

Dear Friends of Agape,

The volatility of the current world screams continual danger. The ongoing toxicity of the political divide has multiplied the fear and loathing of each other, as Trump cruised to a decisive victory. Fear of instability and chaos is real in the minds of many, as the political future looks increasingly fraught.



Agape Protest Vigil in Ware

Feeling overwhelmed by the darkness of the election results, we are still reeling from the catastrophic damage of two back-to-back, highly destructive hurricanes which resulted in many lives and homes lost.

All year long, extreme weather destroyed huge swaths of our beautiful country with 90–110-degree heat waves and rampant floods; 100mph hurricane winds; thousands of acres burning up in ongoing wildfires.

Where do we look for relief, even hope?

Despite it all, we **do** find hope in doing hopeful things. Working on the Agape land in this autumnal season of completion is a great leveler for our human-created strife. As we immerse ourselves in natural things, readying for winter with its earlier than normal frosts, we experience a continued yield of our summer crops, and magically, the kale, Swiss chard, parsley, celery and arugula keep producing. Our cool, dry cellar storage room is a rainbow of luscious squash. As we say in the farming life: “It was a good growing season!”

If we humans can mimic Nature, we notice that Nature never rushes, nor does She hoard. The New England seasons show us the bittersweet excitement of fall moving toward winter. Celebrating life through the fall harvest seems effortless, a time of spiritual garnering and completion.

Amid the celebration, we must not forget that others in the Southern US have lost “everything,” experiencing trauma and unimaginable loss.

If that isn't enough, we also grieve the dead, injured, and starving, especially the innocent children in Gaza, Ukraine, and Sudan. We live in a time of overwhelming grief and horror. "Dear God of Peace, save us from our violent selves, soon, and very soon."

St. Francis Day: Another Sign of Hope

After our 35th annual St. Francis Day at Agape, we initiated something new this year. We placed the planning and presenting of this sacred day into the capable hands of the next generation of folks from Agape and New York Catholic Worker: Agape's Jim Robinson, with Nathan Dufour Oglesby, and Liam Myers. With Nathan as MC, the panelists articulated the theme of the day "Growing the Community of Communities." Presentations



Songfest after St. Francis Day

included the need for environmental justice in both urban and rural farms, Palestinian liberation, and the seeking by the next generations for faith-based community and a nonviolent way of life. It was a blessed day of community building, music and dialogue, expertly led by the multi-talented Nathan. The day was dedicated to hearing from the rising generations stepping into important spiritual and environmental community positions throughout the Northeast. A core group of these New Yorkers is planning to return to Agape soon to join in the work of building our nonviolent community.

Many Laborers in the Vineyard - Hope Shows Up

We have hosted a great mix of volunteers since the summer months. Our June workday attracted 50 or so hearty souls to assist in our garden and to help us put up 15 cords of wood for the winter. In September, Nathan returned to volunteering, taking a respite from his home base in Brooklyn. He contributed immensely to the publicity and coordination of St. Francis Day, October 5th and split his time with work in the garden and stacking wood. What joy he brought, especially when he was joined by his partner, Fiona Murphy, a journalist, who is writing an article on life at Agape including an interview with Suzanne and Brayton.



Brayton and Allen at an Agape workday

Allen Ernst arrived at Agape as a volunteer with a very inspiring story. He was a former military pilot who spent four years fighting for Conscientious Objector status with the U.S. Air Force, was finally discharged in October, as a result of refusing to sign a non-disclosure agreement and being passed over for promotion. Shortly after arriving at Agape, Allen experienced a deep spiritual connection to the place and to the prayer life here,

encouraging him to return regularly to volunteer. Allen's exemplary courage of his refusal to continue in military life led to his acceptance at Boston University's School of Theology on a full scholarship, for a Master of Divinity.



Workday Crew

Chris Hope, son of recently deceased long-time Agape handyman, Mike Hope, finished the gargantuan task of putting up the 15 cords of wood that warm us through these cold New England winters. We are ready, thanks to Chris, for whatever winter brings.

Since the end of Covid, we have been searching for an office assistant. Through an announcement from Fr. Richard, our local priest, at St. Aloysius Parish, we have found a promising

candidate, Judi Korzec, a parishioner at the church and a resident of Hardwick. She has agreed to volunteer in Agape's office part time. We couldn't be more pleased with her skills, experience, and sheer goodwill.

As Usual, We Do Need Your Help

We have had two years of big expenses with emergency repairs.

- Last year, we had a hefty bill of **\$31,000** to replace an underground electric cable that supplied electricity to both houses.
- Soon after, the Brigid House basement flooded, we had to have installed a sump pump and a French drain to prevent further flooding, costing **\$10,000**.
- **Your immediate support replenished our coffers. Our gratitude goes out to you and our sustainers. You are always there to put us back on our feet!**

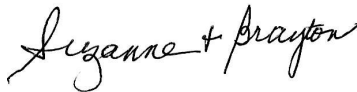
Unexpected Present Needs

- This past September, Francis House basement also flooded due to a record amount of rainfall throughout 2023-24.
- We discovered, after the flooding of Brigid House, dangerous humidity levels generated by our high-water table created serious mold which had grown to the point of urgent attention.
- **These combined emergency repairs, totaling \$25,000, put a substantial strain on our operating budget.**

We remain grateful for any further financial assistance that you can offer at this time.

By the time you receive this newsletter, while we are immersed in the Advent Season, waiting for The Prince of Peace, we know that the genocidal war in Gaza and the devastating two-year war in Ukraine continue. Have we ever experienced a greater need to stop the madness of war? “Come, Lord Jesus, the Nonviolent One, the Prince of Peace,” bring us your peace and inspire us to lay down our weapons of war.

Maranatha,



Suzanne Belote Shanley and Brayton Shanley