

# The Agape Christian Church Story.

-written by Robbie Delgado

“He has made everything beautiful in His time...”  
(Ecc. 3:1)

Agape Christian Church recently celebrated its 8th year anniversary on the 9th of February 2003, at its new premises on the Great Western Highway in Colyton.

“In the beginning...” (Gen. 1:1)

The Church has come a long way from its inception on the 5th of February 1995. Starting out as a Church without a name and without a venue to hold services in, the original group of 97 committed believers and their children, composed of former members and leaders of the Filipino Christian Fellowship Church then based at Wetherill Park, held a picnic meeting at the Tench Reserve in Penrith. It was at this meeting that a corporate decision was made to establish the Church.



The picnic meeting at the Tench Reserve in Penrith.

Ps Rudy Fetalsana was appointed the Senior Pastor, with Ps Nick Pangilinan as the Associate Pastor. Likewise Tom Chua, Gani Santos and Jun Bongco were appointed as Elders of the Church. Appointments were also made of Deacons and Deaconesses, the Business Council, leaders of Cell Groups/Bible Study Groups, Youth Ministry, Sunday school teachers, Senior Citizens, Men's and Ladies Fellowship groups and Intercessory Prayer Groups.

The wheels were certainly in motion within the week of the initial meeting. A venue was secured for Sunday Services, an electric piano was purchased and a Music Ministry group was instantly formed by Jun Bongco, the appointed elder in charge, who together with Bernie Erqueiza scoured second-hand shops to purchase sound equipment and musical instruments.

“For the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go...” (Josh. 1:9)

On the 12th of February, the first Sunday service of the then unnamed church was held at the Doonside Neighbourhood Centre from 4pm. It was also during this occasion that the name of the new church was announced by the Church leaders.

Thus was born the Agape Christian Church.



Ps Rudy Fetalsana preaches at the first Sunday Service at Doonside Neighbourhood Centre.

With this announcement, Agape's very own artist Peping Pangilinan conceptualised and created the logo of the newly formed Church that appears in all Church bulletins, letterheads and correspondences. The logo, formed from the letters A for Agape, the letter C for Christian and the symbol of the cross, visually projects an image of a human hand reaching out in love to the Church and the community - a representation of what God's Agape love is all about.



The Doonside Neighbourhood Centre was home to the Agape Christian Church for several months a great beginning for a church that was just starting out. The sound of children having fun and making good use of the playground, the dinner fellowships after the service, and the bumper-to-bumper parking in the Centre's car park was a regular Sunday routine. This routine however, did not endear the Church to the neighbouring residents.

The need to relocate soon became apparent, and thus the search for a new place of worship began. With most venues in the local area tied to existing commitments with other churches and civic groups, a place for morning services could not be secured. In spite of this, a temporary church location was found at the Evans High School premises in Blacktown. It was also at this time that "Fresh Fire" was conceived, which to this day has remained the name of Agape's Youth Group.



Fresh Fire Youth's first musical performance at the Doonside Neighbourhood Centre...those were the days...

After weeks of much getting used to, the area was inevitably deemed as inappropriate and the nomadic search for a new place of worship continued. Finally, a new venue was found at the Rooty Hill Uniting Church, where afternoon services continued to be held.

**"Let us not give up meeting together..."** (Heb. 10:25)

While based at the Rooty Hill Uniting Church building, Agape Church experienced a tremendous growth in membership. Ps Jun & Cherry Galang joined us from the Four Square Church in Newcastle, followed by Rowell & Ruby Corpuz, then an elder at the Calvary Christian Centre in Wellington, New Zealand plus a host of many others joined us in the Fellowship. It was a time of growth spiritually as well as in physical numbers. It was also a time of activities. During this period, we had many "firsts": our first "Holy Ghost Night", the first deep sea fishing trip (and the last one too!) enjoyed by the Men's Fellowship group, the first two issues of "REJOICE" the official newsletter of the Church, our first Family Camp at WEC in Morrisset with the theme "One in the Bond of Love", our first evangelistic Christmas Cantata entitled "Emmanuel, Your Light Has Come", our first water baptism rites held at Bents Basin in Greendale (Warragamba), and the first Youth Camp at River Ranch with its theme "Solid as a Rock".

In December 1995, Agape Christian Church was granted a license by the Australian Securities Commission. This license officially gave government recognition to the Agape Church not only as an independent church but also as a corporation. The license also authorises the pastors of the church to perform civil functions such as marriage celebrations, baptism ceremonies, and child dedications among others. Consequently, the church as a corporation elected its first set of Board of Directors to attend to the affairs of the company, and its first elected Business Council to oversee the church's business and financial affairs.

“It was He who gave some to be... pastors and teachers...” (Eph. 4:11)

After a fruitful year at Rooty Hill and due to the demands of a growing congregation and the needs of the Sunday School children, it was time to bid adios” to Rooty Hill Uniting Church and say “hello” to the James Erskine Public School in Erskine Park in 1996. Sunday services continued to be held in the afternoons. During the time that we spent at Erskine Park, Agape held its first Sunday Morning Service, which continues. 1996 brought a lot of changes to the Church's leadership. In June, the Church said goodbye to Ps. Jun & Cherry Galang, who left to pursue their ministry. While their departure left a void in the work of the Church, God's faithfulness was again demonstrated as He promptly sent new and committed workers in the person of Ps. Chichi and Gi-jing Aguilar, who brought with them a fresh anointing from the Lord and a renewed fire from the Holy Spirit. Tom Chua was installed as an Associate Pastor of the Church and passed on the leadership of the Youth Ministry to Rowell Corpuz who was installed as an Elder (and who, in 1998, would be appointed as Associate Pastor of the Church). Jun Bongco who was newly appointed as Church Administrator likewise passed on the leadership of the Music Ministry to Ferdie Cruz.

“Press on toward the goal...” (Phil. 3:12)

In 1998, Agape Christian Church finally found a venue where Sunday morning and evening services could be held. The St Clair Public School of St Clair was to be the new home to the Church providing access and use of the main hall, smaller rooms for Sunday school classes, Church meetings, leadership training and numerous church activities for the next four years.

At this venue, the Agape Learning Centre was established. Courses in Discipleship, Hermeneutics, Bible Doctrines, Prayer and Worship and Old Testament Survey were conducted - correspondence courses were also offered. It was at this venue where the Youth Ministry successfully presented their evangelistic musicales “Grace is the Word” (adapted from the movie “Grease” ) and “The Saviour of Oz” (from “The Wizard of Oz”). The third musicale “Faith” (from the movie “Fame” ) attracted a much larger audience to enjoy a “Penrith-meets-Broadway” type production performed at the Playhouse Theatre, located within the University of Western Sydney in Kingswood.

The years spent at St Clair proved to be a trying time for Agape Christian Church. The Church rejoiced in victories, while at the same time experienced disappointment and loss. Tatang and Nanang Pangilinan, and Bobot Chan passed away to be with the Lord, as well as other close relations and friends of the church. There were also those who suffered from debilitating illnesses.

Ps Chichi Aguilar and his family left Agape to join The Living Word Church in Belmore. Other church leaders and members likewise left to either rejoin their original church, or explore other churches. Some left the church temporarily, only to return again to Agape.



There were however a lot of new additions to the Church, either by birth or by conversion. In most of the Sunday services, new faces were always evident. The Fresh Fire Youth Group also continued to grow abundantly and spiritually, with the dedication and commitment of its leaders and members.





Ps Norman & Etchie Villareal of The Living Word Fellowship in San Diego, California

**“In Christ we who are many form one body...” (Rom. 12:5)**

In the year 2001 overseas partner churches were established in San Diego, California in the Living Word Fellowship pastored by Norman & Etchie Villareal; the Foundation of Truth in Novaliches, Quezon City pastored by Ferdie & Fidest Ramos; the Fountains of Love in Arlington Texas pastored by Manny & Arlene Fetalsana; and the Christian Radio Broadcast Service in Odiongan, Romblon delivered by Ps. Teofilito Rufon. On the local front, the Norwest Christian Church pastored by Nick & Elo Pangilinan was also founded. To assist them in the establishment of this new church, Agape Christian Church released Fidel & Jenny Arcega, and Ferdie & Myra Cruz.

Because of the departures of these key leaders of the Church, the leadership of the Music Ministry was passed on to Liezl Escueta, while the roles of Fidel & Jenny Arcega in the Youth Ministry were passed on to Joy Orcena and Laurence Laluan.



Ps Ferdie & Fidest Ramos, of The Foundation of Truth in Novaliches, Quezon City



In May 2001, a missions trip to the Philippines was undertaken. With a team of six led by Ps Rudy Fetasana and Ps Tom Chua, the church's Missions Director, the team visited areas such as Payatas, the Mountain Province, and Odiongan in Romblon.



The Christian Radio Broadcast Service in Odiongan, Romblon



The first Agape Leaders Conference held at the Country Comfort Hotel in July 2001, bringing together Agape Leaders and the leaders of the Partner Churches for the very first time. It was at this conference where the challenge for a permanent house of prayer and worship was made to the local church.



The Church actively accepted the challenge and began the search for a suitable new site. Various blocks of land and premises with potential were identified and explored. Offers were made but were unsuccessful. A building fund was established with contributions amounting to \$56,000. Various fund raising activities were conducted and a Chair Fund was created which raised \$5,000 towards the purchase of chairs for the new church. An ongoing Building Improvement Fund which to-date has generated \$16,000, is still open for contributions.

**“My God shall supply all my needs...” (Phil. 4:19)**

In October of 2001 as he was driving along the Great Western Highway, Ps Tom Chua passed by the old Colyton Fruit Shop which was then being used as a retail outlet for women's underwear and saw a “For Sale” sign. He immediately notified Ps Rudy Fetalsana about the prospect of the site. Ps Rudy then confessed that he had an impression from the Lord, way back in 1994 when he was still Senior Pastor at the Filipino Christian Fellowship. This impression was that the then Colyton Fruit Market would be the site for a future church that God wanted him to lead.



The property was presented to the Church body and immediately the Church claimed it as its new location. Thereafter, offers were made, bank loans as well as personal loans and guarantees were secured, building insurance organised, tax concessions applied for, and council approval to operate a church at the site was obtained. In addition, an unsolicited offer to utilise additional parking space when required at the adjoining property by its operators was presented.



The final settlement on the property was made on the 13th of February 2002, and the Church had its first Sunday Service on the 4th of August 2002. Since then, and through the loving and faithful efforts of Agape's members, there has been much improvement on the land and building. A reception area was built, as well as a cry room to cater to the needs of young families. New carpets were laid, a fresh coat of paint adorns interior and exterior walls as well as the ceiling, a new stage was built, the sound system upgraded, and a revised layout of speakers and sound equipment was instituted with new electrical connections and wiring. The surrounding areas for parking and the adjacent vacant lot was cleaned and spruced up.

Vertical blinds were expertly installed on all windows of the building. And finally an illuminated outdoor sign with the words Agape Christian Church is now prominently displayed along the Great Western Highway declaring the property as a house of God. Newly featured on the sign is the modified version of the original Agape logo which now includes an artist's rendition of a highway, befittingly describing the location of the church.



**"Give thanks to the Lord for He is good..." (Ps. 136:1)**

Throughout the eight years of the Church's existence, we have conducted activities too numerous to mention in the one article. This includes a series of Family Camps, Youth Camps, Youth Rallies, Leaders Planning Camps, Evangelistic Crusades, Marches for Jesus, Holy Ghost Nights, Couples' Nights, Parents' Nights, Christmas Cantatas and musicales, Inter Church Sports Fests and Cell Group competitions, and even the Renewal of Marriage Vows. God has blessed the Church with many dedicated and tireless workers who continue to contribute their time, talents, wisdom and resources to accomplish His work on earth and towards the building of His Church.

There are many workers from other churches who have blessed us and contributed towards the growth of Agape Christian Church. They have ministered to us as guest speakers, resource speakers in both our Family and Youth Camps, and provided encouragement and support to the Church through their testimonies. We acknowledge the valuable contributions of the following friends who have helped Agape Christian Church become the church that God wants it to be, and for having become a part of our Christian life and growth:

Ps. Jerry Ignacio  
Ps. Manny Velante  
Rev. Fred Nile, MP  
Ps Gersh Suan  
Ps. Bob Cabrera  
Ps. Frank Yap  
Bro Jun Polistico  
Ps. James Dagelet  
Ps Faylen Hill-Sparks  
Ps. Beth Lampa  
Ps. Manette Rabina  
Ps. Serge Grygoruk

Ps. Michael Richardson  
Ps. Norman Villareal  
Ps. Ferdie Ramos  
Ps. Teofilito Rufon  
Ps Wayne & Lorelle McGee  
Ps. Philip Keys  
Ps. Mely Matignas  
Ps. Augusto Argamino  
Ps. Edward Leviste  
Ps. David Jones  
Sis Pinky Merchant  
Ps. David Kemp

Bro. Tony Moxon  
Bro Sam Mercado  
Ps Reg Matthews  
Ps. Trevor McIlwain  
Ps. John Sharpe  
Ps. Stuart & Irene  
Robertson  
Dr. Keith Henderson  
Ps. Rico Ricafort  
Ps. Ferdie Taguiang  
Ps. Ray Wadeley



We hope that we have blessed them as much as they have blessed the Church, and pray that they continue to remain faithful servants of the Lord.

**"He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion..."**

(Phil. 1:6)

As the Church continues the celebration of its 8th year anniversary and the dedication of its new church building, one is amazed at God's work: the beauty of His creation, His everlasting faithfulness, and the bountiful blessings He continually pours out to His church.



In spite of the Church's humble beginnings, "He has made everything beautiful in its time" (Ecc. 3:11). Under the Lord's leadership and guidance Agape Christian Church has now become a congregation of 300 committed followers of Jesus working to do His will in their lives, in the community and His church.