

Winter 2010 Update



Agape
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A Whirlwind Tour of Agape



Perhaps you've heard and read about various aspects of Agape but haven't quite understood how all the puzzle pieces that make up Agape fit together. Is "The Farm" really a farm? How do former street kids go to school? Where do the

boys that become part of Agape come from? If there's a reintegration team, which boys are left at Agape and which boys are returned home? Come along with me, my wife, and 15-year-old daughter Kate, during a 10-day whirlwind tour of Agape's work in Kenya and let's see if we can answer some of those questions!

Over a year ago, our family participated in a fundraiser to support Agape Children's Ministry. Through that activity we had the blessing of meeting Blake and Esther Gibbs (Agape's Director). After meeting with Blake and Esther a couple of times to learn more about the ministry, they invited us to come to Kenya and see for ourselves what God was doing. This past September, we took them up on their offer and journeyed to Kenya to see what God was doing and whether He had a place for us serving with Agape in Kisumu. We had read about Agape's Mission and the four-R's—Rescue, Redeem, Rehabilitate, and Reintegrate—but couldn't put the four "pieces" of the puzzle together. We were anxious to see our scattered understanding of Agape come together.

Our first day in Kisumu was a Sunday and we attended the weekly worship service at the Agape Kisumu Campus, formed because local churches haven't welcomed the street boys worshiping with their congregations. The service was full of lively singing, eardrum shattering claps, testimonies from boys, and a strong gospel message by one of the house parents who is also a pastor. I wish you could hear and see these boys worship and pray. They have passionate relationships with their Savior and their hearts overflow with thanksgiving. Worshiping alongside them was an honor.

Walking on the Agape Kisumu Campus for the first time, we began to lay out some pieces of the puzzle. The worship

service sprang to life in the dining hall, which is located next to the two dormitory buildings that house the 90 some boys who call Agape home. A little further away is the school building where 10

dedicated Kenyan teachers teach the boys and the day students from the neighborhood. The rigorous schedule of the school would make our American children groan. The campus also houses a small area for animals, a soccer field, newly planted gardens, a basketball hoop and slab, and an open dirt area where we witnessed many boys running, jumping, and playing all sorts of games. While we were there, the foundation work was being laid for a brand new dining hall that will also house a new kitchen, library, and someday hopefully, a computer lab. It was wonderful to see the campus swarming with joyful boys.



The next day we drove four-plus hours to the southwest portion of Kenya, not far from the Tanzania border, but still on Lake Victoria. This is where we were overwhelmed by the beauty and serenity of "The Farm," also called Agape

Matoso by the Kenyan Agape staff. Here an average of 25 vocational students, divided into first year and second year groups, live amongst the beauty of sunsets on the lake, flowers of every color, exotic birds and animals, and acres of vegetables that they consume to be as self-sufficient as possible. After two years of vocational and life skills training, students graduate with a skill in masonry, carpentry, or auto-mechanics. The Farm gives these boys the confidence and skills necessary to sit for and pass the level one national exams that are required to get good jobs in Kenya. Each year a new group of 10-15 boys from Agape Kisumu will move to The Farm for a life-changing experience. One day was all we had and the next morning we were headed back to Kisumu. More of the puzzle pieces began to fit together after this visit and we felt we had a better understanding of two of Agape's four focuses as a ministry, Redeeming and Rehabilitating, now that we had seen them in action.

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“A Whirlwind Tour of Agape” continued from the front page...

On Wednesday, we left the compound where all the missionaries live, which is just a five-minute drive from the Agape Kisumu Campus, and we headed for the Drop-In Center and Outreach Team a few miles further away. The Drop-In Center is the center of how Agape does what it does.



Years ago Darla Calhoun, Agape’s Founder, went to Kisumu to teach preventive health care in the surrounding villages. What struck her heart was that groups of street boys, begging for food, would regularly approach her. Darla’s talks in the park and meetings on the streets has evolved into the Drop-In Center where the street boys come once a week for a lively morning of crafts, games, music, health care, a hot meal, and a gospel message presentation. It’s on these mornings that Agape staff assesses the 80 – 120 street boys there and determine who the youngest and most vulnerable children might be. These children are invited to come live at the Agape Campus. One of Agape’s four focuses is to Rescue children and it all starts with the Outreach Team. Another piece of the puzzle was now in place.

Even though the week was zooming by at a break neck pace, we couldn’t slow down and didn’t want to. On Thursday we had the privilege of traveling with the Reintegration Team out of Kisumu and into the nearby villages to visit some of the former Agape boys who had been reintegrated with their families. There are many reasons why a young boy of 8 to 12 years of age would run away from his village and travel to a big city.

This is where the Reintegration Team plays an essential role in completing the picture of what Agape’s overall ministry looks like. Sometimes a boy who has been on the streets for a short time can be quickly reintegrated back to a safe home environment. Some times it may take a semester, or longer, for the Reintegration Team and a boys’ family to achieve a safe and stable reunification at home. Sadly, there are also those boys who for a variety of reasons can never be reintegrated and stay at Agape for years until they transition into Secondary School. Regardless of the circumstances, boys that are reintegrated receive regular visits from the Reintegration Team to make sure the reintegration is successful. The men on this team have huge hearts and heart-warming stories about boys being returned to their families. Agape’s fourth focus in ministry is Reintegration and the day with these great men, helped us finish putting all of the Agape puzzle pieces in the right place.



Our trip continued for a few additional days and our time with the boys only got better. Our hearts also grew closer to all of the Kenyan Agape Staff, the boys, and what God was doing in a land so far away from our own! We were finally able to understand the Rescue at the Drop-In Center, the Redeeming of the children

while living on Campus and being fed God’s word and seeing living examples of Christ’s love, the Rehabilitation at the Agape Kisumu School and the Agape Matoso Farm, and the Reintegration through the eyes of joyful boys, community members, and families.

For those of you who have had questions about how all the ministries of Agape fit together, I hope you’ve found our experiences helpful. I also pray that you will join our family in regularly praying for the Agape Staff, children, and missionaries. Agape truly is bringing hope to these children at risk. Your prayers and financial contributions make everything at Agape possible.

Eric and Lisa Kjeldgaard
(The Kjeldgaard family will be joining Agape full-time late 2011.)



We are Grateful to the Lord and Thank Him for:

- How well the 90 boys currently living on our Kisumu campus are doing and growing in their walk with the Lord.
- The students who successfully completed their schooling and training at our Primary School and Vocational Training Center.
- The growing number of children we have successfully reintegrated back into their primary and extended families.
- Our prayer and financial supporters whose faithfulness and generosity enables the ministry to continue reaching children for the Lord and to bring them help and hope.
- The progress that has been made on the many facilities projects we have undertaken on our main Kisumu campus.
- The numerous individuals who came to Agape this past year to assist in teaching, helping with construction projects, counseling our boys, training our staff, etc.

A note from one of our new missionary families...



Greetings in the name of our Savior, Jesus! We are the Pages, a family of six, living in Raleigh, North Carolina. We are thoroughly excited about God's calling on our lives and our future involvement as missionaries with Agape Children's Ministry. Once we make our big move to Kisumu next year, Chris will begin serving as the primary missionary at the Main Campus, which ministers to around 140 former street boys and other disadvantaged children from the local community. Tammy will continue in her role as a stay-at-home mom, supporting Chris in his work at Agape and ministering to our four kids. Her role will be expanding somewhat in that she will begin home-schooling our kids once we arrive in Kisumu. Chris will focus upon three major areas at the Main Campus:

- **Discipleship:** The primary goal of Agape Children's Ministry is to reach these boys for Jesus. Chris will work with Pastor Joel at Agape to disciple and teach the boys about their Savior, Jesus Christ. Chris also plans to establish Bible studies with the staff at the Main Campus to encourage their walk with Jesus, as well.
- **Development:** Chris will also be helping to train and equip the Kenyan management staff at the Main Campus to become better leaders and managers.
- **Directing:** Chris will partner with the Kenyan management staff to direct the day-to-day activities of the Main Campus.

Since answering God's call to the mission field earlier this year, our family has been engaged in the support raising process, reaching out to friends, family, and churches to raise the funds necessary to move full-time to Kenya as missionaries. We rely on God's provision of these financial resources, and ask each of you to consider the possibility of partnering with us through monthly financial support. We covet your prayers and look forward to keeping all of you updated on our progress as we make the big move to Kisumu next summer!

God Bless,

Chris, Tammy, Sutton, Connor, Seth, and Lyla Page

(The Page Family will be joining Agape full-time summer 2011.)

Please Join Us at Agape to Pray for:

- Those of our children who will be visiting their families or extended families for the December school break.
- The team coming in January to erect our new dining hall and kitchen.
- One of our young Agape boys who is awaiting word to come to the Lions Eye Hospital in Nairobi for a double corneal transplant to correct his badly deteriorating eyesight.
- The Lord's clear leading as we restructure our outreach ministry, close down the Drop-In Center, and as Steve and Dianne Warn take on new responsibilities on our Kisumu campus.



- Guidance and wisdom from the Lord as we explore establishing a Transition Center as part of our efforts to bring more boys off the streets.
- Don and Hughena Breneman as they travel to and settle into ministry at our Agape Vocational Training Center.
- Steve and Betty Bishop as they travel from Texas to assist Don and Hughena in mentoring and discipling the students at the Vocational Training Center.
- Opportunities to share the Gospel with more and more children on the streets and for Agape to be able to help and assist them.
- Additional new members of our national staff to fill a number of important vacancies.

Agape Drop-In Center "Rescue"

For the past few years, the Drop-In Center has been a vital part of how Agape does what it does. Darla Calhoun, Agape's Founder, went to Kisumu to teach preventive health care in the surrounding villages. But what struck her heart most was that groups of street boys who, begging for food, would regularly approach her. Darla's talks in the park and meetings on the streets has evolved into the Drop-In Center where the street boys come once a week for a lively morning of crafts, games, music, health care, a hot meal and a gospel message presentation. It's on these "outreach" mornings that the Agape staff assesses the 80 – 120 street boys who attend and determines who are the youngest, the most vulnerable children might be. These children are invited to come live at the Agape Kisumu Campus.

The missionaries and staff of Agape, desiring the best for Kisumu's street boys and the future of the Outreach Ministry, are making a change. The plan is to close the Drop-In Center at the end of 2010. In the meantime, we are restructuring and redirecting the Outreach ministry. In January, the streets will again become the place where we identify and begin the intake process for the children we encounter. There will be daily visits to the different bases where the street boys hang out, such as the Town Center and the bus park. These visits will allow the new Outreach Team to meet the children on the streets, their turf, where the newest and most vulnerable can be found. Those children identified to be taken off of the streets will reside for approximately three to four weeks of orientation either at Agape's main Kisumu campus or at what we pray will become our new "Transition Center." Please join us in praying for the funds to acquire and renovate a building located within a short distance to the current Agape Kisumu Campus. Funds will also be needed to hire staff to carry out the operation of the Transition Center and to oversee the transition of the boys from life on the streets to a life of safety, opportunity, and with Christ in their hearts.

While Steve and Dianne will no longer be serving as Directors of the Drop-In Center, Steve will remain actively involved in reaching out to children on the streets. He will also be working on the main campus mentoring and discipling the children in their walks with the Lord. Dianne will be developing and implementing a new curriculum for those of our children who need special teaching and assistance to prepare them for entering our First Grade class. During this transition time, please pray that the Lord will provide wisdom and insight as we redefine the outreach program and that He will provide the staff and financial resources we need to continue this vital part of Agape's ministry.



Agape Kisumu Campus Life "Redeem"

When you walk onto the Agape Campus, you immediately see scores of happy, healthy children. It's amazing how moving boys from the streets, to the safety of Agape, can allow them to become children again! Boys' lives truly are being redeemed!

When a boy first arrives at the Agape Campus, all of his needs are met. The Agape nurse takes him through a medical check-up to assess his physical and mental health. He is given a bed and bedding and any clothes he may be lacking. Each boy is received by a house parent and the social worker and introduced to the rest of the boys and staff. Our Agape boys make friends quickly so new boys usually find it easy to adapt to the friendly environment among the boys and the Agape staff. New boys attend a two-week orientation, which helps them to transition to life off the streets, presents the gospel in a clear way, and allows us to evaluate their academic placement.



Our boys are very busy! Older boys begin their day at 5:00 a.m. and have long school days in addition to their chores. Boys do manual work, watering the shamba (garden), feeding the rabbits, cleaning the dorms, cleaning classrooms, and picking up litter from the compound. The boys have been trained on personal cleanliness and hygiene.

Most of the boys wash their own clothes and take care of their personal items except for the very young boys who have to be assisted to do some chores and to take care of themselves. The house parents assist the young boys. The house parents rotate in shifts day and night, so there are "parents" around all the time, like a real home/family set-up. This arrangement helps foster very good relationships between the boys and staff.

The Agape church has been very instrumental in helping the boys grow spiritually. Every Sunday the boys gather together for the service which begins with a one-hour time of prayer by the boys, the pastor, and the house parents. The prayers are followed by praise and worship and testimonies from the boys about what the Lord is doing in their lives. A Bible teaching from our pastor follows these powerful testimonies. The boys also participate in a Saturday morning Bible study as well as morning and evening devotions.

Currently, 90 boys call the Agape Campus their home. In addition, 10 boys are in high school and two are in college. The Lord has clearly been behind every success in working with the boys at Agape. Many boys have come a long way since they were first rescued from the streets. It is so encouraging to see boys begin to live a normal, productive life on their own as a result of what the Lord is doing through Agape.

Agape Kisumu and Agape Matoso “Rehabilitate”

The Rehabilitation component of Agape’s mission is made up of three important elements. First, Agape provides each child with significant emotional and spiritual counseling. Second, Agape provides rehabilitation through academic education. Third, Agape provides vocational training. Each element is intended to help equip each child to become independent and to live a productive, contributive, Christ-centered life when they leave Agape.



Agape’s Primary School on the Kisumu campus provides grades one through eight for more than 170 boys and girls. The pupils include boys rescued from the streets of Kisumu, needy children from the community, staff children,

and children from the Kisumu Remand Center (which is similar to an American Juvenile Hall).

When a child initially comes off the street, he is placed in the Orientation Class to help him integrate into the Agape Kisumu Campus. In addition to emotional and spiritual counseling the Orientation Class provides an opportunity to evaluate and assess each child to better understand his emotional and psychological needs, his medical needs, and his academic ability.

While in class, each child is presented with subjects as stipulated in the Kenyan curriculum. These classes include language (English and Kiswahili), science, social studies, religious education, creative arts, mathematics, and physical education. The teachers conduct devotions every morning. Children learn how to praise and worship God through songs, reading of the Word, and prayer.

Once a child has moved to grade eight, he is registered for a national examination. Based upon the boy’s character and performance, he may be enrolled in a secondary school, village polytechnic, or The Farm. Agape Children’s Ministry pays for the costs associated with attending these schools.

In Matoso, at Agape’s Vocational Training Center, (The Farm), students of the second year class recently completed their practical life skills training, final studies for their chosen vocation (masonry, carpentry, or auto-mechanics), and prepared for the National Exams. This year, 10 boys sat for their National Exams. Final results will not be available for another 60 to 90 days. However, the Farm Staff believe that all should score well and pass. During the past three years, 34 Farm graduates have taken the National Exams and all 34 passed. These young men are now either applying for or participating in “attachments” (similar to an American internship). Upon successful completion of the National Exam and the attachment, each boy is adequately trained and prepared to find employment in his chosen field and to make it on his own. The Rehabilitation process has been completed.

Agape Reintegration Team “Reintegrate”

Why Reintegration? Since the formation of Agape Children’s Ministry so many years ago, the first 3 ‘R’s’ have been well observed in Agape’s writings and activities, but not the fourth. On many occasions, the fourth ‘R,’ which is Reintegration, was considered to be a punishment both to the children and Agape staff, anytime it was applied. We had forgotten that Reintegration was a family reunion and it was good for the child, as ordained by God, that the family should be together. Due to this false “reintegration is punishment” perception and even though the intent to reintegrate was here, very little successful reintegration was being achieved.

In 2008, Agape’s Director started collecting comments and suggestions from Kenyan staff members who had been with Agape for quite some time. From those conversations, a new vision for Reintegration was created. We finally stopped talking about successful reintegration and came up with a plan to achieve it.

Our vision was to successfully reintegrate every child back to his home or closest core family unit as long as it was a safe and caring place for the child to remain. We realized though, that even with newly energized efforts to attain our goal, some children would never be reintegrated. These were the children with a family unit that was either too dysfunctional or even non-existent. For those children, Agape would become their permanent home and the Agape staff would become their family for most of their childhood.



In less than three years, our small but hard-working Reintegration Team has returned nearly 250 children to their homes. A “successful” reintegration by Agape standards means the child stays at home, does not run back to the streets, performs well in his schoolwork, and becomes a contributing member of the family. Our Reintegration Team visits each of these reintegrated boys on different recurring time schedules based upon their amount of time at home since reintegration. The more recently reintegrated children receive more visits and the children reintegrated the longest time ago receive fewer visits. This plan has worked and the Lord is being honored through the Team’s efforts.

Even with so many amazingly positive reintegration stories, we are still saddened by some of the families that cannot reintegrate with their son simply due to economic factors within the family. Next quarter we will share about how Agape and the Reintegration Team are using micro-enterprises to bring hope to these families and change a child, a family, and a community’s future.

Every day our Reintegration Team sets out with a vision for each family and child to be spiritually, emotionally, physically, socially, and financially stable and be in good health as ordained by God.

Agape Contribution Opportunities

Nearly 80% of the money we send to Africa to carry out our ministry to street children comes from our General Fund. Support for the General Fund is one of the most direct ways to make a difference in Agape's ability to do the work the Lord has called us to. In addition to the General Fund, please consider making a tax-deductible year-end gift to one or more of the current specific needs at Agape:

- Sponsor one of our five Reintegration Team members. To cover the cost of salary, benefits, and a portion of the cost to reintegrate a child, such as school fees, uniforms, school lunch program, etc. \$250 per month
- Sponsor one of our ten Primary School Teachers. To cover the cost of salary and benefits \$150 per month
- Fund development of our rain water collection and distribution system on our main campus, including three 5,000 liter storage tanks, associated plumbing (valves, pipe, etc.), and labor \$2,600
- Fund construction of a retaining wall to help stem erosion on the main campus. Materials to include cement, wall stones, re-bar, sand, gravel, and labor \$3,500
- Fund remodeling of our old dining hall and kitchen into administrative offices. Labor and materials \$4,200
- Purchase Bibles for our boys and staff \$800
- Fund anticipated remodel and fencing costs for our proposed new Transition Center. Labor and materials \$15,000



If any item is over-funded, excess funds will be directed towards one of the other items or to the General Fund.



In Closing

~Blake Gibbs, Director

One of the privileges of being missionaries in Africa is that we seem to see much more clearly God's mercy and faithfulness to us throughout each day. We know when we are in America He is every bit as merciful and

faithful to us as He is when we are here. But somehow, there we seem to be less aware of all He does and continues to do on our behalf. And that robs us of an extra measure of joy and contentment, knowing we rest so safely and securely in His hands. Life in America is so busy and the daily things of life are so easy and convenient, we often miss all the things He is doing for us. We overlook them. We do not see them. We do not recognize them for what they really are.

When we are here, it is much easier to realize the things that go on in our lives are not mere happenstance. They are not coincidences. Whether it is avoiding an accident, finding just the right words to minister to a young child, or locating the food we are looking for at the grocery store. Large or small, they are all part of the purpose and plan and intent of God.

When we are here, we sense so much more directly, more personally, and more powerfully our complete and total dependence on the Lord, for everything. And that is when we see His faithfulness and mercy more clearly. When we travel the roads, He is our ever present, ever faithful protector, every day. When we have needs, He provides in miraculous ways, ways we could not imagine or explain. Not just once or twice, but all the time. He graciously keeps us healthy and sustains us through times of challenge and struggle.

Experiencing God's mercy and faithfulness in such limitless measure brings us great joy and peace. We are grateful to Him for that. We hope each of you can take time today to pause and to recognize God's hand of mercy and faithfulness so abundantly working in your life.

Blake & Esther Gibbs

Coming in the Spring 2010 Update...

- An update from Darla Calhoun, our Founder
- Agape's Child Sponsorship Program
- Agape missionary highlight featuring Steve and Dianne Warn
- An interview with John Mwalo, a member of our Kenyan staff

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If a project I am contributing to is overfunded, I authorize Agape Children's Ministry to direct my contribution to the next most urgent financial need.

Ministry Support For:

Reintegration Team \$ _____

Primary Teacher \$ _____

Rain Water Collection \$ _____

Retaining Wall \$ _____

Remodel \$ _____

Bibles \$ _____

Transition Center \$ _____

General Fund \$ _____

Total \$ _____

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