

January 2017

Doing it with all our hearts

The great amounts of rain that has fallen the last month has caused the road from Gobabis to Windhoek transform into a joyous drive. Small, yellow flowers laying as a carpet on the meadows. As we were enjoying the scenery Gijssbertha thought of the Dutch proverb 'De bloemetjes buiten zetten...', which means doing your best for the occasion.

While in we are looking at these beautiful spathes, in awe, the meaning of the Dutch proverb's meaning was amplified; as bright, yellow flowers are dancing in the sun, so should we also work with all our hearts in God's presence, every day. Every task. Every conversation. To the best of our ability, with all our might. As the Moravian Mission cry rings "May the Lamb that was slain receive the reward for His suffering. For He is worthy!

What a privilege to stand in His service!

Filled with appreciation

Indeed overwhelming blessings we received for ourselves and the project Light for the Children. This in the form of emails (every time a surprise to hear from each of you), mail, clothing, toiletries, furniture, cutlery, school materials and the list goes on...THANK YOU SO MUCH! We had so much to give to people all around us – where the need is so great. Wonderful to see how gifts arrive at the exact right time. We are so thankful that God can use us as a channel of His love, in deed also.

We are thankful for each financial contribution, also to Light for the Children. Since our last letter we have received enough money for the project to keep running until May 2017! Our sincere thanks for every contribution!

The 1 of us ;)

It is with great thankfulness that we can write that both of us are healthy. The result of Gijssbertha's operation was positive and all the removed tissue was tested and results came back that it was healthy. We are experiencing showers of energy and courage for each task, meeting and conversation. A true blessing to work together in a team, every day☺!

The fact of life...

On 26 December we went to the hospital for the first time and a little girl, who was very thin, clearly uncared-for, caught our attention. Later the day, we returned. She was malnourished to great extend. After spending some time next to her bed, helping to feed her, we prayed for her and she fell asleep peacefully as we left.

Upon our arrival the next morning her bed was empty.

Death has paid it's visit and that precious girl passed just after we left the previous evening.

Both her parents were under the influence of alcohol when they approached us a week later as we were talking to another lady in the informal settlement. It became known that the woman who brought her to the hospital was the girlfriend of her father, but because she was not her child she decided not to feed her. Our hearts are crying for the many other heart-breaking stories that there still exist here where we are walking daily...

The following week a father, whom we were acquainted with passed on. Alcohol poisoning.

Now 4 young children stay behind and a mother who is also addicted to alcohol. Meantime, we were able to find schools for all of them of which the oldest 2, who were on the streets the past 3 years, were sent to a hostel outside Gobabis just yesterday. Away from an environment, which for them, with so many negative experiences.

A new year of school and sponsor children

The new school year commenced 11 January and what a chaos! A few books can be written about the first school week, but we'll save you, and us, that ;). All that we can say is that we are still busy finding outstanding sponsor kids, buying uniforms, getting report cards, visiting their homes, and a few other stuff. We're still learning to work the proper African way 😊.

If you would like to find out more about this part of our work and how you can be part of it, please contact us. Currently we have 40 kids on this programme and with your help we hope to have 55 kids by the end of this year.

Life!

At the beginning of December we met a little baby boy. The first time we saw him, he was sick, weak and very thin. His twin sister passed away 2 weeks earlier due to malnutrition and he was surely on the same track. Today, 2 months later, we are having a totally different boy, the same but different, a true toddler – busy and ready to learn new things. He, with the help of your generous donations, were able to get the right nutritious foods, by which he is growing healthy and strong. Every week it is a great joy to see the improvement he is making.

A great privilege indeed to testify of these shades of light in the midst of a community where the darkness is still so evident. This boy is a testimony of the fact that God is alive and has a unique plan for every Child's life!

Hospital visits

At each of our visits to the children's ward we are amazed at the extreme cases of pain, but also the miracles we are privileged to witness.

The amounts of malnourished babies who is admitted is shocking! In the near future, we hope to have a meeting with the sympathy care givers of the community and discuss this great need. Hopefully this will serve as a way by which we can proactively address the issue and save the lives of many more toddlers and infants.

Our 'Lighthouse' dream

Since our regular visits to the children's ward in the hospital we have dreamed further about a temporary home for Children. A place of safety where children, aged 0-15, can live while their circumstances are being investigated and sought for an ideal new home within their own or a similar community, which should be between 2 weeks and 3 months.

In the past week we initiated contact with the Ministries of Health, Social services and Child welfare. Also have we visited the municipality and requested information regarding the procedure in order to obtain land.

Each of the individuals we came in contact with were very positive and agreed to support the dream, for which we are truly thankful. The intention is that this would be a project of the Municipality of Gobabis, whilst we will just be responsible for the leadership and identity of the home. When we are

no longer here, the project should continue and this will only be possible if we include all future stakeholders from the start. Fortunately, all doors seem to be open, but a long road is still ahead!

Currently, we are busy doing our homework; obtaining supporting letters from various Ministries in order to hand in a completed proposal for the Municipality. Beginning of February is their meetings and hopefully they will react positively to our application.

Will you dream with us?

'Have I not commanded you? Be strong and of good courage; do not be afraid, nor be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go.' Joshua 1:9

This is the promise that we carry in our hearts and this gives us hope and courage to continue!

Agenda:

- Amos monitors training, which Jac-Louis will co-host.
- Building the website for our own future online business.
- Home visits in the community
- 6 February will mark the start of our 'Group of Hope' (+-15 "street kids", aged between 15 and 18, will start a literacy programme with the help of the Ministry of Education).
- 2 Newly qualified Dutch teacher ladies will come to visit and support us for a month.
- Appointments regarding our application for 1 hectare land and finances for the building of Gobabis 'Lighthouse'.

Thank you for each one's involvement. The encouraging emails and continuous prayers are appreciated immensely!

In conclusion; those flowers we saw on our way looked so beautiful, but when you come closer they are actually thorns. Is our lives the same? Just beautiful from far or do people need to come closer to appreciate our true beauty? For all of us I hope the latter will be true in 2017.

Grace and peace,

Jac-Louis & Gijsbertha

June 2017

A Father, Faces and becoming

A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling. – Ps.68:5

The strength of a nation derives from the integrity of the home.

1 + 1 = 3

Thankful, joyful and healthy. Can we, hereby, stop writing about us? ;) In summary, it is true, we are doing really well. We are getting more used to the “cold” during the mornings and evenings, (but also maybe because the cold isn't a real cold yet), and looking forward to the summer (especially Gijbertha). Less laundry, and more empty closets longer days just to name a few advantages of summer.

Adam is doing really well, and bringing so many smiles and laughs on his Daddy and Mommy's faces. This last Monday he turned 6 months already – time goes by so fast and with it we see how much Adam is developing as a very healthy baby who is fond of his mother's special care. Fortunately, he is used to hopping along in his cozy house all the activities Dad and Mom are doing in the community, but luckily they also think of his rest sometimes. As the proverb goes “Blessed are the flexible for they won't be broken”.

Community

Recently we met a mother who was suffering from TB and malnourishment herself she was numbed to even care for her 18 month old boy, who was weighing a mere 4.2kg. After a serious conversation with them we tried to convince her of her dire medical need. After receiving some help in explanation from her brother, she agreed to come with us to the hospital. Both the mother and her son are making good progress in the hospital even though it takes longer due to their struggle with TB. We continue to trust and pray that their improvement continue, as it is so often that we see different.

Group of Hope

Yes, then the streetchildren remain among our favourites, and o they are so many! Every week we come in contact with new children with so much potential hidden behind all the neglect, sorrow and current pain. They are a great joy in our work, but also a reason why we remain so small, so dependant as we are continually challenged to think of new ways to train, develop and influence them for the better. It remains a sad reality that these children, due to absence of parents, love and discipline are forced to go to the street...such astronomical consequences!

Fortunately 'Group of Hope' are still going strong and children are receiving literacy classes on average 4 times a week. For a long time this programme was ill attended but during the past 6 weeks another group of children joined and the programme is showing signs of meaningfulness to more children. There remain a big number of children on the streets, who are unwilling to attend these classes for various reasons. Please pray/think with us of suitable strategies to accommodate these children in the nearby future (seeing that Lighthouse will still take a while to realize). We are very grateful for Teacher Maria who is worth gold with so much love and patience for these children.

Sponsorchildren

Almost all sponsorchildren from the Netherlands have received their warm clothing for the winter. It remains an intensive task to give the necessary attention to all 45 learners from 5 schools but it remains a joy to be a part of the children's lives in such a way. We hopen deze week 1 van de sponsorkinderen wat een 'echte straatjongen' is, weer terug naar school te brengen.

We would really like to provide a home for these children where they can receive the love and discipline necessary to become the person whom they were created to be so that they can serve God's purpose for their generation.

Agenda:

- A teambuilding day for all employees of Light for the Children
- "Home-visits to "Street children"
- Discussion with Governor and regional social worker regarding land for the Lighthouse
- 2 Visitors from the Netherlands, Gijsbertha's sister, Gera and a acquaintance, Corine.
- We hope to attend a gathering in the North of Namibia with a group of friends, and even get to see a bit of the North together for the first time.

August 2017

Enduring faithfully

A wise man's heart discerns both time and judgement... Ecclesiastes 8:5

We would like to change the circumstances around us but we learn that change will take place when we endure faithfully. Patience and faithfulness are indeed fruit of the Spirit.

We remain thankful for the small changes visible and the beams of light around us. I think about the two healthy, whole households whom we have met the last few weeks. Using their own means they have cared for homeless and neglected children the past 30 years! One of these families is still having 19 children at their home, I must add that this includes their own grand-children, nevertheless it remains a dozen. These homes are definitely an example and an encouragement to us.

Between the Three of us

Since our last letter the Dutch visitors have left and we have some time to get used to being alone before our next visit at the beginning of October from a Dutch couple. We were fortunate enough to attend last year their wedding in the Netherlands and now, we look to meet them again in Namibia.

We celebrated our 3rd anniversary on the 23rd of August and remain thankful for every bit of married life. Indeed a great privilege to work and live together in a team!

Adam remain a joy and every little bit of time with him is worth gold. During the last 2 weeks he made giant growth leaps and is showing that he is not just a little baby. Reading book with his Daddy and playing with his Mommy is certainly two of his favourite activities.

Lighthouse dream

As you probably know, from our previous letters, we continue to dream about a home where children who are in need of care can be placed for a time until we find a suitable home in the environment they are used to.

Since our last letter we have received all letters of support from key community stakeholders and as we were waiting for an appointment to apply for a piece of land where we could start building, we received an offer from friends to rent/buy an ideal property. After viewing the piece of land and dilapidated house, we concluded that the opportunities are endless, but in order to utilize it for the purpose of a Light-house a lot of resources will be necessary. In the meantime we are waiting for the contract from the current owners to start renting the place with a option to buy. Once the contract is finalized we will be in contact with an engineer to discuss the way forward. We're hoping to finish the apartment first and once we are able to stay there the rest of the house will be renovated.

Indeed, an extreme make-over home edition is awaiting us, not starting to mention our own less talented construction hands and so we will need to make use of our networking skills to utilize the strengths of others.

We are taking it step by step by working, praying and trusting God to go before us daily as we come in contact with the people necessary for the task at hand. This dream is not just a dream but our calling and we should answer the call, even though it remains daunting!

Often we are finding ourselves in shock to the idea of what we are trying to do but at the same time the excitement and calling rings clear in our hearts...we cannot stop now and must continue working towards creating a home where needy children will be welcome, cared for and loved.

Group of Hope

Words cannot describe our thankfulness of how the literacy program is going. Our teacher, ms. Maria is the perfect person for the job and carries each child's interest at heart. During the last 6 weeks I was looking for a school where these kids can go to in January 2018 and fortunately we have good hopes of a successful attempt. We hope to start with a new group of children in 2018 then.

Recently I have been engaging more with a bigger group of 'street children', hoping to influence them for the better. The dream is that each of them will also be willing to engage in some sort of an activity that will equip them for the future. Unfortunately the kids who benefit from the Group of Hope are most often only between 8 and 13 years and less experienced in criminal activities, whilst the group of, mostly boys, older than 13 are more experienced with life on the streets and all that goes with it. We are hoping to start a programme for the older group once the Lighthouse is running. As we were on our way to church on Sunday we saw 2 of them and took them with us. A pleasant surprise it was that they stayed with us from 09:00 until 11:30.

Wanted: A Role-Model

We are coming in contact with so many young people who are looking for someone whom they can not only look up to but also someone who will have a good influence on them. For the most of them parents and families are distant with little or no interest in their lives. Once more the quote proves true "Children see, Children do".

Then we came in touch with a young man who were busy making all the wrong choices, wrong friends and suffering everything that goes with it. Whilst waiting at Home Affairs a few months ago he walked past us and as we were talking he said "Yes, I know I should repent – I would also like to be like my grand-father". His grand-father has been a faithful missionary among Bushmen folk and even though he is 76 he is still very active in evangelistic activities.

After some time of prayer we saw God providing a plane ticket for this young man to travel to South Africa for a spiritual retreat. In the meantime he is back in Gobabis after a life-changing experience. We continue to pray that this young man will endure faithfully and walk in the footsteps of his grand-father.

Ill and handicapped children

O how we wish we were able to heal all the sick children in the hospitals. Due to high demand the public hospitals have access to so little medical resources which in turn leave so many, especially children, in decay. One of the cases that crossed our paths is a girl of 5 who,

because of TB, were weakened in her spine to the point that she got paralysed this week. O how different it could have been for her if her parents had been actively involved in her life.

There remain so much to do and the same amount of prayer necessary. Will you keep us in your prayers? We know that we are under-qualified for the work ahead of us, but He is faithful. We continue to remind ourselves "He is able to do far exceedingly above all that we ask or think according to the power that works in us." (Ephesians 3:20).

We continue to be thankful for all your continued support! What an encouragement to know we are not alone in this work, but you are with us...thank you!

With love and lovely spring greetings from Gobabis

JacBerthA (Jac-Louis, Gijsbertha, Adam)

October 2017

Just enough!

Time passes by and we hear from different sides 'when do you write again?'

That's a good motivation for me to sit back and think about how the past few weeks have passed. During the past few weeks, we have experienced God's kindness, faithfulness and grace in various areas of our lives.

We are very grateful that Adam is healthy after a few days of stomach virus. We have seen how vulnerable such a little body actually is and how soon a child can get sick but even while he does not feel comfortable, he occasionally showed his "healthy" look and put a smile on our face. Thank you for your support, whether it be prayerfully, financially or relationally it encourages us.

Gijsbertha and I are healthy and enjoy our lives together.

We enjoyed the friends who visited. Very nice to have Dutch company again.

On the 26th, we are going to pick up a very important visit from the airport...Gijsbertha's parents:!)
Indeed something we have been looking forward for so long.

Oom Henk

After being in Gobabis for one year this month, our work is definitely looking different than we initially thought. We are privileged to work with Henk Olwage and continue to seek ways by which we can support him on a daily basis. Recently one of his long time supporters as a missionary, a church from South Africa informed him that they will no longer be able to contribute anything towards his monthly income. Being 63 years old, one might think it a bit 'untimely'. Thank you for joining us in prayers that God will continue provide for his needs. Even though it comes through a different channel, it remains the same Hands.

Group of Hope

A few weeks ago we received very good message from the Ministry of Education. They announced that they would like to continue in 2018 with the program we started for street kids. They see the affect it has on children and would like to support this group of children who can go to school in January in the cost of transport to schools. We got a school that is an hour outside the village of Gobabis and the children will live in a home. Some weekends and holidays must come to the village again, and the Ministry of Education will bear the costs.

We are so grateful for their support and enthusiasm around this program.

Last month, Jac-Louis was invited to attend Namibian childhood with a group of street children.

There was a parade, speeches and a meal was offered.

The minister of youth care was also present and a number of "important" people. The group where Jac-Louis came with impressed these people because they were so well-behaved and they gave a presentation in the form of a song in combination with a dance. We hope that after this special day, the minister will make more effort to create a future for the children in detention.

Lighthouse

The arrangements for our dream for the Lighthouse are a bit quiet. We are waiting for a number of papers before the rental contract can be settled.

We are now looking into whether there is another house with good possibilities that we can use as a Lighthouse. We see the great need for a shelter and we are prepared to take care of more children, but our current home is too small. We trust that everything will happen at the right time and at the same time we will open our ears and eyes.

Light for the Children School

Over the past year, I accompanied 4 kindergarten women from other schools. It was a challenge but also a good learning period and special to do.

Because I was very concerned about it, I could not spend so much time at the Light for the children school but from January this DV will also change.

I will then intensively guide four teachers of that school and I look forward to it.

There are so many growth opportunities for that school, but they need teachers to help them. Jac-Louis is in charge of the leaders of the school and I will give more attention to the teachers.

The whole school and teachers are a big prayer case for us because many educators lead a double life. At home they live in sin and at the school they keep the clean shine on. We need His light so hard that His Spirit will work in their hearts. Then my guidance is also needed less.

Sponsor child

In September we visited all sponsor children again and fortunately, most children are doing very well.

It's a pity that a few pubbers have decided not to go to school and walk the path of sin despite our conversations and guidance. It's so hard to get them out of that sinful culture!

We keep looking at the bright spots and those are happy too. Children who do their best and the second report have better grades than in the first report.

We hope to visit a few parents / caregivers because some children have said there is no food at their house. Chances are that those parents / caregivers will drink all the money ...

In such a case, we switch youth care and we will visit those families to see what needs to be done.

Juvenile care is so severe today that they brought two mothers after the prison last month after we suggested them to these mothers. The mothers were permanently drunk and there was no care for the (sponsor) children. These mothers have now been left free and are guided by the social worker in the hope that they will get rid of it.

Steps for children

For a number of years, Steps for Children (German Organization) has been involved in Gobabis and they support families that provide orphaned children. These families receive a box of food every 10 months and the children's school clothes are taken care of. The system became good but needs a lot of attention in providing guidance to the families because these families also live in the slums. Jac-Louis visits these families every month and also meets with these parents every month to see how the program can be made better.

We are always aware that so much guidance is needed and that without much guidance it will not be much achieved.

It is so sad to think that most of our work will not be needed if the various authorities do what is required in their sector. Nonetheless, we continue to work, stirred with a desire to help those who are in need of it, loving on every person we meet, old and young, rich and poor.

Work- we have more than enough to do, Health- Thankfully, yes, Provision – All that we need, A love for the people around us – o How we need His love every morning...God's grace is enough.