

# AGAPE of NC



**Strengthening Families  
One Child At A Time!**

THIRD QTR 2020

## EVERYTHING CHANGED IN 2020!

None of us could really anticipate how events of this year would impact our routines -- tipped sideways, turned upside down, or cancelled altogether. No doubt or disputing -- our lives, appearance, homes, schools, churches, businesses, communities, states, and country -- **Our World Has Changed!**

We have all **changed** how (and in some cases *if*) we: dress, bathe, eat, exercise, entertain, educate, socialize, serve, worship, work, volunteer. Some say that even the Earth's environment has been **changed!**

As wonderful as all the heroic, essential, virtual, remote, online, binges, smizing, curbside, drive-by parades, amusing challenges, **change of pace** may have been these long months of 2020, now, we just want to remedy, recover, recollect, reconnect, re-open, re-enter, regather, return, resume, redux, reboot, reset, rebuild, re-emerge. We are tired of the crisis-mode, shortages, layoffs, lay-outs, closures, violence, misinformation, despair, panic, grief, ills (both physical & social), waiting for real relief and **lasting change**. We ache for normalcy again -- even if it is a "new" normal.

Now think about the families and children for whom commotion, confusion, disruption, disturbance, exhaustion, isolation, upheaval, hunger, hostility, aggression, violence, cruelty, chaos *was* the norm -- even before 2020 brought fresh challenges to many of our doorsteps.

Their worlds have not **changed** -- except maybe for the worse. In fact, the impact of this year's worries made circumstances less safe and more precarious for a lot of people. The tensions created by 2020's shortages, controversies, and losses contributed to increased pressure and conflict in already over-stressed situations. Having to "stay-at-home"

meant less contact with mandated reporters and others (like teachers, coaches, healthcare practitioners, police, social workers, ministers, etc.), who might have seen and intervened in instances of abuse or neglect.

In short, the kids and families that AGAPE strives to serve **need change now** more than ever!

Throughout this year, **AGAPE has not changed course**. Yes -- we **changed it up** in 2020 -- but even as AGAPE adapted to doing things differently, we remained on task and on mission. We are still all about making an **everlasting change** in the lives of families and kids in need of safe, stable, loving, Christian, homes!

So, when we kick off AGAPE's 5th Annual **Change For Life** Giving Campaign this Fall, you may see some additional **changes** in how we ask you to give -- and we invite you to be creative yourselves, too.

We realize coin shortages have been reported, and we are sensitive to the fact that some Donors may be facing loss and adversity in their own lives these days. Still, the suffering AGAPE strives to alleviate has not diminished -- and it may have become even more acute because of 2020 conditions.

So, once again this year AGAPE of NC is asking everyone who can to **Change It Up!** We need YOU to fill the gap to keep that **Change For Life!** going strong and marching forward!

*Donate to AGAPE of NC today*

*~online at: [www.agapeofnc.org/donate](http://www.agapeofnc.org/donate)*

*~by text to: [919-335-4685](tel:919-335-4685) (type GIVE)*

*~send checks to: POBox 985, Wake Forest, NC 27588*

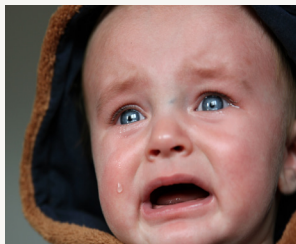




## NORTH CAROLINA HOUSE BILL 918

### TO AMEND ABUSE, NEGLECT AND DEPENDENCY LAWS & EXPEDITE PERMANENCY

Substance abuse and particularly, opioid addiction, has occurred at historically high rates in North Carolina. Paying a very steep price in this epidemic are babies and small children in the care of parents who are too incapacitated to care for them. This is one reason the number of children entering the North Carolina foster care system has reportedly increased over 36% in the last decade.



Do you know about proposed legislation – [House Bill 918](#) -- that has been making its way through the NC General Assembly to try and address the situation? It is a child-centered bill intended to amend the child welfare statutes on abuse and neglect and, as a result, would speed up placement permanency for babies who are born to addicted mothers and children living with parents who abuse illegal substances.

HB 918 aims to make 3 major changes in current laws:

1. Define illicit drug use during pregnancy as child abuse;
2. Change the state's obligation to engage in reunification efforts when a child has been exposed to drugs; and
3. Significantly shorten the time to begin terminating parental rights under such conditions.

Notable features of House Bill 918, a/k/a the "Expedite Permanency" bill, include:

- Placement based on the best interests of the child, including attachment and developmental needs of the child.
- Due diligence to locate and identify adult relatives within 30 days of a child entering state custody. . . . *continued on page 3*

## WELCOMING NEW STAFF: Tina Gill

We are pleased to introduce Tina Gill, who joined our Staff in July as a new AGAPE Social Worker!

Tina is a 1989 graduate of Morehead State University in eastern Kentucky. She relocated to eastern North Carolina, accepting a job with a wilderness camping program that allowed her to work with at-risk youth. Later, Tina went on to work in mental health and a psychiatric hospital.



In 1990, Tina met and married her husband. He was in the Navy at the time, but later transitioned into the US Marine Corps, and retired after 22 years of service. They have two adult children.

Tina confided that the Lord placed foster care on the Gills' hearts many years ago, but it was not until 2015 that they "were obedient" and began their journey to get licensed. Over the last 5 years, the Gills have had over 25 foster children in their home -- from the age of only three weeks old to 18 years old.

To learn more about the foster care system, in 2019, Tina also became a Guardian Ad Litem.

*Tina says she is "passionate about helping children from hard places and looks forward to working with AGAPE and new foster families."*



## AGAPE UPDATES

*as of September, 2020*

29

FOSTER CHILDREN &  
YOUTH IN CARE

26

LICENSED  
FOSTER HOMES

10

FOSTER FAMILIES  
IN TRAINING

1

ADOPTIONS FINALIZED  
IN 2020

3

PENDING ADOPTIONS



## NC HOUSE BILL 918 . . . *cont'd from pg. 2*

- Prospective permanent placement within 1 year for children who enter state custody because of the birth parents' use of illicit substances.
- Designating a foster family, with whom a child has resided for at least 9 months, as "non-relative kin," eligible for permanent placement of the child (after consideration of other birth family members like grandparents).
- Allowing a foster family, with whom a child has resided for at least 15 months, to petition for termination of parental rights.
- Declaring that a birth parent's toxic exposure of a child in utero to non-medical drugs constitutes "aggravated circumstances" so that continued efforts for reunification would not be required unless the birth parent is enrolled in, and is meeting or exceeding the benchmarks of, a drug abuse treatment program.



This legislation was proposed in the NC House of Representatives in April 2019 and reviewed by various committees there. The House passed its bill in May 2019 and it was sent to the NC Senate. Following review by additional committees there between August 2019 and mid-2020, an Amended Bill (in its 4th Edition) eventually passed the Senate in June 2020. The House ratified that Amended Bill (4th Ed.) by the end of the month and presented it to the Governor's Office, where it was vetoed on July 2, 2020.

Governor Cooper shared the following statement on his veto: "House Bill 918 discourages pregnant women with substance use disorders from seeking treatment and prenatal care, risking their health and the health of newborns. And while it penalizes pregnant women with substance use disorders, it does nothing to expand access to treatment. This would disproportionately impact women of color and low-income women, who are already less likely to have access to the substance use treatment and quality healthcare they need."

So far, the NC Legislature has declined to vote on trying to override the Governor's veto and HB 918 now sits with a House committee again. Will it be revisited sometime soon?

Controversy remains. HB 918 could impact the rights of birth parents troubled with substance abuse to take the



**CHANGING IT UP!** THIS YEAR TO CONTINUE **CHANGE FOR LIFE!**  
Our 5th Annual Giving Campaign  
will run through the end of this year  
to take us beyond 2020!

## GIFTS

June 2020 to September 2020

In Memory of  
**Ms. Joyce Barrett**  
given by  
Sylva Church of Christ

In Memory of  
**Ms. Martha Ray**  
given  
Anonymously

In Memory & In Honor  
of  
**All Who Have Suffered Loss (of any kind) This Year**  
given  
Anonymously

time necessary to recover and get their lives in order, which is often at odds with the rights of their children to live less chaotic lives in foster care or to be permanently adopted. The divide is ideological and trying to achieve a balance is difficult and delicate.

Ironically, both advocates and opponents of HB 918 cite a growing body of brain science research that emphasizes:

- the importance of early childhood bonding with caring, attentive adults during the critical ages of 0-3 to promote neurological development; and
- how trauma during those years sets up children for a lifetime of psychological and physical challenges.

When one or both birth parents are substance abusers, should the goal of foster care be ultimate reunification of a child with his or her birth family, or should it be providing the most stable environment for the child as early as possible?

AGAPE of NC is interested in resolving for the best of both.





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## OUR MISSION

AGAPE of NC exists to provide professional social services as a compassionate Christian outreach to strengthen children and families.

## OUR VALUES

Children deserve Christian families, care and compassion, excellence in the provision of services, best interest of clients, financial integrity, responsible stewardship and ethical Christian standards.



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by subscribing to our newsletter at:  
[AGAPEOFNC.ORG](http://AGAPEOFNC.ORG)



**SURVIVE ALL  
TO  
THRIVE Y'ALL**



## DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

*Kimberly Scott*

Yes – this year **Our World has Changed**. As humankind, we have experienced loss of life, health (both physical & mental), connection with loved ones, decorum, income, insurance, jobs, businesses, services, homes, sobriety, confidence, control, dignity, privilege, peace, justice, safety, security, trust, beliefs, and breath. In some instances, we may perceive these losses as a lack of leadership, training, funding, services, access, understanding, empathy, or faith.

Words and phrases that now bombard us: global pandemic; quarantine; stay-at-home; face masks; COVID testing and contract tracing; homeschooling; disaster and tragedy (both natural & man-made) like tornadoes, hurricanes, flooding, wildfires, arson, murder, vandalism, theft, injustice, aggression (both macro & micro), self-defense, excessive force, racism, and inequality. We react with protests, marches, rallies, politics, legislation, press conferences, proposed solutions, action plans, promises, and prayer – some resistance and responses more effective than others.

We can congratulate ourselves on having coped, addressed, adjusted, adapted, pivoted, shifted, transitioned, TikTok'd, Zoomed, innovated, reinvented, and reimagined as best we could. But many are still mourning, frustrated, angry, anxious, scared, discouraged, depressed, or just plain weary of the struggle feeling reduced, restricted, disconnected, distant (both physically & socially), devalued, divided, powerless, unheard, lonely, isolated, or abandoned.

This year (or this season in our lives) has been described, understandably, as different, difficult, challenging, oppressive, precarious, unusual, unprecedented -- a time of unrest, a day of reckoning, an age like no other. And right now, the future may still seem unknown, uncertain, and unpredictable; but Hope remains!!!

**What has not changed is God, our Father, and His Son, Jesus!**

We still must obey God's Will and embrace the Grace He extends through His Son. Then, Our Lord's holiness, righteousness, love, compassion, joy, patience, commitment, perseverance, wisdom, and mercy will encourage, inspire, motivate, liberate, and affirm. His Spirit enriches and empowers!

When we truly seek Him and embody His Spirit . . . When we kneel before the Lord and stand up for one another . . . we find each other too. When we see and hear each other, we recognize needs. When we serve those in need, we get to share Jesus. That is, and always has been, **His Way to Be the Change** everyone wants to see in Our World!!!