:13-16. These children came to him with no thought of hiding anything from him. In many ways, we were probably like these children. However, we get older and, in an attempt to protect ourselves, we try to hide our faults and difficulties.

God knows our struggles even as we attempt to hide them, before we find the courage to admit them. He knows our struggles better than we do. *"My ways are higher than your ways."* This is not power to fear; it is peace to accept.

So Agape brings children into Christian homes in an effort to bring these young lives into a relationship of a loving father—something they have been missing. And this is our story, isn't it? Learning to rest in the arms of Jesus to receive a blessing, to find healing, to find release of past failings, to receive hope for the journey, and to have peace in every moment. It is a position in life we reach through humility, submitting ourselves to the blessings Jesus is waiting and wanting to give. He longs to bless our lives in ways well beyond what we can ask or imagine (Ephesians 3:20).

Our Agape families teach the children in their care of a personal relationship with their heavenly father. What an amazing reality! We invite you to spiritually and financially partner with us in these moments. Let us meet where the humble human embraces the divine as family. 🌟

Ken Dowdy, Director of Development

in Honor and Respect

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SID & LORETTA ALLEN
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Georgia Agape, Inc.

3094 Mercer University Dr., Suite 200, Atlanta, Ga. 30341

Our Mission is to provide professional social services as a compassionate Christian outreach to children, families and individuals in order to enhance their prospects for a better and brighter future.

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is National
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