



# Morning Star

## Children's Centre

Reg.No. 009-016 - NPO

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### 19<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

22<sup>ND</sup> JUNE 2018

### GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

#### OUR NEW MISSION STATEMENT

Morning Star exists to prepare children and young people in a Christian environment to move beyond their vulnerability to productivity.

Our current statistics are:

- ✓ 142 children attend our 2 Centres (Welkom & Kutlwanong) on a daily basis.
- ✓ 582 of our children are in primary and secondary schools in Matjhabeng.
- ✓ 18 of our young adults who have left school are still on our register under "School-leavers". They do not want to be discharged from our care. (We, otherwise, discharge our children once they're 20 years of age).
- ✓ 300 of our children have died since our inception in January 2000 (7 since our last AGM).
- ✓ We presently have 51 children on our Waiting List but most are HIV negative.

#### STAFF MOVEMENTS OVER PAST 12 MONTHS:

- Sr. Pulane Leeuw retired at the end of 2017 and has been replaced by Sr. Ntaoleng Lebeko.
- Pastor Revival Hlongwane is back in Welkom and has taken up the position of Morning Star Chaplain. He and his family live in one of our Kowie Street flats in St Helena.
- Julia Klip, formerly the Preschool Teacher at our Kutlwanong Centre, has relocated to Thabong and is now the Assistant Preschool Teacher at our Welkom Centre.

- Emily Mahlangu replaced Julia Klip as the Pre-school Teacher at our Kutlwanong Centre at the beginning of 2018.
- Motshidisi Karreebos has been moved from the Welkom Pre-school to the Grade R (Reception) Class as Teaching Assistant. She replaces Kekeletso Mohlabane who left us in 2017.
- Ntsoaki Sehlabo left our employ at the end of 2017 and has been replaced by Nomvula Mpinda as 2<sup>nd</sup> Kitchen Assistant.

### **EDUCATION:**

The educational side of Morning Star is running well. Sarah Wilkins ably heads up this department and we continue to reap the benefits of her years of experience back in the UK. Sarah has been in South Africa/Morning Star for 8 years now and, to our great delight, has just been granted a further 3 years volunteer visa. Sarah generally teaches the Grade 3 pupils and English to some of the children in Grade 2.

A big thank you to Ms Ellen Molibeli, a retired teacher from Thabong, who comes in 2 mornings per week to help Sarah's class with their Sesotho syllabus.

Experienced educators, Roseline Moshone and Evelyn Tshabalala continue to teach our Grade 1 & 2's/Special Class respectively. The good rapport and loving relationships that exist between them and their pupils is very special and it's always a joy to see them interacting with them at playtime and in the afternoons.

The afternoon Arts & Crafts sessions are very popular with the children and, amidst all the other activities over the past year, Relebohile Mokhena has become proficient with the sewing machine, a few of our pupils have learnt to knit, the older boys have done some carpentry and both the Welkom & Kutlwanong Grade R pupils have made blankets for themselves. A big thank you to Ron & Elissa Gould, Paddy Winson and Cary Dodds for assisting us so faithfully.

Our 2 Reception Class teachers do an excellent job getting their little pupils ready for their formal education and for 'big' school. Portia Khobi has been our Grade R teacher in Welkom since its inception and her passion and love for the children in her care has never waned over the years. Motshidisi Karreebos is a valued teaching assistant in this class and is always willing to help where she can.

Zanele Khambule is back in the Grade R Class at our Kutlwanong Centre after being on maternity leave for part of 2017. She does an excellent job with her 12 little pupils as well.

Both pre-school classes are running well and enjoy the excellent oversight of Sylvia Ntholeng in Welkom and Emily Mahlangu in Kutlwanong. Sylvia has close to 40 children in her class but is ably assisted by Julia Klip & Melanie Cornelissen.

Our well-established toddler groups (Little Stars) for our 2-3-year olds at both Centres are ever a joy to behold! Selloane Maseloa in Welkom and Merriam Moreboli in Kutlwanong continue to stimulate and interact with those in their care in ways they would never have otherwise enjoyed. Selloane has 2 very challenging little ones in her class this year but is coping admirably. She enjoys the assistance of staff member, Joyce Monyane and now, temporarily, that of Maki Mosimane as well.

Even though fewer babies are born with HIV/AIDS since receiving anti-retroviral drugs in utero, we are finding that quite a few 'slip through the cracks' anyway. Almost half of the new intake of children at our Welkom Centre in January 2018 were born with the disease and 3 of the 4 babies presently at our Welkom Centre are HIV positive as well. Child-Care Worker, Esther Matsaneng, is tasked with looking after our little ones this year and it's good to know they are in such capable hands.

A big thank you to all my staff involved in the care and education of our children. We are confident of the fact that we are giving our little ones a good start to life and ensuring that they begin their formal school careers better equipped than most other little children attending crèches and pre-schools in Matjhabeng region of the Free State.

### **KUTLWANONG MORNING STAR CENTRE:**

Our Kutlwanong Centre has now been in existence for almost 12 years. Ever since October 2006 many needy little children from this Township have enjoyed the benefits of the services Morning Star provides and that, right on their doorstep. Anna Matiyase, the Manager there, has been overseeing Kutlwanong Morning Star for the past 4 years and has proved herself very capable indeed. Each week our professional nurse visits Kutlwanong to conduct in-service staff training and to check on the children. In addition to this, a Management staff member visits the Centre each Thursday and Pastor Revival and Shedreck Hollane, lead staff devotions there several times per week as well.

Our Gardener, Shedreck Hollane, continues to oversee the Kutlwanong gardens and works there twice a week. Our Kutlwanong grounds have never looked better! We are so proud of Shedreck. Not only is he a hard worker and a valued staff member, but he is busy finishing his schooling/studying for matric right now and has also recently passed his driver's licence and bought himself a bakkie – for cash. What an achievement that is, in a culture where saving for something over an extended period of time is so seldom seen these days. We applaud you, Shedreck!

### **TRANSPORT:**

Transporting our children back and forth each weekday remains a massive operation and fuel alone costs us over R30, 000.00 per month. Maintaining 8 vehicles, keeping tabs on licencing deadlines, service plans, our children's safety etc. is almost a fulltime job but, between Operations Manager, Elizabeth vd Westhuizen, and our 4 drivers Tokelo, Vusi, Johannes and Tshepiso, everything happens on schedule and our vehicles continue to run smoothly. A big thank you to all our drivers for always being willing to work longer hours if need be and for going the extra mile. Your commitment to Morning Star is deeply appreciated. And thank you, our Gracious God, for keeping our children and staff members safe on the roads for the past 18 ½ years.

### **OUR OTHER REGULAR ACTIVITIES:**

- Weekly In-Service Training for our Child Care Workers takes place each week both at our Welkom and Kutlwanong Centres.
- Monthly Support Group Meetings – geared towards our children's parents/ carers – are held once a month in both Thabong and Kutlwanong Townships. These meetings are chaired by our professional nurse, Sr. Ntaoleng Lebeko, and are generally well supported. A prerequisite to receiving one of Morning Star's monthly food parcels is that an adult family member attend the monthly Support Group Meetings. Special thanks go to Pastor Revival Hlongwane for faithfully sharing the Gospel with these audiences each month. Only the Gospel can change the state of individual hearts and of our Nation as a whole.
- Food parcels go out to only 60 of our most needy families each month at the moment – and just to those whose monthly income is R400.00 or less. (This is only half the number who received food assistance in 2017). We're conscious of the fact that there are many others on our Register who desperately need

help as well but, due to the drop in our monthly income from abroad, we've been forced to take this decision in the meantime.

A big thank you to our local Woolworths Store for keeping Morning Star on as one of their beneficiary charities year-on-year. Their expired food donations each Friday are a huge boost and, in addition to complimenting what we cook for our current children each day, they also enable us to give out healthy food to our most vulnerable families every weekend as well.

As ever, we're totally dependent upon God, the generosity of the community and our faithful overseas supporters, for continuing to meet this vital, ongoing need.

- Staff devotions continue to take place each morning from 7.45 – 8.30am and remain an important part of our daily schedule. Over the past year we've enjoyed the input of Joshua Bolaji, Revival Hlongwane, Phil Carmichael, Kyle Klemcke, Matowane (Frans) Radebe, Louis O' Tool and staff members Shedreck & Tebogo Mokoko, especially when we need stand-in replacements at the last minute. We are a privileged staff to have benefitted from sound Biblical teaching all these years and, I fear, don't stop often enough to thank God for this benefit.
- Our second-hand clothing shop continues to boost our coffers and has brought in about R11, 500.00 over the past 12 months. We always welcome donations of second-hand clothes at Morning Star – all sizes and all ages – so please share our need with your families and friends. A big thank you to Louise Brady for faithfully heading up this endeavour for another year and Maki Mosimane for her assistance. Sadly, long-time supporter, Alison Geleta, died during the course of the past year.
- Our Teens Meetings continue to take place every 3 month and the average attendance is about 75 strong. There would be even more attending if it wasn't for the fact that secondary schools in the Townships have authorized compulsive extra classes over weekends.

Supporting our teenagers has increased significantly over the past few years as the ones who survived early childhood and flourished in our care when we first opened, are now in this age category and getting to the end of their school careers. They have many needs besides still suffering from the stigma associated with their disease. Not only do they have to come to terms with the

fact that HIV/AIDS and anti-retroviral drugs are ‘for life’, that their parents have already died from AIDS-related conditions, that the time is approaching when they’ll have to share their statuses with a future marriage partner, but they have the usual teenage challenges to deal with too. And what’s so special about getting them together regularly is that each teen knows that everyone else attending was born with the HIV/AIDS virus as well and that Morning Star is a safe place to unburden, share their concerns and fears and come to terms with their conditions. They know that they are accepted and loved in our midst.

Our teens love our meetings, more so if there’s a special treat planned and eagerly engage in the Bible Studies as well. Thank you, Pastor Revival, for your willingness to come alongside our youngsters and lead the morning devotions at each of their meetings.

- The Young Adults Bible Study held once per month has gone from strength to strength since Pastors Joshua and Revival took it on from September 2017. This group of older teens is such an encouragement to us, as they’re the ones who are endeavouring to live their lives according to God’s Word. There might only be 20-30 of them all-told, at the moment, but we’re hopeful that this number will increase going forward as more of our teenagers discover how meaningful these sessions are and how beneficial it is to have pastors who are able to address all their questions about life.
- For the past 2 years a small group of these young people have attended the Welkom Baptist Church’s Annual Youth Camp as well. This has become a highlight for them and a great talking point. We trust we’ll be invited again this year and that this event will become a permanent fixture on our annual calendar going forward.
- Morning Star’s annual sea trips remain a firm highlight each year. Thus far 16 trips have been undertaken and 280 of our teenagers have been to Durban, swum in the Indian Ocean and visited uShaka Marine World. The couple who have faithfully sponsored this event year-on-year will never know how meaningful these trips are and how much joy they’ve brought to all who have benefitted over the years.
- Our Annual Gogos’ Christmas Party remains a highlight in our grandmothers’ lives and I think they start to plan what to wear months in advance! They

come dressed in their very best and enthusiastically participate in all that's on offer. This function always takes place on the last Saturday in November – so that it's easy for them to remember – and is geared for grandmothers who are our children's primary carer at home. This function affords us the opportunity to thank and spoil them a little for the unexpected roles they play in their grandchildren's lives once parents have died from AIDS-related symptoms.

- We continue to host an annual vegetable-growing competition each year, ever trusting that the entrants will not only enter the competition for the prize-money incentive but will continue to grow vegetables for their family's consumption every year. That's really the idea – to instil in our families the mind-set that they don't have to go hungry if only they keep on growing their own food. We've always told them that planting seed on a piece of ground the size of a standard door is all they need to ensure their family enjoys fresh vegetables on an ongoing basis.

The winner of the R1000.00 first prize for the 2017/2018 competition was Puseletso Xume. We remain indebted to the Welkom Rotary Club for its monetary assistance in this endeavour each year.

### **FUNDRAISING:**

Fundraising for Morning Star continues to be a huge challenge as over R400, 000.00 per month is needed to keep our Organization running efficiently. Almost all of our income comes from the United Kingdom these days and Joan's annual fundraising trips remain the main source.

However, in recent months, it has become apparent that we can no longer rely on my annual UK fundraising trips to sustain Morning Star going forward. I am getting older, our sponsors are generally aged too and our operational needs are exceeding our income at present. This is mainly due to the fact that Charities Aid Foundation in the UK (CAF) closed our account with them at the end of February 2018 and about 50 former sponsors have not transferred their giving to one or the other available sources.

My 2018 UK trip took place in May this year and was a great success. Once again, Glenys Barham drove me around England and all-in-all, 1, 500 miles were covered in just over 2 weeks. My programme was far less strenuous this year and only solidly supportive churches were visited. But the response to my presentations was very generous and 29 of the 30 children seeking support were sponsored out.

What Morning Star would do without the compassionate support of our friends in the United Kingdom I don't know. I thank God for them all and for their sacrificial giving to the children we serve.

Local monetary funding and assistance 'in kind' is never frowned upon and we remain indebted to the Free State Department of Public Works for our premises and cost-free utilities at Kopano Complex over the past 18 ½ years. We were last served an eviction notice about 5 years ago and are starting to wonder if the next will come after the 2019 General Elections.

### **UPDATE OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS OVER PAST 2 YEARS:**

#### **KOWIE STREET PREMISES:**

Our new premises in Kowie Street are still being utilized as 4 flats. We have tenants in all but one flat at present, with Pastor Revival Hlongwane and family occupying Flat No. 3 and acting as caretaker-on-site as well. Maintaining the property and keeping it functional and the gardens neat has been costly and we're trusting that, over the next 12 months, things will settle down and the major repairs will be behind us.

#### **RESOURCE CENTRE:**

UNWG (United Nations Women's Guild), Switzerland, funded this cause in 2016/2017 and our fully functional Resource Centre (doubling up as Sarah Wilkins' classroom as well) has been in operation ever since. Not only do our school children benefit from the 6 computers donated, but our teenagers come and do their school projects and research on them in the afternoons, and our staff utilize them as well. Chantell Erasmus, my PA, oversees the basic Computer Training Course our staff are enjoying each week and, once our teachers are proficient enough, the course will be extended to any other staff member wanting to learn this skill.

#### **TELKOM FOUNDATION GRANT:**

The Telkom Foundation awarded Morning Star a R100, 000.00 grant at the beginning of 2018. We are still in the process of purchasing all the electronic equipment this grant has afforded us and, thus far, have acquired 5 new computers and 3 smart television sets. We're hoping to upgrade our PABX system, replace our photocopier and upgrade our internet connections over the next few months with the balance of the grant.

#### **SKILLS DEVELOPMENT TRAINING FOR OUR YOUNG ADULTS:**

Over the past few years we've been conscious of the fact that many of our teenagers, because of the effect of the HIV/AIDS virus on their brain development in early



childhood, will never finish their schooling successfully or have the qualifications necessary for tertiary education. What do we do about this huge problem with our limited resources and skills?

What we have done, thus far, is teach 4 of our older teenage girls to bake our Morning Star cakes (with others to follow suit every 6 months or so), put 2 young ladies onto the Pelo & Hart Sewing Project to learn to sew, and sent our first 2 cake-bakers to Thabiso Skills Development on a 10 week catering course (with others to follow). It is our intention to give them each their own food/cake mixer or sewing machine in due course, so that they can start their own little businesses from their Township homes, when the time comes. This may all seem like a drop in the ocean ..... but at least it's a start.

### **MORNING STAR VOLUNTEERS:**

Morning Star continues to enjoy the input of both local and overseas volunteers each year.

Our own mothers/guardians serve as local volunteers and assist in the kitchen with the preparation of meals/washing of dishes and with the cleaning of our premises and windows. Although there's a fairly high degree of absenteeism and lack of commitment amongst them, we do have several who are faithful and upon whom we can rely.

Our spate of overseas volunteers over the past 12 months include:

- Judie Turner, Bob & Ellen Iseman, Dave & Chris Pomery & Family and Charmaine Wheatley and fellow Rotarians from Australia - September 2017
- Marilyn Tonge – Cornerstone Baptist Church in Bolton, UK – Nov/Dec 2017
- John & Marion MacDonald – Tenterden Baptist in Kent – March/April 2018
- Team of 10 from Tenterden Baptist in Kent, England – April 2018
- Luke Summers – Manor Park Evangelical in Worcester, UK – May 2018
- Lydia Sourbutts – Wheelock Heath Baptist in Cheshire, UK – June 2018

Our overseas volunteers are ever a joy in our midst and are generally a true example of Christian love and compassion. We are especially grateful to the Tenterden team, including John & Marion MacDonald, for all the work they did at our Kutlwanong Centre and in the Welkom kitchen recently. Marion MacDonald and her sewing

skills were utilized to the full as well and Elizabeth vd Westhuizen had her hand at work making 40 new mattress covers for our children and new aprons for all the staff, before she even had time to catch her breath! Marion also fixed our children's parachute and recovered our door stoppers, all within the course of 3 weeks.

### **MANAGEMENT/STAFF/BOARD:**

My heartfelt thanks go to my Management Team – Elizabeth, Liza and Sarah for their unwavering support of Morning Star over the past year. It's my great joy to work with you all and to be on the receiving end of your individual strengths and skills. We've welcomed Sr. Lebeko to the Management Team this year too and she's slowly finding her feet and starting to understand the important role she plays here. A big thank you to Chantell Erasmus, my PA, and Shiwe Nkuna, our Auxillary Social Worker, for their assistance and for relieving me of much of the load I would otherwise have carried alone. And Tebogo Makoko, you're the perfect match in the Accounts Office and compliment Liza so well. Thank you.

And what would we do without Lineo Moroane, our Receptionist. She's proficient in all she does and such a wonderful support to Elizabeth in the front office.

Thank you Lindsay and Mapulane for controlling the clothing cupboards so well and stretching the little we have, at times, to benefit the maximum number of children.

And then we have our excellent kitchen personnel, Camilla, Maria & Nomvula who cook up a storm each day and produce the delicious meals our little ones have come to love and appreciate. Once our children have left our daily care, what we hear most when they come for a visit is how much they miss the food!

Papiki, Stephen, Petrus, Shedreck & John – the best gardeners in Matjhabeng! Thank you for your hard work and for ensuring our Welkom, Kutlwanong and Kowie Street grounds are kept neat and tidy. Our vegetable gardens are a picture of productivity and we are absolutely delighted with all that's produced for our children's consumption each week.

A big thank you, too, to Ron & Elissa Gould who assist in the vegetable gardens once a week. They are both in their 70s but have the energy and stamina of people half their age!

Last but not least – the staff who, in my opinion, have the most important jobs of all at Morning Star and without whom we couldn't function – our faithful launderer, Lorato, cleaners, Bronica and Evelyn and Tricia Dargie, our Correspondence Secretary. Thank you for all you do at Morning Star each and every day – all under the watchful eye of Elizabeth vd Westhuizen. Thank you, Trish, for keeping our sponsors updated and happy and well supplied with letters and photographs from the children they support.

I'd like to express my deep appreciation to our Board of Governors for their ongoing support of Morning Star over the past 12 months as well. Words could never convey how deeply each of you is valued and appreciated. My special thanks go to our chairman, Joshua Bolaji and Treasurer, Kevin Lombard, who can be called upon at any time for advice and counsel.

Many thanks, too, to my husband Ron for all he does for Morning Star behind the scenes. Just this month he collected our E-Pap from the depot in Gauteng, fetched a suitcase inbound from Australia, met Lydia Sourbutts, our UK volunteer, at OR Tambo Airport and brought her to Welkom and inspected our faulty pepper gas alarm system at our Kutlwanong Centre last weekend.

And, as ever, may our Gracious God be praised for meeting our every need at Morning Star for another year. At every turn He proves Himself faithful. Despite the drop in our income recently, our children are still well fed, we have enough money to run our 8 vehicles each day and our 40-strong personnel get their salaries at the end of every month.

For me, what an awesome privilege to serve Christ here and to be able to reach out and minister to the orphans and the widows in our community, year-on-year. 2,500 children have passed through our Morning Star Centres since our inception in January 2000 and each one was special and sent to us by God Almighty to love and minister to, unconditionally. It's always hard to lose them to death but to have loved them is always worth the pain of losing them. As C.S. Lewis says in his book 'The Four Loves:

*"To love at all is to be vulnerable. Love anything and your heart will be wrung and possibly broken. If you want to make sure of keeping it intact you must give it to no one, not even an animal. Wrap it carefully round with hobbies and little luxuries; avoid all entanglements. Lock it up safe in the casket or coffin of your selfishness. But in that casket, safe, dark, motionless, airless, it will change. It will not be broken; it will become unbreakable, impenetrable, irredeemable. To love is to be vulnerable."*

My prayer, as ever, is that Christ will remain central to all this Organisation stands for and that we, His servants, will ever reflect His glory in all we do and say.