



# ***Morning Star***

## **Children's Centre**

**Reg.No. 009-016 - NPO**

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### **THE 26<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**25<sup>th</sup> JULY 2025**

### **GENERAL MANAGER'S 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:

- 117 children aged 3-9 years attend our Welkom & Kutlwanong centres each weekday.
- 426 of our children are in primary and secondary schools in Matjhabeng.
- 23 of our 117 current children are living with HIV/AIDS. (19%)
- 235 of our 426 primary school children are living with HIV/AIDS (55%)
- 202 of our children 14 years and upwards of which 179 is positive. (88%)
- 330 of our children have died since our inception in January 2000.
- 2 children have died since our last AGM in 2024.
- 8 children are currently on our waiting list.

#### **STAFF MOVEMENTS OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS.**

- Revival Hlongwane was appointed as the new General Manager in November 2024. This comes after Elizabeth vd Westhuizen was acting General Manager from March – to the end of October 2024.
- Patricia Letseke was employed as our 3<sup>rd</sup> Pastoral Youth Care Worker in Welkom, Hani Park and Thabong in October 2024. She replaces Revival Hlongwane and will be responsible for visiting/counselling all our teenage girls/young adults. She brings in a special touch since she has unique abilities and knowledge in certain critical aspects.
- Vusi Sithole retired and stepped down as our Kutlwanong driver at the end of February 2025.
- Part-time driver, Johannes Wettes, retired at the end of 2024 and was replaced by Mr. Mpho Thamae in January 2025.

## **GENERAL:**

Our biggest challenge in 2024 was not financial but human resource-related, in that John Burrows, our previous general manager resigned suddenly in February last year. A replacement for him was needed urgently and Elizabeth vd Westhuizen (Operations Manager) was appointed as acting General Manager from the beginning of March. Elizabeth is a phenomenal lady and held the fort very well.

Joan Adams still plays a vital role at Morning Star as our Ambassador – handling all the fundraising, correspondence and the child sponsorship programme. She visits Welkom for a week, each month. We give thanks to God for continuing to grant her safety on the roads as she does her monthly traveling and wisdom as she ensures that Morning Star's mission and vision gains traction on a continual basis.

Donations from our UK supporters, enabled us to purchase two new vehicles in 2024 – a Toyota Quantum on the 12<sup>th</sup> of March 2024 and a Toyota Rumion on the 19<sup>th</sup> of March 2024. The purchase of these two vehicles enables us to fulfill our daily operations at Morning Star, such as transporting our children and clients as well as doing the necessary errands without any hindrance.

Our teenagers now comprise more than half of the total number on our register and have become our most vulnerable group. 88% of them were born and are living with HIV and are dealing with the symptoms, the side-effects of the ARVs and the stigma associated with the disease. Our burning desire remains to see all of them thriving in adulthood, living Christ-centered lives and being able to stand on their own two feet. Having three Youth Care Workers has enabled us to better serve them and cater for their varied needs. Each youth care worker conducts at least 5 visits per week and, in addition to forming relationships with those living in their areas of operation, also checks if they understand their condition/are taking their drugs as prescribed, provide counselling and emotional support, assist with homework where possible and ascertain which of them need to be on our skills training programme. Our skills programme requires them to volunteer at Morning Star for 3 months prior to starting their respective 10-week courses (carpentry, plumbing, welding, electricity, catering etc.) at Thabiso Skills Development Centre. Upon successful completion, we try to find them jobs or work experience in their chosen fields. Funding for courses at Thabiso Skills Development Centre is presently being covered by two couples in the UK. Their assistance is truly appreciated.

## **Some of the highlights of 2024/2025 include the following:**

Our annual Holiday Bible Club for our 10 – 13-year-olds took place from 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> June 2024. Paul Brunning from Grace Baptist Missions in the UK and Suzanne Bezundenhout from Emmanuel Baptist Church in Johannesburg got to be part of the first day of our holiday club. This club was initiated to address the alarming number of young 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. The 2024 theme was 'The Armour of God' and our key text was Ephesians 6:10-17.

From 20<sup>th</sup> -28<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 Alex (AJ) Johnstone and a team of eight (8) young people from Woodgreen Evangelical Church in England visited Morning Star. It was a blessing to have them. Two of the team, Joshua Fisher and Caitlyn Chapman, returned to South Africa in January 2025 to volunteer at Morning Star for a further 3 month period. We also had Tayo Oyeniyi, one of our Morning Star UK Support group members and from Bexley Heath Baptist Church, visiting us from 29<sup>th</sup> July to 6<sup>th</sup> August 2024. It was a pleasure to host her at Morning Star as well.

Professional film-maker and UK supporter, Jeremy Du Toit, visited Morning Star from 5<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> November 2024 to make us a new video. The video was to highlight our growing work with our teens and young adults and to capture the essence of the way we are moving in the future. He explored Welkom, Thabong, Hani Park and Kutlwanong, recording videos and doing interviews with our children, teens, young adults, staff and board members. He managed to compress his two weeks work to a 29 minute documentary that is both heart-touching and thought-provoking. You can now access this documentary on our Morning Star website. During Jeremy's visit, we were able to have a one day Bible Conference on the 9<sup>th</sup> of November 2024. This conference had 86 young people in attendance and the theme was 'How does one get saved'. Our prayer is that our teens/young adults come to know Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour.

From 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> October 2024 we were visited by Victor and Candice Thomas from the charity, Living Hope, in Fish Hoek. Victor is the CEO of Living Hope and he and Candice came to see Morning Star to explore us working with Living Hope or merging with them in the future.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of January 2025, Morning Star celebrated its 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. Our board chairman, Pastor Joshua Bolaji gave a message and our ambassador/founder, Mrs. Joan Adams, shared the background of how the Lord led her to establish this beautiful organization in the heart of the Lejweleputswa District. It was started out of deep compassion for the plight of the many children born and suffering from the disease, HIV/AIDS. All who attended this celebration enjoyed a good time of fellowship and delicious food.

Our annual sea trip to Durban/south coast of KwaZulu Natal took place from 2<sup>nd</sup> – 6<sup>h</sup> of April 2024. Thirty (30) teenagers, generally around 15 years of age, went on the trip, bringing the total number of Morning Star children to have benefited from this once-in-a-lifetime-experience to 420. 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.

In April 2024 Joshua Bolaji and Joan Adams travelled to the UK for the annual fundraising trip. The first two weeks of their travelling was done from the comfort of the vehicle loaned to them by UK supporter, Stephen Allmand-Smith. Another UK friend, Nicole Correia, accompanied Joan for the last week of the tour. All-in-all 20 presentations were conducted and 20 new children were sponsored out. We thank God for Joan and Joshua's sustained good health and for travelling mercies all the way.

In February 2025 one of our staff members was diagnosed with Tuberculosis (TB). All staff members/volunteers were subsequently tested to see if they had contracted TB too. Fortunately, only one other staff member and a volunteer tested positive and had to be put on treatment.

The rezoning process of our Kowie Street property is still underway. We are hoping that the matter will be finalized soon.

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

- Weekly in-service training for our child-care workers, at both our Welkom and Kutlwanong centres. Professional nurse, Sr Mamorena Lekhalanyane, has wondrously revived these meetings and made them meaningful for each and every staff member who attends.
- 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 Pastor Zwide Khumalo, Mrs. Patricia Letseke 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 the past financial year we were giving out up to 145 food parcels each month. Annual reassessments are conducted to determine which families can be taken off the list. Thankfully, we are still partnering with Food Forward, a company that distributes food to NPO's across South Africa.

### **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. A big thank you to my PA Chantell Erasmus, who diligently edits the minutes each time and ensures that they are filed and important reports submitted on 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 outgoing HOD of education, and long-term UK volunteer, Sarah Wilkins. For the past 15 years, she 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. Sarah will be retiring & returning to England at the end of the second school term in 2025. The above, of course, includes our Kutlwanong team as well. To our teachers, cleaners, kitchen staff and pastoral youth care worker/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, cleaners, gardeners and drivers? Morning Star would cease to function without you all. This, of course, includes Lineo, our receptionist, Mapulane the clothing matron and Esther who oversees the pantry and the laundry.

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. 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 for your faithful commitment to Morning Star, Shiwe.

And finally, a big thank you to the 2 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:**

Our Morning Star board must be one of the best in town. All members bring something vital to the table at each meeting and their joint input is always insightful and pertinent to the discussions at hand. A big thank you to our ambassador, Joan Adams for ensuring that the vision the Lord laid in her heart more than 25 years ago is always on traction. Thank you, Naledi Marumo, for your able assistance with our finances and for your willingness to assume the role of board treasurer. Thank you, Kevin Lombard, for your consultative role when important decisions need to be taken and for your willingness to assist us with our petty cash at Tempest Motors. The same applies to the two doctors on our board – we deeply value their input in medical matters and their willingness to treat our children free-of-charge. A special word of thanks to board chairman, Joshua Bolaji and vice-chairman, Johan Pauw, for their willingness to go the extra mile and for being 'sounding boards' 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 25½ 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.

"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: ..... / ..... / .....