

AGAPE SERVICE PROJECT

2025 ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

“Human Dignity is Not Dependent on a Person’s Citizenship or Immigration Status (USCCB)”. This has always been a core belief of the Catholic Church and of Agape Service Project, but this year it felt like an emergency proclamation to **ensure that hope, love, and dignity were the louder voices.**

Upholding the dignity of our farmworker and immigrant community members has always been the heart of the mission of Agape. This year, that mission felt extra important as many of our community members are currently living in a heightened state of fear and oppression. In light of this, the summer’s guiding question was - **what can we do to ensure our community members feel safe and loved?**

Many things stayed the same - creating spaces of joy and community at farmworker housing sites through friendship bracelets, weekly BBQs, and energetic games of four square. And many things needed to change - a more discreet food bank location, a complete operational overhaul to allow for drive-thru food box pick-up, adding additional Spanish-speaking staff and volunteers.

With our youth and adult participants, we focused on rooting our work in the Catholic Church’s long-standing history of receiving and caring for our immigrant, migrant, and refugee community members, no matter their status. A reminder that **the Holy Family too were refugees** and that Christ taught us that when we welcome the stranger in our midst, we are in turn welcoming the Divine.

To uphold dignity and practice solidarity, **we must choose courage over fear, encounter over indifference.** These can be difficult choices, but collective action makes it easier.

We are immensely grateful to each person who joined us this summer - in person, through prayer, with financial support, through community partnership. **Thank you for joining this collective action and proclamation of dignity, hope, and love.**

May ‘eres amado’ (you are loved) be our continued collective message.

HIGHLIGHTS

- **12 total staff-** Agape’s largest summer staff team ever!
- **7,384 households (28,924 people) served over 10 weeks** by Agape Food Bank
- **270 youth & adult participants-** from 20 parish/school communities
- **2 college scholarships-** (\$1,000 each) awarded to farmworkers pursuing higher education - Agape is honored to play a small role in these educational journeys
- **6,550 Dry Boxes** packed for the food bank on our new conveyor belt box packing system
- **Offered 493 fully stocked backpacks** to K-12 students



LET’S STAY CONNECTED

Website: archseattle.org/agape

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

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

ACTIVITIES & SERVICES OF AGAPE

ENRICHMENT ACTIVITIES AT FARMWORKER HOUSING

Through community meals and activities, everyone can experience child-like joy and build a culture of encounter.

- 7 weekly communal BBQs at 2 housing sites
- 3 days a week, we built relationships through play & activities at 3 different housing sites!
- Every Monday, we provided special activities, such as: life-sized Lincoln Logs, kites, hygiene kits, slime, Lotería, & water balloons!



Verbum Dei students helped children build a house

MOBILE FOOD DISTRIBUTION



Students from Holy Cross helping distribute hygiene products

Through food delivery, we provide access to nutritious and culturally-relevant food, and eliminate access barriers, like transportation and time, for families.

- For 8 weeks, delivered an average of 163 food boxes weekly to 4 different farmworker housing sites
 - A total of 1,306 deliveries!
- We also offered hygiene products, such as diapers, variety of formula, and feminine products
- We are grateful for our partnership with Bellingham Food Bank that makes this service possible

JUSTICE-ORIENTED AGRICULTURE

Through farm work, groups practice solidarity, build a connection with creation, and support farms with a better vision of agriculture.

- Staff and groups worked at 4 different organic and justice-oriented farms
- Together we harvested spinach, cilantro, cauliflower, blueberries, peppers, carrots, beets, cabbage, green beans, and sunflowers!
- We appreciate all the farms who welcomed us onto their farm, and taught us how farm work is dignified labor!



Students from Assumption Church harvesting cabbage at Christ the King Farm

COMMUNITY MEMBER REFLECTION

"I am grateful for Agape, I am grateful for them because they help a lot of people.

When I think of Agape I think of something good.

I like Agape because they come and play with kids and they have activities for the kids such as the BBQ and other fun activities."

-Mother at farmworker housing & food bank guest



2025 FOOD BANK UPDATE

This year, Agape Food Bank's message to our community, is 'eres amado' ('you are loved'). Due to the current climate, **safety** became our number one priority for our clients. With that in mind, two months prior to opening, we moved the food bank to a new, more private location with the goal of continuing **to provide dignified, and joy-filled food access.**

We **reformatted** our whole food bank layout, which resulted in providing **two food access points** for our guests and allowed guests to pick up for other families and friends:

- a 'mercado' style (in-person shopping) and a drive-thru model (food box pick-up)



Our clients immediately **felt the love, care, easy access, and security** we sought to provide as we encountered **more families comfortably visiting our food bank.**

This summer, we served an astonishing average of 738 households weekly for 10 weeks (total of 7,384 HH & 28,924 people). The most we have ever served in Agape history.

The food bank remained a **hub of community resources, hospitality, and support!** Below are quick descriptions on how we were able to support our community in ways beyond food.

We always strive to provide a large selection of culturally-relevant food items, diapers, feminine hygiene, etc. In 2025, we offered 28+ items weekly. This requires us to purchase almost everything we offer. We are grateful to the many foundations, grants, and individual/group donors who join us in this work and make it possible.

You play a critical role in helping us proclaim 'eres amado'.

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES



Hosted 20 different agencies, who provided access to services and resources Agape cannot provide - serving the **whole person & whole family.** (See the list of partners on the last page.)

FREE HOSPITALITY MEAL



This summer, we served **300 burritos weekly!** Increasing connection & providing a hot meal. **Thank you, Chispita de Sabor** for the delicious food!

BACKPACKS & SCHOOL SUPPLIES



Offered 493 fully stocked backpacks for students; helping students better **access their education.** Thank you to all the communities who donated school supplies and helped!

AGAPE FAMILY - 2025 GROUPS!

Agape welcomed 270 youth and adult participants from:

- 5 western WA Catholic high schools & 10 parishes from the Archdiocese of Seattle
- 5 Catholic high schools/communities from CA & WA during our Ignite week in partnership with Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center

We are so grateful to our returning & new groups alike - it is an honor to grow with and serve alongside these remarkable youth and adults who give so selflessly, reflect with such intentionality, strive to find Grace in all things, and infuse our program with joy and energy! We are in awe of our growing & beautiful Agape Family!

STUDENT REFLECTION - MATTHEW M, SENIOR - BISHOP BLANCHET HS

I started volunteering for Agape in 2022, and I have volunteered all 4 years since. Every summer, I always left Bellingham with a takeaway, and this summer was no different. A particular moment this summer **helped me realize my role in justice, and making the world a better place.**

During the week, we were out delivering food boxes to farmworkers living in old RV's and old chicken coops that had been converted into houses. At one RV we met a man who had hurt his foot and was unable to work. He thanked us in tears, praying over the food and saying how we were sent by God. This moment was very stirring for me, as it made me realize the unfortunate reality that we - 17 year old me and my other high school friends - are the people giving men like him food. It is not, of course, unfortunate that we did, but unfortunate because we are children.

There are adults in our modern world with so much money and power that sit back and do nothing, because they themselves aren't living in an old RV. If me and my friends are able to make such an impact on the lives of these farmworkers - humans - **it is unimaginable to think how many lives could be benefited if people with more money, power, and time acted as we do.** This experience felt like a door had just been slammed in my face, and written on it were the ugly words "this world is unjust".

But the fact that our modern world isn't right is exactly why normal people like me need to step up.

I don't have much money of my own to give, but I gave my strength. I don't have much strength, but I gave my hands. I only have two hands, but I gave my kindness.

This summer I realized everyone has something to give, and I believe everyone should try to give something. This program has given me priceless experience, allowing me to view life with so much more depth than before.



Matthew helps move boxes for food delivery



Matthew, Lily, EvaMaria, & Javier have all served with Agape for 4 years. (with Kelsey, Director)



2025 AGAPE YOUNG ADULT STAFF

Every summer, Agape hires college-aged young adults who demonstrate servant leadership skills, are passionate about faith-in-action, and have a deep calling for social justice. Through formation and empowerment, they put their skills and passion into action through a summer of prayerful sacrificial love, working for the common good, and leading young people.



Josephine, 1st Year

Being on staff this summer was such a blessing in many more ways than I expected. Most notably, is how God's presence and His teachings were revealed to me each and every day. Because 'agape' is not something that can be taught through words but through action, each joy, struggle, and moment of growth this summer taught me not only how to truly love my community, but how to truly be loved. From the joyful faces of kids brought on by bags of oranges at our food bank, to laughing with my coworkers, to the tireless commitment of the middle and high school students this summer, God never failed to remind me why He placed this work in our hands. I am so grateful for everything Agape has taught me this summer, most especially how we bring people together to encounter each other in bright joy, deep intentionality, and shining love, no matter the mistakes we make or the obstacles that arise, the most beautiful community is created.

It's been my honor to have spent 3 summers knowing, growing, and learning alongside the farm working families of Whatcom County. They've taught me how to find joy in everyday moments and how to not let outside systems of oppression dim our light. Agape and everyone I've met through this program, have shaped me to be a person who works for others on the journey of upholding everyone's rights and dignity. Agape is truly a life changing experience and I am so blessed to be a part of something so special with all of you!

Lizveth, 3rd Year



Sarah, 1st Year

Being a part of Agape has been a life-changing experience; it has altered my faith, widened my vision, and taught me how to live out solidarity and dignity. Through every activity, session of faith formation, and service opportunity, I experienced God's deep love, his Word, and his mission in new ways. In particular, arriving every day to the reality that I would have an encounter with the living God through the encounters I had with everyone around me, opened my eyes to what it meant to see everyone as his image bearers. Additionally, Agape has challenged me to go beyond having awareness of hardships that members in my community experience, compelling me to step into advocacy and service. I have been so blessed to get the opportunity to be a part of this Agape family, and I know these experiences and encounters will impact me from now on.



2025 AGAPE YOUNG ADULT STAFF

Loriza, 2nd Year

It truly has been an honor to return to Agape. From teaching students about Catholic Social Justice, specifically on how we can honor the dignity of a human being in today's society and helping out modern holy families, to actively pursuing the culture of encounter in our communities. This summer, I really enjoyed watching our groups find joy and radiate the light and love of God through service, whether it was working the food bank, delivering food boxes door-to-door, or making sure that the kids at the farmworker camps had a fun summer experience. If I could pick a rose from this summer, I would say it would be seeing the wholesome friendships between our groups and camp kids blossom over a few days. Again, I'm very thankful to have been a part of such a wonderful program that helped me grow in many ways including strength, confidence, love, and faith.



Robert, 1st Year

As a seminarian for the Archdiocese of Seattle, Agape has become such a memorable and beautiful piece of my priestly formation. It has taught me many skills and tools that will be invaluable in future ministry. Whether it be driving a 10,000 pound produce truck, blowing bubbles with the kids at farmworker housing, blasting K-pop over Flora's speakers, and everything in between, I couldn't fit it all into a whole book! The encounters that I was blessed to have with the other staff members gave me so much joy. Getting to know them, hear what they have been through, and letting ourselves be truly known by each other, was a very beautiful experience. In addition to the ministry to the middle/high schoolers and the farmworker families, this assignment for me was an effective and beautiful discernment tool for, God willing, a future as a spiritual father to many such as these in the Archdiocese. If I could say a big enough thank you to all the people who make this project possible, I would say thank you for helping all of us to encounter the love of God in and through others, and thank you for building the kingdom of God and fostering the culture of encounter here on earth in simple, loving, and lasting ways!



PROGRAMATIC UPDATES & TRANSITIONS

There are many changes on the horizon for Agape Service Project & the food bank. We are excited for the possibilities - more sustainability, expanded services, & more concrete partnerships.

The Food Bank is Moving to Catholic Community Services!

- Catholic Community Services of Western Washington is the largest local private provider of assistance to individuals and families struggling with poverty and the most vulnerable in our communities. In Whatcom & Skagit Counties, CCS has a long history of relational services offered to the farmworker community. We know that this move will allow our food bank to stay rooted in its mission while also enabling growth. Thank you CCS for believing in our mission so deeply!
- Agape Service Project will stay at the Archdiocese of Seattle. And in an expanded partnership with CCS, the Agape parish/school groups will continue to partner with the food bank as the weekly volunteers throughout the summer.
- In the coming months, Agape will share information on how to stay connected to the food bank and financially support the work.



Agape Service Project 2026 - New Leader, Same Mission

- In the coming months, Agape will hire a new program coordinator to lead Agape into its 23rd summer and beyond. Rooted in the same mission and with an expanded partnership with Catholic Community Services, Agape will continue to work to uphold the dignity of farmworker & immigrant communities, offer service-immersion experiences for youth, and empower young adult leaders.
- Summer 2026 group registration information to come, once new leadership is hired. In the meantime, direct any questions to: Chris.Koehler@seattlearch.org

Immense Gratitude at the End of Six Years

Agape has been one of the greatest blessings in my life, so I'm feeling all the emotions as my time with Agape wraps up. More than anything, I hold abundant gratitude. Gratitude for the beautiful, hard, and heart-expanding work of living the Culture of Encounter. Gratitude for this mission that will always remain part of my core. And gratitude for every single person I have been blessed to encounter and share life with through Agape:

- resilient and joy-filled farmworker community members who have forever shaped my life
- remarkable youth & adults who inspire with their hearts of love and passion for justice
- volunteers, supporters, & donors who make the vision of dignity and love possible
- community partners who have taught me so much and journeyed with Agape enabling growth
- the staff - some of the best people I have ever met who have become my extended family

I'm excited for the new chapter of Agape, under new leadership with a new strategic partnership with Catholic Community Services. I am also incredibly grateful that I will be able to stay connected to the work of the food bank and to the communities of Whatcom County in my new role as Director of Community Programs for Catholic Community Services NW. Please stay connected at: KHarrington@ccsw.org

With gratitude for your partnership, support, trust, laughter, and witness of pursuing love, dignity, and joy, Kelsey Harrington



THANK YOU! This work cannot happen without collaboration, and we are so grateful to our amazing partners and generous supporters!

- **Food Bank and Social Services:** Bellingham Food Bank, Lynden School District, Food Lifeline, Chispita de Sabor, Christ the King Farm, Stow-It, WSDA EFAP, Lakeland Foundation of the Whatcom Community Foundation, Puget Sound Energy Foundation, Church of the Assumption, CRS Rice Bowl Grant, Ferndale Food Bank, Builder Boards, Whatcom County Library System, NW Educational Service District
- **Health & Human Services Present at Food Bank:** CCS Farmworker Center, Community Health Plan of WA, Department of Social & Health Services, Food Lifeline, Inspire Development Centers, Lydia Place, Migrant Education Program, Opportunity Council, Puget Sound Energy, Skagit Legal Aid, WSU SNAP-Ed, Spiritual Resources with Fr. Joseph, Depart. of Labor – Wage & Hour Division, Whatcom Center for Early Learning, Whatcom County Library System, OIC of Washington, Catholic Community Services, Molina Healthcare of Washington, Goodwill Job Training Education Center
- **Farms:** Bellingham Country Gardens, Bellingham Food Bank Gleaning, Christ the King Farm, Growing Veterans
- **Operations:** Church of the Assumption and Assumption Catholic School, Bellingham Public Schools, Catholic Community Services, Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center
- **Agape Participating Communities:**
 - **Catholic High Schools:** Holy Names Academy (Seattle), Kennedy Catholic HS (Burien), Bishop Blanchet HS (Seattle), O’Dea High School (Seattle), Seattle Prep
 - **Catholic Parishes:** St. Vincent de Paul (Federal Way), Whatcom Catholic, Holy Cross (Lake Stevens), St. Michael (Snohomish), Holy Family (Kirkland), St. Stephen the Martyr (Renton), St. Anthony (Renton), St. Madeleine Sophie (Bellevue), St. Louise (Bellevue), St. John (Seattle), Our Lady of the Lake (Seattle)
 - **Ignite Groups - In partnership with Intercommunity Peace & Justice Center:** Seattle Prep, Verbum Dei High School (Los Angeles), Our Lady of Guadalupe Parish (San Diego), Loyola High School (Los Angeles), Centro Rendu (Kent)

And all of our generous donors, volunteers, & supporters who carry us year-round!

With Immense Gratitude, The 2025 Staff

Director - Kelsey Harrington

Food Bank & Social Services Manager - Rosa Figueroa

Core Staff - Lizveth Delgado-Olvera, Loriza Rombaoa, Josephine Stevenson, Sarah Leslie, Robert Currall

Chefs - Rob Viggers, Claire Nave

Language Access Specialists - Anthony Thomas Meza Santos, Jennifer Escobar-Lopez

Administrative Assistant- Rowan Marsh

