



Morning Star

Children's Centre

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THE 25TH ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

19th JULY 2024

GENERAL MANAGERS REPORT

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:

- 122 children aged 2 – 10 years attend our two centres in Welkom & Kutlwanong Township each weekday.
- 455 of our children are in primary and secondary schools in Matjhabeng.
- 32 of our 121 current children are living with HIV/AIDS. (26%)
- 87 of our 243 primary school children are living with HIV/AIDS (40%)
- 197 of our 215 teens/young adults are living with HIV/AIDS. (92%)
- 324 of our children have died since our inception in January 2000.
- 3 children have died since our last AGM in 2023.
- 28 children are currently on our waiting list.

STAFF MOVEMENTS OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS.

- General Manager, Albert Duvenhage, left our employ in July 2023 and was replaced by John Burrows in August 2023.
- Shedreck Hollane (previously one of our gardeners) became our 2nd Youth Care Worker in Kutlwanong Township in September 2023.
- Professional nurse, Pulane Leeuw, retired and left our employ in November 2023. She was replaced by Sr Mamorena Lekhalanyane in January 2024
- Kutlwanong Driver, Vusi Sithole, semi-retired in December 2023. He's been working part-time for Morning Star since the beginning of this year.
- Zwide Khumalo became our 3rd Youth Care Worker in Hani Park/Bronville in January 2024.
- Selloane Maseloa (assistant pre-school teacher in Welkom) left our employ at the end of January 2024. Joyce Monyane was subsequently moved from the kitchen to the pre-school to

take her place and Dieketseng Thabane, one of our children's mother's, replaced Joyce in the Welkom kitchen.

- General Manager, John Burrows, left our employ at the end of February 2024. Elizabeth vd Westhuizen, Operations Manager, has stepped up as Acting General Manager until a suitable replacement is found. PA, Chantell Erasmus, has taken on some of the operation manager's duties in the interim.

IN GENERAL:

All-in-all, 2023 was a financially stable year for Morning Star. Our Gracious God blessed us abundantly through our many friends in the United Kingdom, so much so, that a Christmas Card from Stewardship (one of the two avenues used to channel funds to us from England/Wales) mentioned that giving through them to our organization had increased by 19% in 2023. Awesome news indeed!

Our biggest challenge in 2023 was, thus, not financial but human resource-related, in that we lost two general managers in the space of 7 months - Albert Duvenhage in July and John Burrows, who replaced him, in February 2024. On top of this, former general manager, Joan Adams, together with her husband, Ron, relocated to Johannesburg in January this year.

Joan has not left Morning Star in the lurch though; she is still handling all the correspondence, as well as matters relating to our child sponsorship programme and visits Welkom for a week, each month.

On a brighter note, and due to targeted funding from individual supporters in the UK, we were able to employ two additional youth care workers in the 2023 financial year: Shedreck Hollane (Kutlwanong) in September and Zwide Khumalo (Hani Park & Bronville) in February 2024. They join Revival Hlongwane (Thabong & Welkom) in the immense task of visiting, counselling and encouraging all our Morning Star teenagers and young adults and pointing them to Christ and to Biblically-sound churches in Matjhabeng.

Our children 13 years and over now comprise more than half of the total number on our register and have become our most vulnerable group. 92% of them were born and are living with HIV/AIDS and are having to deal with the symptoms, the side-effects of anti-retroviral drugs and the stigma associated with the disease on a day-to-day basis. Our burning desire remains to see all of them thriving in adulthood, living Christ-centred lives and able to stand on their own two feet.

With this in view a more deliberate approach to those of our young adults in need of skills training was instituted at Morning Star last July. In essence, they are required to volunteer at Morning Star for 3 months prior to starting their respective 10-week courses (carpentry, plumbing, welding, electrical, catering etc.) at Thabiso Skills Development Centre. Upon successful completion, we will try and find them jobs or work experience in their chosen fields. Funding for courses at Thabiso Skills

Development Centre is being covered by two UK couples for an initial period of 3 years. Their assistance in this regard will be reviewed thereafter.

Some of the highlights of 2023/2024 include the following:

UK friend and long-term supporter, Linda Gardiner and her professional film-making friend, Isabella Astengo, visited Welkom and Morning Star for a week in February, to make us a film/video. It was a totally amazing experience having Isabella in our midst. God has brought many visitors to Morning Star over the years but none as unique as this lady filmmaker from Italy. Equipped with an enormous camera, microphone and other accessories, she began to randomly take footage of anything and everything that moved at Morning Star. She would pop up in all sorts of places and times, filming whatever was happening, whether good, significant or just plain boring. The end result, received a few months later, was a superb film about Morning Star. How Isabella and her editor managed to condense 5 hours of solid footage into a 12 minute video entitled "A Day in the Life of Morning Star" we'll never know. In just 12 minutes they encapsulated the essence of Morning Star on a daily basis and transformed it into a professional film, worthy of the big screen. We'll definitely be using it as a promotional tool for many a year to come.

Our annual sea trip to Durban and the south coast of Kwa Zulu Natal took place from 21st – 25th February last year. 30 teenagers, generally around 15 years of age, were selected, bringing the total number of Morning Star children to have benefitted from this once-in-a-lifetime-experience to 390. How amazing is that! Not only did they have plenty of time to enjoy the sea and the beach, but they also got to visit uShaka Marine World and stay at the Kinderstrand Children's Resort in Port Edward. Our annual sea trips are a highlight on the Morning Star calendar and are something all our teenagers look forward to each year. A big thank you to the UK couple who have been funding these trips for the past 20 years. Without their committed, faithful assistance, there wouldn't be an annual sea trip at all. A further £5000.00 has recently been deposited into our bank account for our 2025 trip, God willing.

In April Joshua and Joan travelled to the UK for the annual fundraising trip. Many miles were covered as we crisscrossed the length and breadth of beautiful England, all done from the comfort of the luxurious car loaned to us for the duration of the trip. It was Joshua's first full Morning Star trip and between us we shared 27 presentations to different audiences over our 4 weeks of travelling. I must add that Joshua brought an added dimension to the talks and was very well received wherever we went. We remain grateful to Peter and Glenys Barham for putting the PowerPoint Presentation together again and for coordinating the itinerary so well.

May saw the arrival of two lovely, young volunteers from England – Kizzy Angel and Beth Atlee. It's wonderful having overseas volunteers at Morning Star again; we so missed this blessing during the Covid era. Not only do they always interact with our children at a personal level and invest in the

maintenance of our facilities, but they also share their talents and skills with us and enrich our lives in umpteen ways.

Our annual Holiday Club for our 10 – 13-year-olds took place from 27th – 30th June. This club was initiated in 2022 to address the issue of the alarming number of children in South Africa who are falling pregnant and being raped each day. We're hoping to reach our children before they become sexually active and want to give them the skills needed to spot the signs of sexual grooming/sexual predators. The theme of each annual event is based on Scripture and features a Gospel message and handcrafts relating to the theme as well.

Two things stand out in July last year: 29 of our children came down with mumps and the Morning Star board agreed to sell our Kowie Street property. Ongoing structural problems and agreeing that Morning Star would never relocate there, pushed the board to deciding that we needed to put the property on the market. Two firm offers were subsequently received, and duly cancelled due to discovering that the property needed to be rezoned – from educational to residential – before a bank bond could be applied for. The rezoning process has proved to be a lengthy affair as the municipality only sits 4 times a year to discuss the issue. On top of this, our municipal offices were closed for the first 3 months of 2024, due to striking and stay-aways of staff. Thankfully, the rezoning process is now underway and should be completed by the beginning of September 2024, God willing.

OUR OTHER REGULAR ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:

- Weekly in-service training for our child-care workers, at both our Welkom and Kutlwanong centres. New professional nurse, Sr Mamorena Lekhalanyane, has wondrously revived these meetings and made them meaningful for each and every staff member who attends. She has also instituted a monthly meeting for our male staff as there are many issues pertinent to them as well.
- Monthly Support Group Meetings for our children's parents and carers in both Thabong and Kutlwanong Townships. Attendance has soared since Sr Mamorena began leading these meetings at the start of 2024 as well.
- Staff devotions between 8:00 - 8:30am, four times a week. A big thank you to the various men who have faithfully preached God's Word over the past twelve months - Joshua Bolaji; Revival Hlongwane, Zwide Khumalo, Shedreck Hollane, Randy Teachout, Louis O' Tool and George Van der Westhuizen.
- Quarterly Teens' Meetings for our teens between 13 – 18 years of age. These meetings are solely for our HIV positive children so that they can have a safe and empathetic space to share their struggles and to be encouraged by one another.
- We also have a monthly Bible Study for our teenagers/young adults and these meetings are open to all who wish to attend. All three youth care workers are now involved with our monthly

Bible studies and it's encouraging to see an increase in attendance over the past months. A big thank you to Pastors Revival Hlongwane and Zwide Khumalo and Mr. Shedreck Hollane, for going the extra mile with our young adults and for faithfully serving them in many and varied ways.

FOOD PARCELS:

Our monthly food parcels go out to all families who receive less than R1000.00 income per month. We have seen a massive increase in need since the Covid era and are finding that more and more of our families are struggling to survive. In February 2023 we were giving out 115 food parcels per month. This increased to 135 in August last year and is currently standing at 150 per month. We reassess our food parcel list each new year but, as some families are taken off the list, others are added because of their huge need. Thankfully we are still partnering with Food Forward, a company that distributes food to NPO's across South Africa. This helps a lot, and especially since we severed our ties with Woolworths as a result of their LGBTQ stance last October. Morning Star, being unashamedly a Christian organization, meant that we had to distance ourselves from the stance they'd taken and stop receiving their weekly assistance of perishable foodstuffs. It's been a huge loss but we've moved on and are trusting God to supply our needs.

MANAGEMENT & STAFF:

A big thank you to our Morning Star management team for the unity we've enjoyed over the past year and for your input in your field of expertise. Meetings continue bi-weekly and are led by the general manager. Thank you, Elizabeth, for taking over this role in the interim and a big thank you to PA Chantell Erasmus, who diligently types up the minutes each time.

Morning Star is truly blessed with wonderful diversity and a great team of staff who work hard in their respective departments. Without each of you coming to Morning Star every day to perform your respective duties, we could not continue to serve our children and the community as well as we do. A big thank you to all our teachers and teaching assistants for a job well done and a special word of thanks to the HOD of education, and long-term UK volunteer, Sarah Wilkins, who, for the past 14 years, has tirelessly served our children, enriched and encouraged our teaching staff and brought joy and self-assurance to all those who have passed through her hands and realm of expertise.

The above, of course, includes our Kutlwanong team as well. To our teachers, cleaners, kitchen staff and driver there, a very big thank you too. It's always a pleasure to visit our Kutlwanong branch and to see everything ticking over as it should. You've been an excellent manager in Kutlwanong, Anna Matiyase, and we want to thank you for ably leading our satellite centre for another year.

What would we do without our Welkom kitchen staff and the cleaners, gardeners and drivers at our Kopano premises? Morning Star would cease to function without you all. This, of course, includes Mapulane our clothing matron, Esther who oversees the pantry and does the washing of the children's clothes and our efficient receptionist, Lineo Moroane, who has proved to be the best receptionist Morning Star has ever had! A special mention must be made of our dear Rachel who bathes our little ones each day and who, uncomplainingly, cleans all those who vomit and mess their pants. Thank you, Rachel, for always attending to your chores cheerfully, even singing as you go.

A big thank you to Chantell Erasmus, PA to both to the general manager and the Morning Star ambassador, for a job very well done. Thank you, too, for stepping up since John Burrows' resignation and ably assisting Elizabeth in many and varied ways. A special mention must be made of Shiwe Nkuna, our auxiliary social worker, who is our first point of call when a new child is admitted or when a family comes to us for help. Thank you, Shiwe, for your insightful understanding of both our children's problems and the intricacies of documentation issues and for so often being a step ahead in advocating what assistance is needed. Revival's support in many of these areas is vital too as he now has a wealth of valuable contacts and a good understanding of anything pertaining to government, be it Home Affairs, Social Development or SASSA etc.

And finally, a big thank you to our two ladies in the finance office, Rose Kambula and Lorato Rapoleng, who are tasked with handling Morning Star's money matters. This demanding job requires dedication, commitment and attention to detail and, as a result, Rose & Lorato are often required to stay on after-hours or come in during the school holidays. The two of you going the extra mile is not taken for granted.

Being a part of Morning Star is both challenging and rewarding. Each day brings its own crises and problems and very often important decisions must be taken instantaneously. We have good days and not so good days, joyous days and sad days but when we stop and consider all things, we know that there's nowhere else we'd rather be than serving God, our children and each other than at Morning Star Children's Centre.

MORNING STAR BOARD OF GOVERNORS:

We truly believe that our Morning Star board is the best in town! All 7 members bring something vital to the table at each meeting and their joint input is always insightful and pertinent to the discussions at hand. One thing for sure, our meetings are never boring; in fact, they're enjoyable and that says something, don't you think? Thank you for your willingness to join the board, Naledi Marumo, and for agreeing to take over the role of treasurer from January 2024. And thank you, Kevin Lombard, for your years of service as treasurer. We've truly appreciated your input and involvement with our finances and don't take for granted the many times you've had to visit our premises in person to sort out a problem. A special word of thanks to board chairman, Joshua Bolaji, for always going the extra

mile and for your willingness to be a 'sounding board' whenever a pressing issue needs to be thought through or discussed.

To conclude, it's deeply humbling when I stop and consider how much God has blessed Morning Star over the past 24½ years. From our humble beginnings in January 2000, to the diversity of services we offer today, our Gracious Lord has faithfully guided and sustained us every step of the way. I give Him all the praise and honour due His Name.

“Great is Thy faithfulness, O God my Father,
There is no shadow of turning with Thee,
Thou changest not, Thy compassions, they fail not,
As Thou hast been, Thou forever shall be.
Great is Thy faithfulness, Great is Thy faithfulness,
Morning by morning new mercies I see
All I have needed Thy hand hath provided
Great is Thy faithfulness, Lord, unto me.”

“To Him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by His blood and made us a kingdom, priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (Revelation 1:5b)

Signed: _____

CHAIRMAN

Date: / /