

Summer 2021

# AGAPE SERVICE PROJECT

NEWSLETTER

"We plant the seeds that one day will grow. We water seeds already planted, knowing that they hold future promise. We lay foundations that will need further development."

Our 18th summer was another summer of the new normal, but the seeds planted and foundations laid in 2020 allowed our services and programs to flourish and grow this summer. With the experience and knowledge we gained from running our services in the first year of the pandemic, we were able to maintain all of our services in collaboration with our incredible partners to the farm worker community of Whatcom County!

With much planning (and many safety protocols) we were able to provide service-learning experiences for parishes again this year – traveling to 10 parishes across Western Washington. It was incredible to engage with youth, families, and adults who desire to be in community and live their faith through service.

As always, fruitful collaborations and partnerships helped us to live Agape's mission to serve our farm worker brothers and sisters. We are always in awe of the graces that the Lord pours over this program. It takes many hands to bring Agape Service Project to life, and we are incredibly blessed by the countless prayers, donations, time, energy, and support from each and every person that touches our program.

## MONDAY FOOD DELIVERIES

In partnership with Bellingham Food Bank, for eight weeks we delivered perishable and non-perishable food, diapers & baby supplies, and menstrual products to 120 families weekly at four different farm worker housing sites. The goal of this service is to eliminate the transportation and work-hour barriers that come with the long hours of the summer harvest that often prevent access to services.



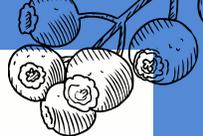
*Our pop up food bank at the largest site*



*Take some time to notice the ants — Staff member Justin and some of the children admire ants during our Monday food distribution*

## SUMMER ENRICHMENT FOR KIDS

In an attempt to increase summer enrichment experiences for the children of farm workers, Agape and the Lynden Library supplemented NWESD 189's migrant summer school by providing 65 at-home enrichment activity kits which included arts and crafts, sports equipment, and books for three weeks. We are grateful to St. Benedict's 7th graders for collecting and preparing one week of fun and educational kits for the children.



*Staff members Rosa, Ryan, and Anthony behind the scenes during the Gather For Agape event with Agape alumnus, Juan*

# GATHER FOR AGAPE

On the third day of this summer, we held a Zoom event with past Agape staff, partner agencies and farms, and various other members that encompass our growing Agape family. We shared stories, played a game of Agape-themed lotería, and raised \$4,930 (and counting)! Just a few minutes before we launched the Zoom event, all of our own screens froze (which hadn't happened at all during our rehearsals). Everything started running smoothly just before we started and through our whole event, but once we finished they all froze again. It was a very clear sign to us that we needed to be surrendering this summer to God!

# FAMILY MISSION

Because we were unable to host parish youth groups again this summer, we tried something new – Family Mission! Three families (responsible for their own housing in Whatcom County) joined us for three days of community, prayer, and service. The Agape staff loved having a group with us for a consistent period of time, and it was a unique opportunity to serve alongside families. It has left us contemplating incorporating a Family Mission into our "new normal."



*Agape staff and families from St. Patrick's at the food bank after serving 120 families!*



*At Growing Veteran's farm where Agape staff and Assumption's youth group weeded & harvested garlic*

# FARM WORK

Care for creation and supporting organic, just farms is necessary as we play our part in moving our agriculture system towards one which upholds justice, dignity, and the rights of workers. We love supporting local, mission-oriented farms with volunteer labor and are equally restored by connecting with God's creation. Each week we worked on a different farm including Growing Veterans, Bellingham Country Gardens, and Bellingham Food Bank's Gleaning Project. We were also blessed to welcome local Bellingham youth to serve with us.

*Staff Zoom training session in April*



# STAFF TRAINING SESSIONS

The formation of our young adult staff is deeply part of the mission of Agape. In an effort to expand the content and increase the quality of the training sessions in the spring, we invited seven expert guest speakers to lead workshops on a variety of topics. We were so blessed by their wisdom, and we are grateful for their time. Our speakers included: Patrick B. (St. James Cathedral), Annie B. (Archdiocese of Seattle), JoAnn L. (Seattle University), Anna J. (Maryknoll Fathers & Brothers), Will R. (Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center), Clayton S. (Catholic Labor Network), and Julie T. (National Farm Worker Ministry).

# 2021 AGAPE COLLEGE STAFF



## JUSTIN

- **Moment of Unexpected Grace:** Multiple parents at our Agape on the Road events experienced some kind of moving encounter through our words, the service, and/or some other instrument. When we traveled down we were pretty focused on the youth's experience and our food bank preparation, so it was heart-warming to hear how parents were also being drawn closer to God.
- **Planted or Cultivated Seed:** Now having done two summers of Agape, I want to strive to live out service in some capacity year-round, not just in this whirlwind two months.
- **Transformative Encounter:** We got to interact and play with children of farm workers much more than last summer, and their big grins and giggles will stay with me for a long time. It was a sweet reminder that we all ought to become like children.

## RYAN

- **Moment of Unexpected Grace:** At the food bank, it was easy for me to get stuck in a logistical mindset of serving others. Moments where we were served caught me off guard, like when an elderly couple came through the food bank and brought us a hot, home-cooked lunch. Their love and joy in feeding us helped me to improve my mindset and to serve more joyfully.
- **Planted or Cultivated Seed:** At one of our food banks this summer, a scout troop served as volunteers. Matthew had collected books to distribute to the kids at the camps for his Eagle Scout project. Seeing the scout troop serve alongside us reminded me of my time as a boy scout, where my desire to serve was also cultivated. A decade ago, when I first joined scouting, I never would have predicted that desire to serve bringing me to Agape.
- **Transformative Encounter:** Building on an appreciation of the diverse talents of our team this summer, I was given a new understanding of the unity of the Body of Christ. We, "though many, are one body, so also Christ" (1 Cor. 12:12). In a way that none of us anticipated, our different strengths came together to make our team more than any more of us could be individually. As, "God placed the parts, each one of them, in the body as he intended" (1 Cor. 12:18).



## ANTHONY

- **Moment of Unexpected Grace:** One grace I had this summer were the joy of giving myself to Agape's mission of serving the farm workers with dignity. The joy that I have felt this summer through service has opened my soul to the ongoing struggles of the farm workers.
- **Planted or Cultivated Seed:** This summer has allowed me to communicate openly in Spanish with the families. I could start a conversation without missing a beat and create rapport and laughs with the families through just being my true self. Agape has enabled me to be... me.
- **Transformative Encounter:** At a food bank we were offering toys for the kids. I was having a conversation with a mother of two. I was letting her know that we had toys and that her kids could come out from the car and check them out. Her son ran to the table and came back with a toy and a big smile on his face. His mom told him to say "thanks." I knelt down to talk to him and with his big brown eyes he said "thank you" with a smile. This experience allowed me to see that Agape goes beyond service. It transcends relationships with God's children.

## ROSA

- **Moment of Unexpected Grace:** I was gifted in meeting many smiling families throughout the summer. They showed me that even though their days are long and tiring there is always time to smile with one another.
- **Planted or Cultivated Seed:** One farm worker always came to the food bank with so much joy that it was contagious. From him, I learned to joyfully greet and welcome others as they are worthy of being loved.
- **Transformative Encounter:** At one of the food banks, I met this two year old boy with the biggest eyes and a beautiful smile. His eyes reminded me that life is beautiful, and his smile reminded me of the joy it contains despite the hardships.



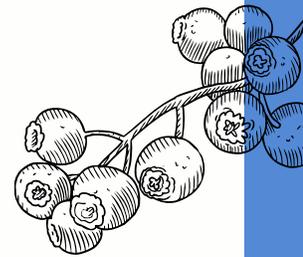
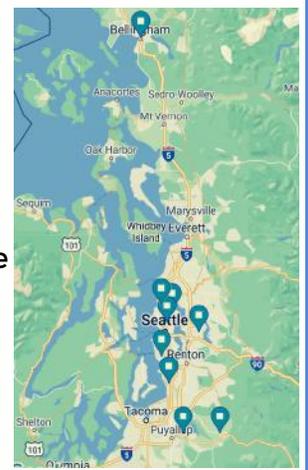
# AGAPE ON THE ROAD

With a year of running our social services in the midst of a pandemic under our belts, we knew we needed to add-in fulfilling the other element of our mission – providing service-learning experiences to youth and parish communities. Knowing it would not be possible for them to come to us, our only solution was for us to go to them. So over the course of the summer, the Agape staff traveled 1,500 miles to visit 10 parishes and communities to facilitate three-hour events of community building, prayer, reflection, and service. Agape On the Road was totally out of the norm and also absolutely beautiful.

Our events provided participants time to connect with and encounter people they hadn't seen in months or maybe had not met. We reflected on the prayer "Prophets of a Future Not Our Own" and contemplated what it means to be prophets of hope, justice, and unity. We learned about injustices that farm workers face and realities of our food system. Participants responded to the call to be agents of change by helping prepare items for that week's food bank – doing small things with great love.

During the planning stages, we assumed these events would be traditional youth and chaperone events. But it was incredible how many parishes turned them into family events. It was a beautiful opportunity for Agape to support and be inspired by families striving to live their faith through service together – an unexpected grace of this summer.

And we'll ask you the same question we asked the participants: How are your individual and unrepeatable gifts called to respond to the injustices of the world?



*Agape On the Road participants sort rice for the Agape Food Bank*

## BY THE NUMBERS

- 8 weeks of services
- 5 staff members
- 56 volunteers served 233 volunteer hours
- 195 kid kits distributed to families
- 228 families were served on average each week
- 206 Agape On the Road participants
- 1,500 miles driven for Agape On the Road
- 159 backpacks with school supplies distributed
- 19,320 diapers distributed at the Agape Food Bank & Monday distribution
- 4,750lbs of rice, flour, & sugar sorted & distributed at our food bank

# FOOD BANK UPDATE

The Agape Food Bank continues to remain the center of our services – it is not only where we are able to provide the most direct services, it is also where we are blessed to encounter and get to know the families we serve. As Pope Francis said, "We achieve fulfillment when we break down walls and our heart is filled with faces and names!" At the food bank, our hearts are filled with faces and names, and we are forever changed by all of the encounters with the farm worker families, the volunteers, and the partner agencies – people encountering people.

We still operated a drive-thru food bank with many safety protocols in 2021 but were able to expand offerings this summer thanks to donors and the work of our Agape On the Road groups. Weekly at the food bank, we provided non-perishable food boxes, perishable food boxes, frozen protein, pinto beans, masa flour, oil, diapers and wipes, baby food and formula, and menstrual products. We served an average of 113 families each week for seven weeks. We continue to learn a lot about the best ways to serve the families and are again left with goals for the future. We could not operate our food bank during COVID without our partnership with Bellingham Food Bank. We are forever grateful for their support!



*Staff members Rosa & Anthony run the distribution stations at our drive-thru food bank*

## HIGHLIGHTS:

- **Books Provided Weekly:** Thanks to Matthew's Eagle Scout Project and the organization Kids Need Books, we distributed books at every food bank this summer
- **Spiritual Care:** Fr. Moore & Deacon Josh were present at a few of our food banks to offer, to any who desired, spiritual care and prayer
- **Hospitality Table:** In the 2nd year of our hospitality table, we offered sandia (watermelon), agua de jamaica, Mexican pasta salad, hot dogs, & homemade cookies
- **Community to Community:** C2C is an incredible partner organization in Bellingham working for farm worker justice. Their weekly presence at our food bank provided vaccine information & hygiene resources



*Volunteers offer hot dogs at the hospitality table*



Thanks to the incredible generosity of donors, grants, and donations from our Gather for Agape event, we were able to expand offerings at our drive-thru food bank this year. This helped our food bank be a bit more like pre-COVID and supplement the food boxes with culturally-specific foods.

Throughout the summer we provided:

- **Dry Goods:** Flour, sugar, rice
- **Culturally-Specific Produce:** Jalapeños, cilantro, serrano peppers, tomatillos, radishes
- **Hygiene Items:** Family hygiene kits, dish soap, laundry detergent, hand sanitizer, toilet paper



*Fully stocked backpacks at our last food bank*

# YOUTH REFLECTION -- EVAN

## From Assumption/Sacred Heart (Bellingham)



*Evan helps prepare watermelon for our food bank hospitality table*

I volunteered at multiple Agape events this summer: a three-hour retreat with service, the food bank in Lynden, as well as working at a farm. I got to meet lots of new people who worked for Agape and at the places we volunteered.

I learned about the farm workers in Whatcom County and how much we depend on them yet how little we care for them. A powerful encounter I had was distributing food to people at the food bank. I saw how there were so many different types of people that came through and how they all needed help.

Participating in Agape made me realize how lucky I am and that I can't take anything for granted or want anything more than what I have. Service is a part of my life because there will always be people who need help.

## GROUP LEADER REFLECTION -- BY MICKEY D.

### From St. Patrick Parish (Seattle) Agape On the Road & St. Patrick's Family Mission

St. Patrick Parish youth group was super excited to join Agape Service Project in summer 2020 for the first time. Then COVID-19 put everything to a halt, and we had to wait another year before joining with Agape for two unique summer programs.

In early July 2021, St. Patrick youth, families, and even two grandmothers joined with the Agape staff for service, prayer, and education around migrant farm workers in Whatcom County. Our direct service efforts in packaging sugar, rice, and menstrual pads meant that the Agape staff could hand these items out at the food bank in Lynden the next day. It was a wonderful window of opportunity to engage in community building and mission work while at our home parish facility.

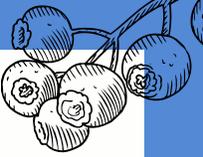
Later in July, five youth and their families were able to travel to Bellingham and Lynden to engage directly with outreach. Our first day was spent baking cookies, packing food boxes, and inventorying toys we handed out the next day. We were able to attend Mass at the Church of the Assumption to end our first day of volunteering.

Day two involved setting up the outdoor food bank in Lynden which included a fresh food box station, several tables full of toys, and a hospitality station serving homemade chocolate chip cookies and hot dogs. Migrant families from several local farms drove through the pop-up food bank to receive these goods. At the end of the day, we gathered for a circle reflection centered around processing our day and praying for those we served.

Day three involved going to Bellingham Country Gardens to help with farming. Getting our hands dirty and bending over for a few hours helped us to understand, although very minimally, the incredible sacrifice of migrant workers. We all walked away with a higher respect for the food that comes to our tables. We are so grateful to have had this experience with Agape and look forward to next summer when we hope to return to volunteer!



# THANK YOU!



It was a beautiful summer of collaboration! We could not have served the farm worker families without our amazing partners and generous supporters!

- **Food Bank and Distribution:** Bellingham Food Bank, Ferndale Food Bank, Project Hope Lynden Food Bank, Third Christian Reformed, Kids Need Books, Community to Community, Opportunity Council Rental Assistance
- **Summer Enrichment for Kids:** NWESD 189, Lynden Library, Common Threads, Vamos Outdoors Project, St. Benedict's 7th Grade
- **Farms:** Bellingham Country Gardens, Growing Veterans, Bellingham Food Bank Gleaning
- **Operations:** Church of the Assumption, Sacred Heart Church, CYO Camps, CYO Athletics, WWU Newman Center
- **Agape On the Road Communities & Donors:** Sacred Heart Enumclaw, Sacred Heart Bellingham, Church of the Assumption Bellingham, St. Patrick's Seattle, Cultures United FC, Space United FC, St. Andrew's Sumner, Christ the King Seattle, St. Louise Bellevue, Our Lady of the Lake Seattle, St. Philomena Des Moines
- All of our generous donors, volunteers and prayer team who support us year-round

## JOIN US BY SUPPORTING OUR WORK

Agape Service Project is fully self-funded; we are abundantly grateful for the donors who make our services and ministry possible each year. If you are interested in financially supporting our continued work, please visit:

[donate.seattlearchdiocese.org/agape-gift](https://donate.seattlearchdiocese.org/agape-gift)

## THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT!



*The 2021 Staff*

Kelsey Harrington

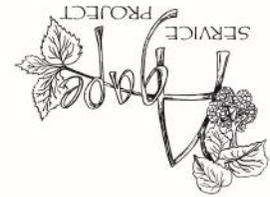
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## LET'S STAY CONNECTED

**Website:** [archseattle.org/agape](http://archseattle.org/agape)

**Facebook:** [facebook.com/agapeserviceproject](https://facebook.com/agapeserviceproject)

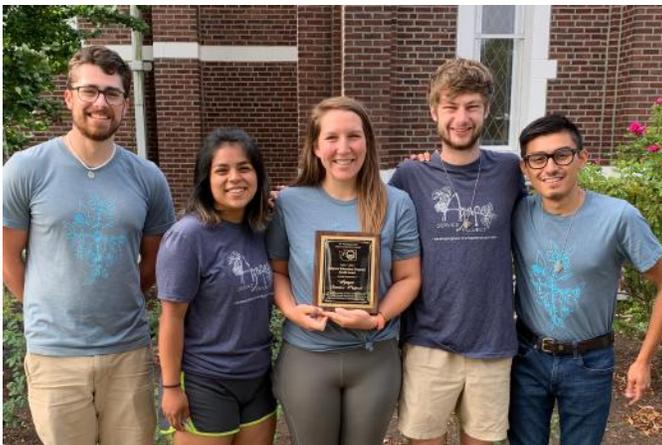
**Instagram:** [instagram.com/agape.service.project](https://instagram.com/agape.service.project)

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We are humbled and honored to have received **The 2020-2021 Washington State Migrant Education Program's Health Award:** "In appreciation for your dedication to providing health & social services to migrant children in Washington State."