



# Morning Star

## Children's Centre

Reg.No. 009-016 - NPO

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**15<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**  
**OF MORNING STAR CHILDREN'S CENTRE.**  
**13<sup>th</sup> JUNE 2014**  
**GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT**

**OUR MISSION STATEMENT**

To provide an interdisciplinary daily program of optimal care for HIV/AIDS and vulnerable children so that they can experience the very best quality of life possible in a Christian environment.

Our current statistics are:

- ✓ 106 children attend our Welkom Centre on a daily basis, 10 of whom are in our new Remedial Class and 21 in our little school.
- ✓ 38 children attend our Kutlwanong Morning Star Centre.
- ✓ 540 of our children are now in primary and secondary schools in the Matjhabeng Region.
- ✓ We have tested the blood of 2,380 children since our inception in the year 2000 (85 over past 12 months).
- ✓ 265 of our children have died since our inception in January 2000. (But only 5 over the past 12 months compared to up to 25+ per annum in our earlier years).
- ✓ Just over 2/3 (two thirds) of the children on our register now access anti-retroviral drugs.
- ✓ The number of children on our waiting list has dropped down to 13 (from over 100). This is attributed to the fact that the majority of unborn babies are now being born HIV negative because they're given ARV therapy whilst still in utero.

**STAFF MOVEMENTS OVER PAST 12 MONTHS:**

- Driver, Sam Mofokeng, retired at the end of 2013 and then, tragically, suffered a stroke at the beginning of March this year. He's busy recuperating at home now and slowly regaining movement in his right leg and arm. His 9 years of service to Morning Star (from March 2005) is deeply appreciated. Mr. Mpho Thamae has been employed in Sam's place and is proving a real asset to our Organization.
- Professional nurse, Pulane Leeuw, left our employ at the end of 2013 as well. She resigned in order to pursue a career in caring for the aged in her community, something she's had on her heart for many years. We were sad to lose her but appreciate the fact that we can call on her to stand-in for

absent staff members in an emergency.

Sr.Pulane has been replaced by Sr. Agnes Mokgatlhe. We trust she'll have many fruitful years of service in our midst as well.

- Sadly, former Kutlwanong Manager, Ms Holygaste Malunga died unexpectedly on 9th April 2014. Her death came as a shock to us all and when she was admitted to hospital on Monday 7<sup>th</sup> we little thought she'd be dead 2 days later and we'd never see her again. Holygate was appointed the manager of our Kutlwanong Centre at its inception in October 2006 and is sorely missed both there and within the Kutlwanong community as a whole. Staff member, Anna Matiyase, has been appointed manager in Holygate's place. Fortunately she'd been assistant manager there for several years already and so was our natural choice to transition to this position.
- Mr. Teboho Moloi has been moved from our finance office to take up the position of Receptionist this year and Vincent Nkhobo, pastor of the Kutlwanong Reformed Baptist Church, has returned to our employ and taken up his former job as Assistant Accountant once again. We are privileged, indeed, to have these 2 godly men in our midst and continue to seek God's guidance as how best to grow and utilize them in the future.
- Much to our delight, UK volunteers, Dave & Jan Isherwood, are with us for at least another year. Dave now transports children to and fro each day as well as tackling any and every general task at Morning Star. Jan is acting as PA to the general manager and, as such, has taken up her position in my office and relieving me of much of the pressure I've been under over the past few years. What Morning Star would do without this couple if they left us now I can't imagine! They have both become indispensable and deeply valued in our midst.
- Happily, Mrs. Tricia Dargie is now working at Morning Star fulltime and has moved into the post, Correspondence Secretary. Sadly, Mrs. Val Bekker was forced to relinquish this job in August 2013 due to increasing ill health and discomfort.
- Retired educator teacher, Roseline Moshone, was employed in February this year as our first Remedial Class teacher. She is the perfect person to have in this post and we're amazed at how God led her to us in our hour of need.
- Other staff members who left our employ in 2013 were carer, Elizabeth Ramakhale, and cleaner, Gladys Mens. Both were dismissed for stealing from our Organization.
- The final staff change is in the form of Catherine Joels. She joined our Welkom employ in April 2014 to replace carer, Julia Klip, who was transferred from Welkom to our Kutlwanong Centre after Holygate's death. Catherine is presently assisting in the kitchen, in the preparation and serving of our children's meals.

### **EDUCATION:**

The Morning Star School continues to operate efficiently under the able leadership of experienced educators, Sarah Wilkins and Dipuo Mahlangu. Dipuo is responsible for the Grade 1's & 2's and Sarah, those who are in Grade 3 upwards. Our present 21 pupils range in age from 7-14 years and are in Grades 1-3. Our oldest child, 14-year-old Papiki Mpesi, should be in high school already but is struggling with severe

health issues and learning problems. He's in Sarah's class but not even coping with Grade 3 work! Many thanks, Sarah and Dipuo, for your contribution to the educational side of Morning Star and for ensuring that your pupils get the best tuition possible.

We are delighted, indeed, to have experienced remedial teacher, Roseline Moshone, as educator of our new Special Needs Class. She has shown the utmost patience with her little pupils and rejoices in the slightest progress they make! This little class presently has 10 pupils in it, all of whom have moderate to severe learning barriers. At least half of them won't make much progress long-term ever! This, of course, means that we could have them in this class year-after-year/until they're old enough to leave school and go out into the world!! And what then?

Our 2 reception class teachers do an excellent job getting their little pupils ready for their formal education and 'big' school. Portia Khobi has 27 children in her class at the moment and Tshidi Mohapi in Kutlwanong, 12. Miss Nyakello Nkaki, one of the Morning Star teenagers who matriculated in 2013, has been Portia's classroom assistant since the beginning of this year and does a very good job supporting and assisting where she can.

Our Welkom and Kutlwanong pre-schools continue to enjoy the enthusiastic oversight of teachers Mamosa Rantso, Melanie Cornelissen and Mmasabata Tlhobo. It's always a joy to watch them in action and note the rapport they have with their classes. A special thank you to Ekunseitan Tolulope (Tolu for short) and Ntsoaki Sehlobo (our 2<sup>nd</sup> MS teen working with us this year) who assist in our Welkom pre-school each day, ensuring that all our children are kept busy and stimulated.

A further new development this year has been the setting up of our 2 'Little Star' toddler groups – in Welkom and Kutlwanong. With the diminishing need of providing for tiny babies these days, we took the step to remove our cots and transform our former baby rooms into bright, cheerful classrooms. These classrooms cater for our 2-3 year olds and each Centre has 10 little pupils to stimulate and keep entertained. Our toddlers are truly our liveliest group of children and all just love their new elevated status. A big thank you to Jan Isherwood for her assistance in setting up the toddler groups and for training/overseeing the designated staff members, Merriam Moroboli and Julia Klip, in their new roles.

### **MORNING STAR VOLUNTEERS:**

Morning Star continues to enjoy the input of both local and overseas volunteers. The former, our own mothers / guardians since the beginning of 2013, assist with the preparation of meals/washing of dishes and also with the cleaning of our premises/windows. Most are the mothers/guardians of the children on our register and have chosen to give Morning Star one day per week to say 'thank you' for the help they receive from us.

Our overseas volunteers are ever a joy in our midst. They're always willing to go the extra mile and tackle any task allotted to them and are a true example of Christian love and compassion.

Since our last AGM (and in addition to long-term volunteers, Sarah Wilkins (been with us for 4 years now) and Dave & Jan Isherwood, (into their 2<sup>nd</sup> year with us), we've enjoyed the assistance of:

- Sarah Stilwell – (Manor Park Evangelical Church, Worcester) August 2013
- Ryan Lynch (Church of the Good Shepherd, London) – August 2013
- Emma Keedwell (Horsecastle Chapel, Yatton) – September/October 2013
- Bill Muddyman & Linda Gardiner (Esher, Surrey) – January 2014

- John & Marion MacDonald (Tenterden Baptist Church, Kent) – February to May 2014.
- Aase & Gareth Wilkins, Sarah's mum and brother, arrived today and will be with us for the next week.

We have a string of overseas volunteers scheduled to be here between now and the end of 2014 as well. They are Hannah Heaps (arriving in 2 weeks' time and staying for 2 months), Tayo Oyeniya & Alice Relf, Sandra Rycroft & Eleri Milsom, John & Wendy Harris, Rachel Sheard & Kathryn Green, Laura Bellinger, Marylyn Tong & Jennifer Walker, Iris Barcroft & Ann Rogers and finishing off in November with Everton & Jeanette McLeod, the Isherwood's vicar from Trentham Parish, Stoke-on-Trent. Perhaps it's time to buy a house to accommodate them all?

### **TRANSPORT:**

The number of vehicles Morning Star owns after 15 years of service is mind boggling! And we could actually do with an extra one these days! From our 'borrowed', clapped-out old Peugeot station wagon used when we first opened in 2000 to the 4 Quantums, 2 Avanzas, Kia Picanto and bakkie (8 in all) on the road today just goes to show how God has blessed and prospered our ministry over the years! Thank you, Lord, for keeping our children and staff safe whilst in transit and thank you Jacob, Kgotso, Eric and Mpho for ever being prepared to 'go the extra mile', often after-hours, for Morning Star. Your commitment to our Organization is noted and deeply appreciated.

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

- Weekly In-Service Training for our Child Care Workers takes place early every Monday morning in Welkom and on Tuesdays in Kutlwanong.
- Monthly Support Group Meetings – geared towards our children's parents/ carers – take place in Thabong and Kutlwanong Townships each month. The above meetings are ably chaired by our professional nurse, Sr. Agnes Mokgathe, and have been well supported since we enforced attendance to guarantee delivery of monthly food parcels.
- Monthly food parcels go out to 105 families at present. At the end of 2013 our quota had risen to over 160 strong but our annual reassessment policy brought to light those who were 'riding on the bandwagon' and receiving assistance even though they were now accessing government grants/found employment. Our auxiliary social workers, Shiwe Nkuna and Holygate Malunga (until she died) also visited each home to gauge the level of poverty in each family and to ensure that our help touched the lives of the most vulnerable on our register. The suffering out in the Townships is immense and, as ever, we're totally dependent upon God, the generosity of the community and our faithful overseas supporters, for meeting this hugely important need.
- Early morning staff devotions continue 4 times per week from 8.15am – 9.00am. Thank you Joshua Bolaji, Vincent Nkgobo, Phil Carmichael, Louis O Tool, Revival Hlongwane, Frans Manaka and visiting pastors for another year of faithfully preaching God's Word in our midst. We are a privileged staff to have had the opportunity to come under sound Biblical teaching all these years and my prayer remains that every staff member will come to know Jesus as Saviour before they leave us one way or another.
- Our second-hand clothing shop remains a surprising source of regular income to Morning Star, even though it only opens once per week for a couple of hours. Some weeks up to R1, 000.00 is generated and over the past financial year a sum of R19, 034.00 boosted our coffers. Special thanks go to Jane Blane, Louise Brady, Alison Geleta and Dina de Abreu for their ongoing commitment to

this cause and for their willingness to keep sorting, marking and disposing of all our adult clothing donations.

- Our Teens Meetings for children 13 years and over are held every 3 months. Over 60 youngsters attend these functions these days and continue to enjoy the activities presented, the refreshments provided and the sound Biblical teaching given. Pastor Frans Manaka has faithfully shared the gospel with our teenagers over the years and we are grateful, indeed, for his commitment to this ministry.
- Just 2 months ago we started a Young Adults' Bible Study group at Morning Star. These monthly meetings held on a Saturday morning are open to all our teens 16 years/and in Grade 10 and above. A young man studying for the ministry, Lucas Stoltz, is presently leading these meetings and its wonderful what a positive impact his gleanings have already had on these young lives. Each of the 20+ teens presently attending will be given an English Bible at their meeting tomorrow, 14<sup>th</sup> June, and, before long will be able to navigate their way through all the Old and New Testament books and come to a deeper understanding of God's Word.
- Morning Star's annual sea trips remain a highlight each year. We started taking a group of our older children down to Durban in 2004 and 11 trips later, 154 youngsters have benefitted from this 'once-in-a-lifetime' experience. For the past 2 years we 've stayed at the Mercury Children's Holiday Home in Hibberdene, down the south coast of Kwa Zulu Natal, and have thoroughly enjoyed being waited on and not having to prepare our own meals and being right on the beach!
- Our annual Gogos' (Grandmothers') Christmas Party is always popular and well attended. This normally takes place the last Saturday in November and is especially aimed at grandmothers who are our children's primary carer at home. The aim of these functions is to thank our gogos for the unexpected roles they're forced to play in their grandchildren's lives once parents have died from HIV/ AIDS related symptoms.
- Our annual Vegetable-Growing Competition in the Townships remains an integral part of our yearly calendar as well. Roughly 30 participants set-off enthusiastically each August, when training is on offer but sadly, several loose interest along the way and give up. For those that persevere the reward is great and the R1000.00 1<sup>st</sup> prize is always an incentive to keep going. Anna Ramosebi, one of our mothers, continues to head-up this project and is adept now in assessing and photographing the gardens she visits every 2 months.  
We remain indebted to the Welkom Rotary Club and Mr Johan Strydom from Bevans for their monetary assistance and support each year.

### **KUTLWANONG CENTRE**

Our satellite centre in Kutlwanong Township had a knock recently, with the unexpected death of manager, Holy-gate Malunga on 9<sup>th</sup> April. Despite this loss though, it continues to operate efficiently with new manager, Anna Matiyase, in charge. What's amazed us about Kutlwanong Morning Star over the years is how well the staff adheres to routine, seldom deviating or shirking their responsibilities even though there's no constant management oversight present!

Our Welkom branch doesn't neglect them though. Elizabeth, Teacher Sarah and I take turns visiting the Centre each week, Agnes, our professional nurse, goes every Tuesday morning for in-service staff training and Pastor Vincent leads the morning devotions on Thursdays. All-in-all, our Kutlwanong Centre is a credit to our Organization and a beacon of light in that community. It's always a delight to visit there and note how well cared for and happy the children are.

The Kutlwanong Reformed Baptist Church continues to occupy these premises on Sundays and for their regular, weekly meetings as well. The church has been in operation for about 2 ½ years now and slowly but surely is gaining impetus in the community and attracting new folk to its services. Vincent Nkhobo, the pastor there, is proving such a blessing and is excited about the spiritual growth taking place within his congregation.

### **FUNDRAISING:**

Fundraising for Morning Star continues to be a huge challenge as about R320, 000.00 per month is needed to keep our Organization running efficiently. Close to 90% of our total income comes from the United Kingdom and Australia these days. This doesn't mean that we don't appreciate the assistance still provided by the Department of Social Development and, 'in kind' support from the Free State Department of Health/Public Works by way of our rent-free premises at the Kopano Complex in Welkom. We are grateful, indeed, for the partnership we've enjoyed with these 3 government departments and for the assistance we've received from them over the past 15 years.

Joan's annual fundraising trips to England/Wales, and less frequently to Australia, have ensured that we're able to maintain the services we've provided to our children and their families over the years and enabled us to reach out to additional HIV/AIDS and vulnerable children as well. Audiences/sponsors overseas are ever receptive to my presentations and updates and graciously support us in the purchasing of our Tshedisanang Women's Project's merchandise as well. I recently returned from my 2014 UK trip and spoke through my PowerPoint Presentation 24 times in 19 days. Over 17,000.00 pounds was banked as a direct result of this trip and 30 new little children sponsored out. Peter and Glenys Barham from Worcester continue to play a significant role in the pre-organizing of these annual trips. Peter willingly updates and designs the annual power-point presentation and Glenys coordinates the meetings, keeps in touch with the different churches/new venues and plans my route so that not too much criss-crossing across the country takes place. Glenys is really the most organized, efficient person I've ever met and no words can express my appreciation to her and Peter for their sustained support of Morning Star over the years and love shown to me since I met them 12 years ago.

### **TSHEDISANANG WOMEN'S PROJECT**

Our Tshedisanang Women's Project has had a better year. Financial figures show an increase in profits and far less dependency upon Morning Star itself. Production and quality control has improved, new skills have been learnt and, generally, the women are more motivated and positive about themselves and their output. Mrs. Ilze Weyers continues to run the Project part-time and, to assist with the oversight in her absence, we've employed Mrs. Jill de Bruin on a fulltime basis. Having Jill at Tshedisanang has taken a big load off both Elizabeth vd Westhuizen's and my shoulders as she's now the one to purchase and pay for new materials and package up all parcels for overseas posting. Tshedisanang's main sources of income stem from the sale of products on Joan's annual overseas trips and from Kingdom Academy's school uniform contract. A new line of merchandise is envisaged for 2015 with a greater emphasis on smaller, less time consuming articles instead of bulky big quillows and shopping bags.

### **BOARD OF GOVERNORS:**

I'd like to express my deep appreciation to the Morning Star Board for their marvellous support and joint contribution made to the smooth running of our Organization over the past 12 months. Each member comes with unique skills and can be called upon at any time for advice in their specific field of expertise. Sincere thanks, especially, to our chairman, Joshua Bolaji, treasurer/accountant, Kevin Lombard and labour consultant, John Pauw, for the many hours they've given to Morning Star since our last AGM. Words aren't enough to express how deeply each is valued and appreciated.

Board meetings continue to take place quarterly and are generally well attended. Tomorrow, 14<sup>th</sup> June, the Board meets for a Strategic Planning Workshop where Morning Star's future will be explored. This meeting is deemed necessary due to the fact that so few babies are being born with HIV/AIDS these days and,

should this trend continue, the services we presently render at Morning Star might very well become obsolete. It has, thus, become apparent that unless we change our direction and transition into an organization that addresses current identified needs, we may soon have to close down.

**MANAGEMENT AND STAFF:**

My heartfelt thanks go to my Management Team for their unwavering support of Morning Star and me over the past year. The close bond we enjoy is very special and each member's individual strengths and skills vital to the smooth running of our Organization. This was confirmed last month when I was in England and returned to find all was well and that Morning Star could function very ably without me being here.

2013 was not an easy year for the management team in many respects. Staff disunity and dismissals, theft in our ranks and having to install CCTV cameras to counteract the latter all contributed to the heartache and soul-searching each of us went through. But, we've come through it and, amazingly, are still passionate about the work God has called us to do.

Thank you, Elizabeth, for your grace and Christian witness at Morning Star. God raised up the perfect 'right-hand support' for me in you and I'm deeply thankful for the years that we've worked together here and been able to encourage and spur one another on!

Thanks to you too, Liza, for all your hard work in the financial office. It was a good move employing you in 2009 and I've thoroughly enjoyed working with you all these years. Thank you Sr. Agnes for your professionalism and rapport with the children and staff this year and Sarah, for the wonderful way you oversee the educational side of Morning Star and continue to support and stretch our teachers and pupils.

To the rest of the staff, a big thank you for loving our children unconditionally and for ensuring all our programmes run smoothly day-after-day. What we'd do without our 3 hardworking gardeners, our cleaners, the kitchen staff, child care workers, correspondence secretary, Tricia Dargie, matron Lindsay Leonard and lovely Shiwe Nkuna, my social auxiliary worker, I just don't know. You are a blessing to Morning Star and all very dear to my heart. What's particularly heart-warming this year is your renewed unity, your increased consideration of each other and the sheer joy you exude as you go about doing your daily chores.

A big thank you, too, to my husband Ron for all he does for Morning Star behind the scenes. From picking up overseas volunteers at the airport to collecting all and sundry in donations from all over Gauteng and, in particular, for being so patient with me, just know that I'm truly thankful.

And, as always, all praise and thanks to God Almighty for continuing to meet our every need and for ever showing us His glory, His power and His grace at Morning Star. It remains an awesome privilege to serve Him here and to reach out and minister to the poor and hopeless in this region and bring relief where possible. Work like ours is a constant reminder of how much we have to be thankful for and how fickle we are in our complaints against God and His dealings with each of us. Working here causes one to count one's blessings each and every day and forces one to acknowledge that there's always somebody else worse off than us!

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

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