



Newsletter 2019

Annual Report 2018



Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard

P O Box 440
Mandeni 4490
Republic of South Africa

Telephone & WhatsApp: +27 82 492 4043
Telefax: +27 86 693 8940
e-mail: bbg@bbg.org.za
Homepage: www.bbg.org.za



The **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard**
is an Association
of the Roman Catholic Church,
a South African Public Benefit Organisation
and the Relief Organisation
of the Order of Malta in South Africa.

Caring without borders



Our **mission** is
to further the glory of God
and strive with a common effort
to foster a more perfect life of our members
by devoting ourselves
to the apostolate of the Church
in works of charity
to serve "the poor of our Lord Jesus Christ"
extending God's loving care to them
under the motto
"tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum"
(Protection of faith and service to the needy).

"Vision"

May the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard
in adopting its patron's charisma
continue the ancient spiritual tradition of its roots
to humbly serve the hungry and thirsty,
estranged and naked, sick and imprisoned Lord
and thus become a sign of Christian faith,
cheerful hope and apostolic love to the people.



We care in any case

Imprint:

The "**Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard Newsletter/ Annual Report**" is the official mouthpiece of the **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard**.

This Newsletter and Annual Report is also published online at <http://www.bsg.org.za/en/our-organisation/publications-media/newsletters-annual-reports.html>

A special vote of thanks is due to Mrs. Maresi Rehder who contributed most of the pictures and articles to this newsletter again.

Brotherhood



We are ...

- a group of more than 2500 **idealists** with the aim to enable and empower people to help themselves and to provide direct aid in cases of emergency and immediate need.
- the South African **relief organisation** of the Order of Malta. The latter had been founded as a nursing brotherhood by Blessed Gérard more than 900 years ago.
- a **faith based organisation** (FBO) putting into action what our motto "tuitio fidei et obsequium pauperum" means: "Protection of faith and service to the needy".
- a "**Private Association of Christ's Faithful**" in the Roman Catholic Church, open to members from all different faiths and cultural backgrounds.
- a **community based** (CBO) **non-governmental organisation** (NGO).
- a "**public benefit organisation**" (PBO) operated not for profit (NPO) and dedicated to the welfare of all people.
- a **non-discriminating** and **non-exclusive organisation**, which serves the needy irrespective of their creed, colour of skin, political affiliation, sexual orientation or social status.
- a **charity** which helps within its own capability according to the identified needs of the people.



is a "Non-profit Organisation" (Registration No. 080-935-NPO) and a "Public Benefit Organisation" [SARS Ref. No. PBO 18/11/13/2777, VAT No. 447 0252 182] founded and owned by the

Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard.

It provides a comprehensive system of holistic care in the wider Mandeni area where a quarter of a million people are estimated to live. A large number of these have to live in poverty.

All its services are rendered free of charge.



No One Goes Away Without Having Been Helped

by Father Sylvester Tusaninkosi Ngema



I wish to thank everyone who are part and all who help in this organization. A special word of thanks goes to Father Gérard and his administration team. It has been an exciting experience to be here at the Blessed Gérard's Hospice. I'm forever thankful to you all. As a priest I feel blessed by God for having been here since November 2016.

I also feel especially close to the children who are orphans residing on the premises of the hospice and to the staff members.

I would like to state briefly that the Blessed Gérard's Hospice has always considered orphans and patients one of their primary tasks.

Father Gérard has given orphans and patients and staff members a place of importance in this hospice. I am kind of amazed by his calm and untiring dedication coupled with the unfathomable love with which he loves everyone. Father Gérard reminds me of Christ who helped everyone without judging. **No one** comes to Father Gérard and **goes away without having been helped**. He is an altruistic kind of person.

The administration team of the Blessed Gérard's Care Centre makes sure that we eat healthy and get the best medication. Furthermore, they make sure that we stay in a clean place and we are safe.

The Brotherhood also gives bursaries to the poor children and young people of the community so that they can go to school, to college or even to university.

The lack of education is one of the main reasons for the great poverty in kwaZulu-Natal.

The staff members and the volunteers are very dedicated to their work. They take good care of the patients.

What I find so important is the fact that they go an extra mile to care for those who are under the shadow of death to ensure they die peacefully. They do their work with love and confidence. They go out to nurse those who live at the outskirts of the community.

Another thing that I like about living here is that there is a church where we gather together for Holy Mass every morning before everyone starts work.

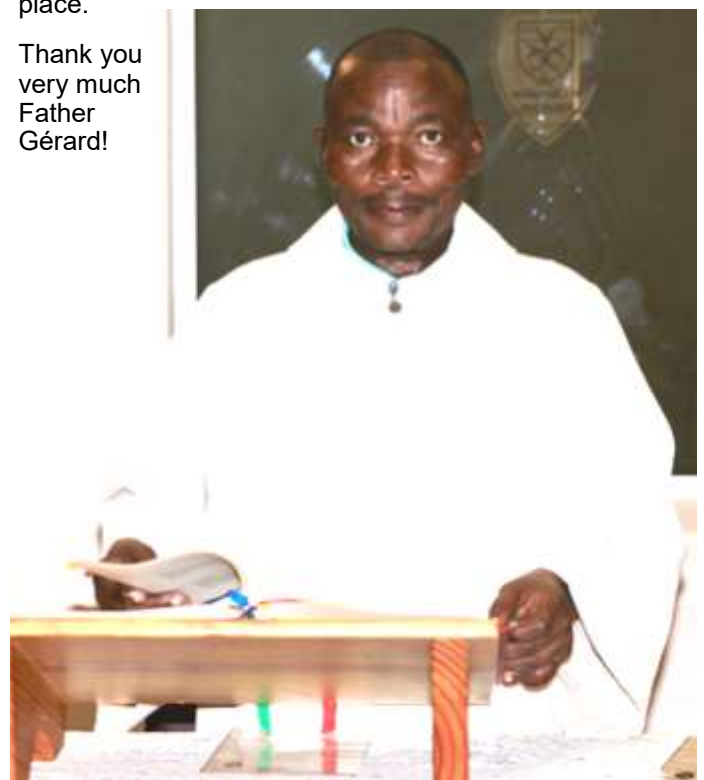
Father Gérard strongly believes and emphasizes that prayer connects us to God all the time. So therefore, we should center our lives on the Eucharist which is the source and summit of our lives.

The hospice treats every patient, Catholic and non-Catholic with love and respect that they deserve. Nobody feels excluded or discriminated.

With gratitude I invoke abundant blessings upon Father Gérard and his administration team and upon the whole staff and all volunteers. May God bless you all.

May Blessed Gérard protect the hospice, the Children's Home and the Care Centre and all those who work and help the poor and the sick, to make the world a better place.

Thank you
very much
Father
Gérard!





They Are Afraid of My Illness

by Maresi Rehder



I would like to tell you Lucas's story.

Since I met him in September, I keep on thinking about him, his life, and the way he deals with it.

That morning I accompanied the Home Care Team to visit outpatients, hoping to take some good photos for fundraising reasons.

We reached a little, poor-looking house but much better than many others are.
I thought we would go in, but we passed it.
Next to the house stood a rundown hut.



Some windows were broken and repaired with plastic bags.

Inside this hut, we found Lucas.

He was lying on a mattress on the floor, covered with an old dirty and torn sleeping bag and a torn blanket. The only furniture in the room was an old tattered sofa and between the sofa and the mattress was a small plastic box, used as table.

The walls were all kinds of brown, mould and dirt. I asked him whether he would allow me to take a photo of him and if he would like to tell me a bit about his life:





Lucas comes from a family of ten siblings.
His parents died long ago.
Nobody has work.
The only income is his disability grant.
With his money, he supports the whole family.

I asked him whether his siblings take good care of him and he answered that his eldest brother, another brother, and a sister live in the little house next door.

I was a bit shocked and asked why he, being weak and sick, lives in this hut while the others live in the house using his money.

They are afraid of my illness he answered.

When the nurse was ready with what she had to do, we said good-bye and I was the last to leave the hut.

I turned for a last smile and then I saw it.



The letters were hard to see in brown on the dirty, blotchy wall right behind his head:

**JESUS IS THE STREET
GOD I LOVE YOU**

Did you write this? I asked.

Yes, he smiled.

It is just to remind me.

That is the reason why we love our work.

We can show our patients the love of Christ.





Real Care for the First Time

by Julia Abspacher



If you sleep for six weeks in the guest room of the Care Centre on the second floor, you can almost forget the world around you. There is running and warm water, duvets and even air conditioning against the African spring, which is more like our European midsummer, in short: all the comfort you could wish for. However, when you look out of the window, you quickly realise that the relative luxuries that the patients in the hospice and the children in the home can experience are far from normal living in Mandeni. For the reality in the area looks quite different: a large part of the population can only dream of water and electricity and a safe home. Crime on the streets is high and around two-thirds of the population are HIV-positive. Terrible living conditions, which the beauty of the scenery can not hide. And despite all the disgusting things, the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard and its members, especially Father Gérard, have not been intimidated for more than two decades. They work every day to improve the lives of so many in the area. I have experienced this personally.

I got to know the various activities at the Care Centre



during my stay. In the children's home there was a lot to do due to the different age levels. While the little ones are fed and the diapers have to be changed, the older ones need more math coaching or support in other school projects. And although they grow up at the other end of the world, I always notice how similar they are in their interests to children and young people in Germany and how much vitality they radiate despite their sometimes more difficult life circumstances. They also help one another mutually. The bigger ones take care of the smaller ones like siblings, tie their shoelaces and wipe their nose when they have a cold. Everything looks like a very big family. It's nice to know that the children who grow up here have a real chance for a better future. After all, they will be given decent education at school and then a vocational training or perhaps they may study at university. The leaders and workers in the children's home lovingly take care of their protégés, foster and challenge them.

At the beginning of my six weeks, I see a notice on the board for a contest, who can decorate his room most beautifully for the spring. Over time, more and more paper garlands and self-painted pictures and quotes are found at the room doors, until finally the winner is chosen. Supposedly small things that make a big difference to the kids.



In the hospice, dying people can spend their remaining time in dignity and tranquillity, and perhaps **for the first time** experience **real care**. There are also many patients who are not actually terminally ill, but who simply could not be cared for in their own homes because their living conditions are too poor and nobody is there who would know how to look after them properly.

How the local people live is really experienced when you go out with Home Care team, which regularly visits the patients, who are taken care of by the Brotherhood, but also other people in need of help. Again and again the crew of the ambulance showed me houses where patients live when driving past. This illustrates how densely woven the net of charity is that the Care Centre has set up here, but also how many people are in need of help.

The first patient on that day lies huddled in a dilapidated bed in the far corner of a gloomy hut. There is an appalling smell of faeces and chickens run around in the

room wildly. His relatives have called our Home Care team. The man refuses to take medication or to wear diapers to alleviate his suffering at least. As the ambulance crew takes his details to create a medical record, I



am surprised: The man is only 39 years old. He still has most of his life ahead of him, but he does not seem even have the will to fight against his disease, although so many people around him obviously try to help him. A relative of the next patient is already waiting for us outside to tell us: The old lady has unfortunately passed away a few days before. These are low blows and sad



moments that the team copes with unscathed. A lady is already waving at us from the next very neat little house. She was a patient in the hospice that spring. A few months later she is feeling much better again and she is looking forward to the visit from the Care Centre. When we get back to the ambulance after fifteen minutes, the caregiver, that is a kind of nursing aide, has a smile all over his face: "I love my job!" It slips out -



"I love my job!"

His happiness stems from the fact that not only the children and patients are taken care of in the Care Centre. I realize that quickly. In an area where as many people are unemployed as there are employees, the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard is a good and reliable employer. Not only the patients come from the townships and informal settlements, but also the employees and volunteers live there, wash their shirts in the rivers instead of in the washing machine and set off each day in the crazy South African mini-taxis to work here. Because this also provides the opportunity for them to build up a structured life, to send their children to school and work for a better future. You realize that they like it here, indeed.

While eating in the canteen, they sit together and chat and laugh. Everyone comes to greet you and asks how it is today. There is a collegial and respectful spirit in everyday life. It is a place where one likes to work, which is far from normal in South Africa. The employees, but also the children, share pictures of the work and of the children's home in the social media. They are obviously proud to belong to it.



This sense of belonging is also what the common service every morning at half past eight creates. For example, whereas the kitchen crew and the nurses hardly ever meet in their daily work, this contemplative half-hour at the beginning of the day is a moment where everyone who wants comes together before they go their own way again and keep the whole machine running.

Living in a guest room of the Care Centre for six weeks gradually reveals the extent of its influence on the Mandeni area, and how many lives are affected and improved both directly and indirectly. The dozens of children in the kindergarten as well as the numerous names in the thick folders for school bursaries with which I have made good contact during my work in the office prove that. The patients in the hospice wards on the ground floor as well as the children who found their home two floors up. The sick in the Informal Settlements, as well as the employees, who managed to escape from these through their employment in the Care Centre and work towards creating a safer home. Even if you often are tempted to despair facing the mostly terrible reality in the area, it is a comfort to know that the Care Centre and the Brotherhood are constantly working to improve these life circumstances, and that it succeeds so often.

Moments When I Had To Hold Back My Tears

Excerpts from Our Guest Book

selected by Maresi Rehder



Dear Father Gérard & hello to all future volunteers, My name is Sylvie Lohrer, I'm from beautiful Lake Constance and I'm a new born theologian. Although I've had some experience with old, sick and needy people throughout my life, at the beginning of my journey (and I still do) I had a lot of respect for what was done here and I was very excited about what to expect , These four weeks, which I was able to experience in the Care Centre, enabled me to be a part of the whole and to witness the remarkable work of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard. During my time here I have had many great experiences, be it with the children, in the hospice or with the ambulance. You can tell the employees how proud they are of their work and that they are there with their hearts. Certainly the most challenging experience for me was when a man died before our eyes at a first visit with the ambulance as we were taking his pulse and temperature, and the family mourned so terribly. "Where love overcomes misery" - describes best the work and the help that is provided here and given to people. I have often wondered in my life where to start helping facing all the suffering and poverty in the world. maybe this question is wrong. Perhaps the question should rather be: "What can I do in practically? How can I contribute with my own skills and talents?" In short, it is not about looking away and resigning when we face oppressive poverty, but facing up to this reality! Taking care of those who are in need of help and not leaving them to their own devices. Exactly this basic idea is noticeable everywhere in the Care Center. Dear Father Gérard, you and your team have done something great here and impressed me deeply. Thank you from my heart that I have the chance to be a part of it. All the experiences made here will accompany me on my way into the pastoral ministry of the Archdiocese

of Freiburg and will certainly influence my pastoral work and shape it. Thank you for everything and see you soon in Africa or in Germany.

Sylvie

It was once again a great joy to be able to participate in so many different lives; Just the fact that the number of children almost doubled last year, but every single child still gets the same personal affection and time devoted to it, shows how nice everyone here is.

Andreas



I could realize my big dream "foreign experience as a nurse" here with you and thank you very much. To get to know such a wonderful project, or rather such a large institution with many small workplaces, was an impressive experience for me. The life stories of the patients in the hospice and at the same time their great gratitude to all those who work and help in the Care Centre were **moments when I really had to hold back my own tears.**

Stephi



I learned a lot from the lovely people here and took a lot for my life. Working with the kids, big and small, keeping together when it matters. The good atmosphere in the house, which you notice when you enter the Care Centre and you still feel in the far corner. I was welcomed with open arms from the first moment, thanks for that.

Julia



As a former student of the Descartes Gymnasium in Neuburg a. d. Donau has always been very interested in the work of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard and yet I could never have imagined what far-reaching positive influence she has on the lives of so many people in Mandeni and sometimes far beyond.

Julia



"In the last two months, which could not have been more intense, I not only learned a lot from the people here, but also from myself. These experiences have shaped me, certainly not only for the moment, but for my entire life. Not only did I learn how to wash patients or change my diapers, but I also collected some very touching interpersonal experiences that made the whole stay unique."

Johanna



We know each other so briefly and yet we have already gone a few important meters on the rocky road in the fight against AIDS together. Faith, love, hope is omnipresent here in the hospice. And above all, actions.

And where there are actions, one needs only a few words that I almost always wrestle with to utter. Thanks for the confidence that I was able to receive from the visit, thank you also for the touching morning Mass. Gery Keszler, chairman of Life +, CEO Life Ball



Blessed Gérard, our patron saint, is quoted to have said:

"Our brotherhood will be everlasting because the soil on which this plant is rooted is the misery of the world - and because, God willing, there will always be people who want to work on it, to decrease these sufferings and increase resilience to this misery."



Blessed Gérard, pray for us!



Supporting the Forgotten Mourners

by Philani Mathonsi



I am Mr Philani Mathonsi, the Children's Home Social Worker at Blessed Gerard's Care Centre.

I have noted with sensitivity that families are often in the distressing situation of mourning the death of a family member in our communities.

Children are often the **forgotten mourners** in the healing process of family members who have been affected.

Many people in Zulu communities believe that a child should not be informed about the death of a family member until the child is fully matured to understand death.

However this belief causes serious dilemma to children who have lost their parents.

This positions them into a situation of unresolved questions, unattended distress, confusion about their identity and these may result in long term episodes of traumatization that often curb their psychological development.

We at Blessed Gerard's Children's Home are able to provide a nurturing environment for children to grieve and understand death and accept that their parents are deceased.

I have done this by providing grief counselling sessions to two girls who lost their mother here at Blessed Gerard's Hospice recently.

The two girls had to be admitted into our residential care at the Children's Home when their mother was admitted into our hospice, and the children knew about the seriousness of their mother's condition.

The mother died after two weeks and the children were temporarily released to attend the funeral.

They came back with statements and questions like

- "I saw my mother sleeping in a box."
- "There were so many people at home and they were crying."
- "Will my mother come back here and sleep here?"

These questions prove the level of trauma experienced by children and the fact that obviously no adult family member had explained to them what death is all about. Grief Counselling helps children to cope with the trauma of death and to understand the meaning of death according to their respective level of understanding.

Annual Report 2018

Activity Report

The activities of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard and of Blessed Gérard's Care Centre in the year 2018, as in the year before, were concentrated on maintaining momentum in our existing projects:

Blessed Gérard's Care Centre provides a comprehensive and holistic system of care:

We render a **health care service** to poor and needy persons, including the care for people living with HIV/AIDS at the hotspot of the AIDS pandemic in the world, the North Coast of Zululand in South Africa.



Our **AIDS treatment (HAART) Programme** comprises



Voluntary Counselling and HIV-Testing (VCT)
We offer free and confidential HIV Tests to the general public.
76 patients tested

Antiretroviral Treatment

We provide free **Highly Active Anti-Retroviral Treatment (HAART)** as comprehensive medical care including regular medical examinations, blood monitoring, on-going prevention

or treatment of opportunistic infections, medical and psychosocial counselling and dispensing of the drugs.

703 patients on ongoing life-long treatment
20 new patients admitted



Adherence Monitoring

Our Therapeutic Counsellors make home visits to our patients on ARV-treatment to ensure that they adhere to the treatment and so to prevent treatment failure. This enables us to discover adverse drug reactions early and to prevent problems.



3328 home visits



Hospice & Palliative Care



We provide **residential Palliative Care** for terminally ill patients in our **Inpatient Unit**. We can admit up to 40 patients, which makes us the largest inpatient hospice in

South Africa.

6926 social workers' consultations

(mostly for the Hospice, but also for the Children's Home, Bursary Fund and Relief Fund)

5322 outpatient consultations

488 new outpatients enrolled

151 new inpatients admitted

(re-admissions not counted)

62 inpatients accompanied when they died



We send out mobile **home-nursing teams**, which supplement and support the family's home based care through hands-on-training and additional aids in

the home situation of the respective patient. This includes the assessment of patients at home and proper medical **home care**.

1308 home visits by our home care teams

612 patients transported by ambulance

364 patients looked after at their homes

308 patient assessment visits done

136 new home care patients enrolled

Activity Report – continued

Child Care

Pre-Primary School & Crèche

We provide "edu-care" and an early childhood development service for underprivileged pre-school children.

80 children looked after and educated



Children's Home

We look after, counsel and give a home to sick and healthy "Orphans and Vulnerable Children" (OVCs).

29 children were admitted
17 children were discharged
64 children were living here on 31 December 2018



Malnutrition Clinic

We provide a health care service to poor and needy persons by running a clinic, where we examine, treat and feed malnourished infants and teach their



parent/carer in proper baby care and nutrition.

1102 consultations
46 children (average occupancy)

Bursary Fund

We provide poverty relief by giving bursaries to poor pupils and students of our local community.

273 bursaries given



Relief & Social Care

Relief Fund

We provide poverty relief by helping people in genuine cases of immediate need.

We provided relief in **50 social emergency cases**.



Poor Sick Fund

We provide poverty relief by helping sick people from our local community, if they cannot afford urgently needed medical treatment.



We care in any case

Accumulated Statistics: Figures

| | 2018 | 1992—2018 | increase |
|---|------|-----------|----------|
| New outpatients (Hospice) | 488 | 31824 | 18.1% |
| Patients transported by ambulance (Hospice) | 612 | 7193 | 9.3% |
| Inpatient admissions (Hospice) | 151 | 5291 | 2.9% |
| New Home Care Patients (Hospice) | 136 | 4938 | 2.8% |
| Social cases (Relief Fund) | 50 | 2152 | 2.4% |
| New HAART patients (Hospice) | 20 | 1580 | 1.3% |

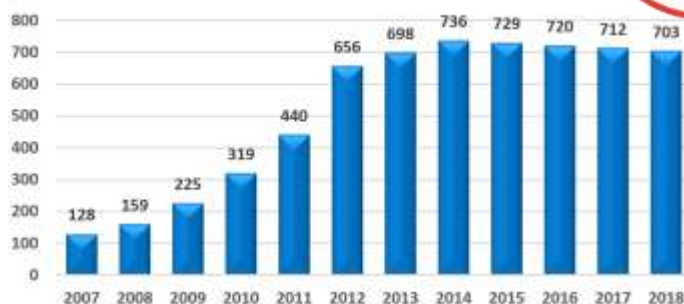


Activity Report – continued

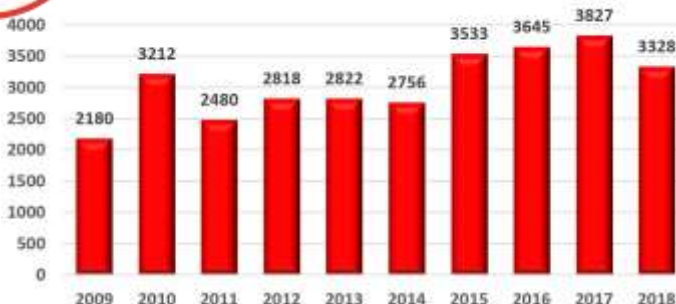
Statistics: Graphs



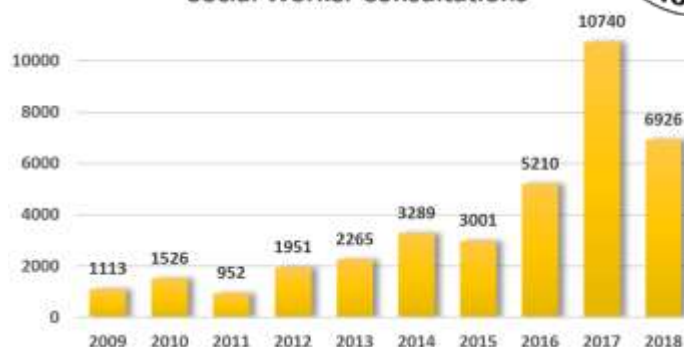
HAART Patients



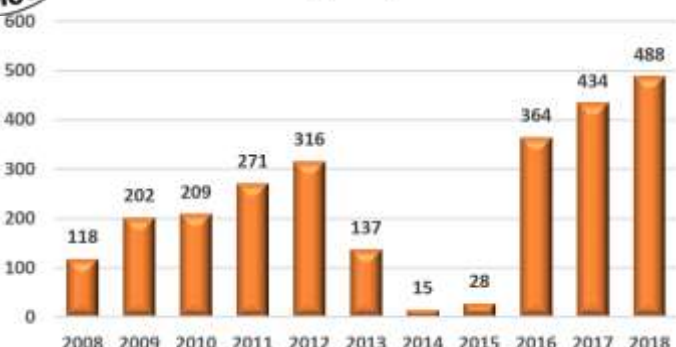
Home Care Visits - Therapeutic Counsellors



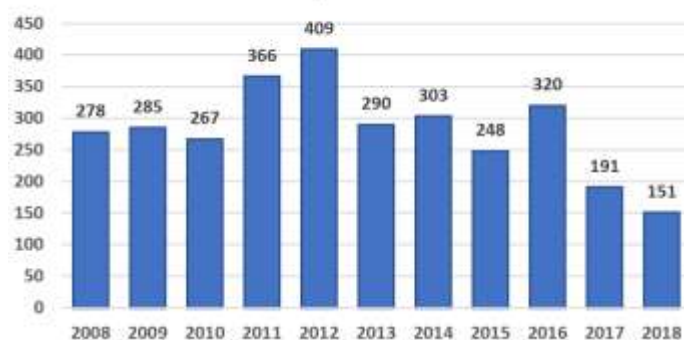
Social Worker Consultations



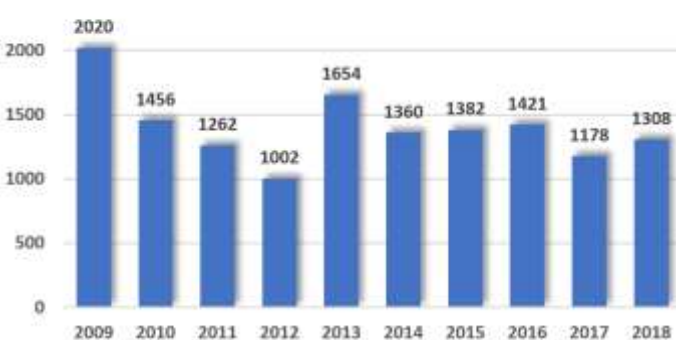
New Day/Outpatients



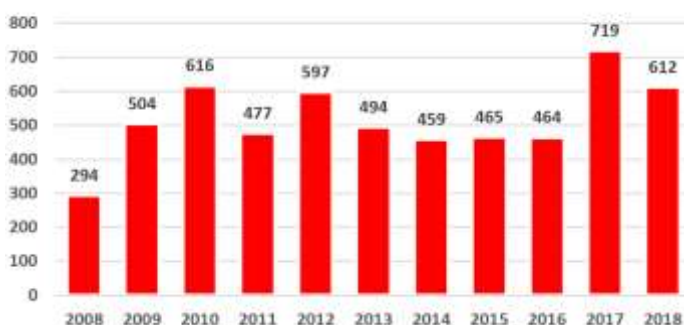
Inpatients



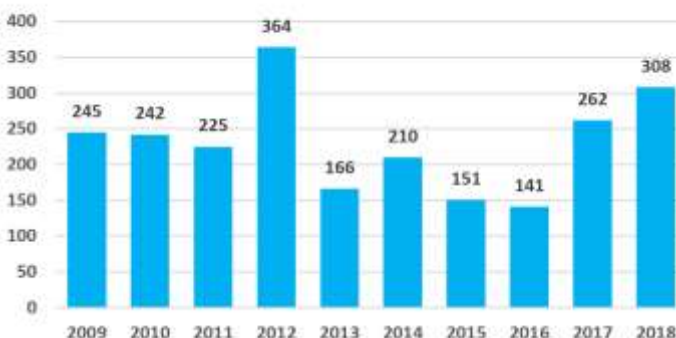
Home Care Visits - Home Care Team



Transported Patients



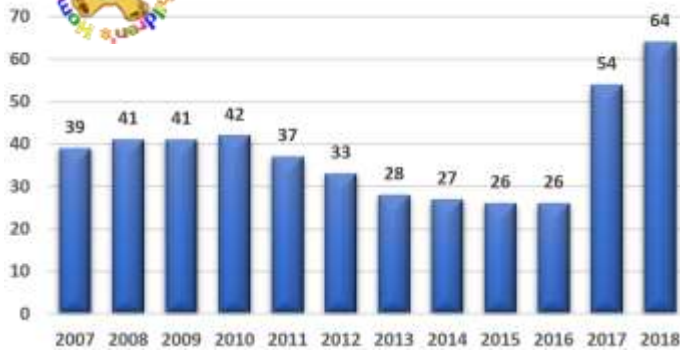
Home Care Assessments



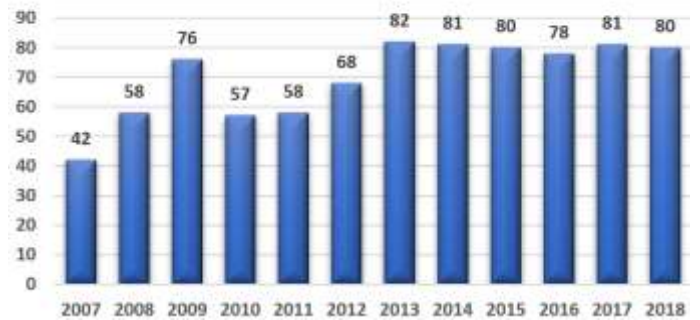
Statistics: Graphs (continued)



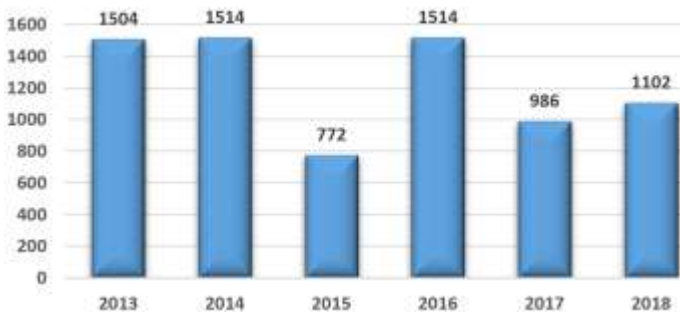
Children - Children's Home



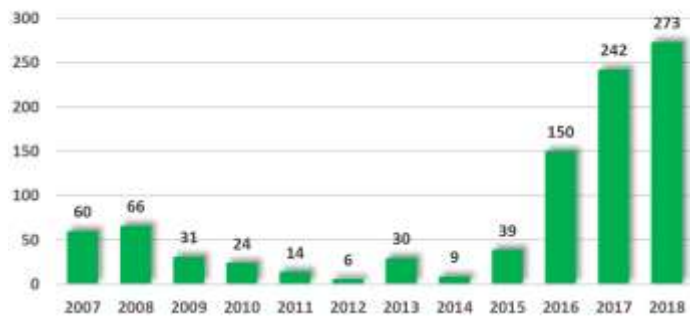
Children - Pre-Primary School & Creche



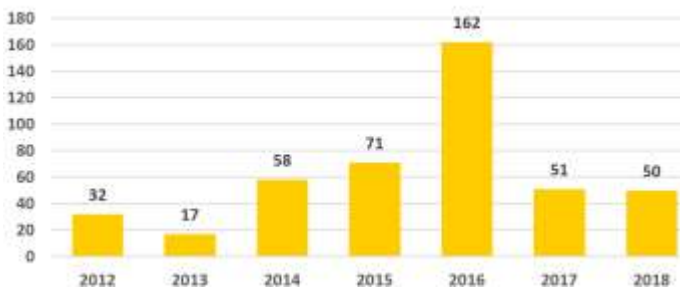
Malnutrition Clinic - Consultations



Bursaries



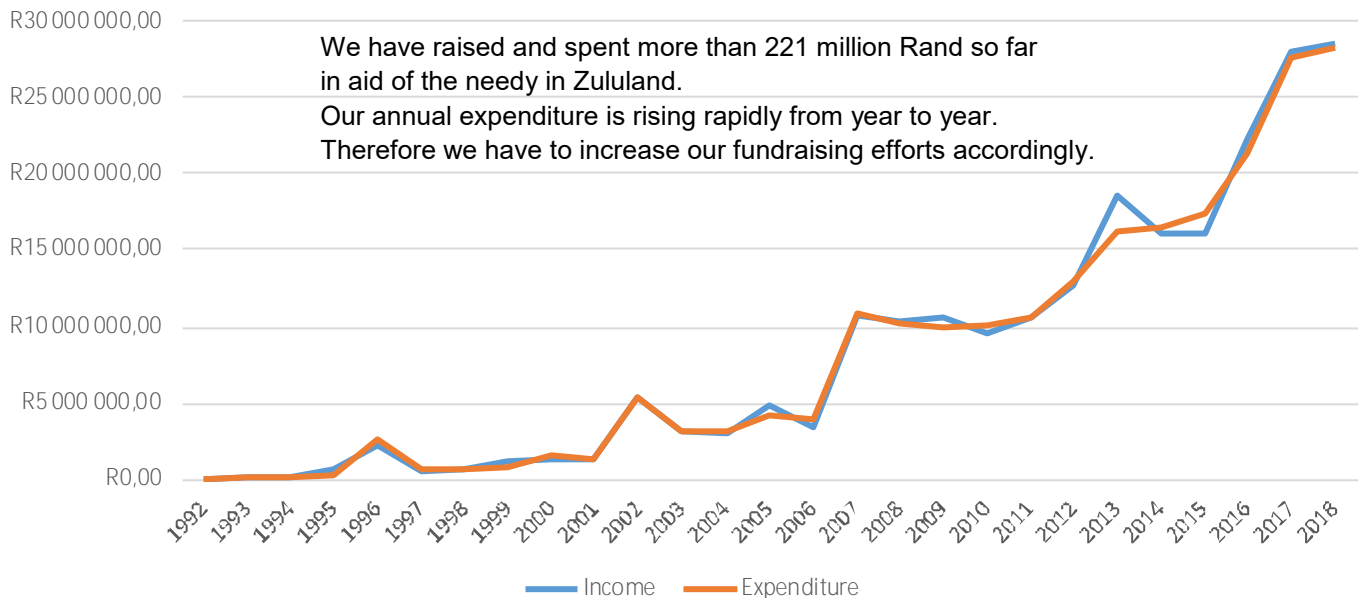
Social Cases - Relief Fund



**Caring
without borders**

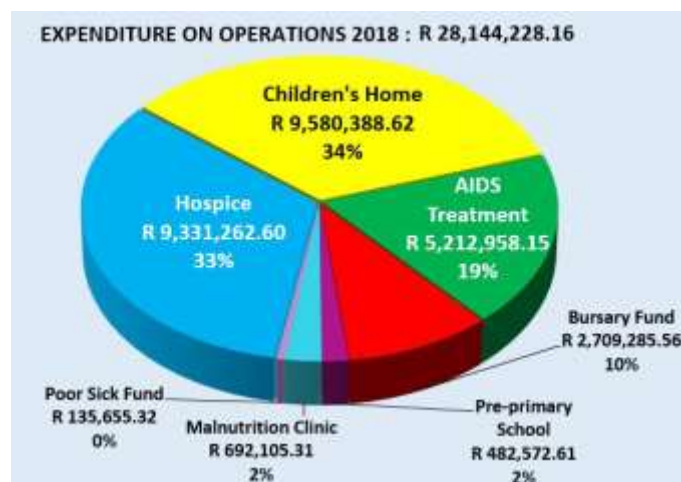
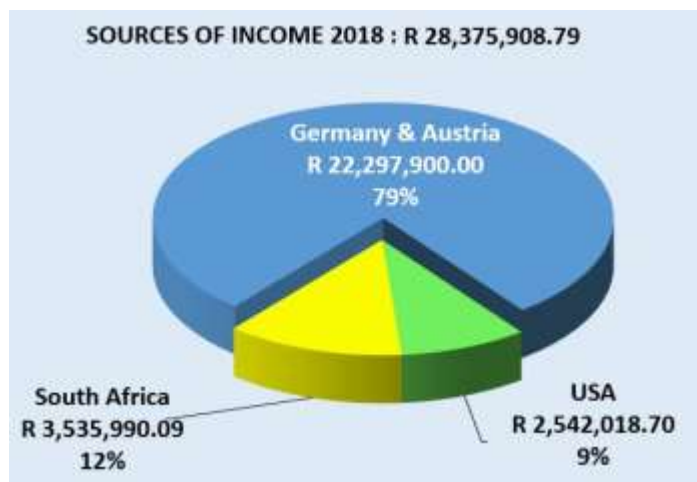


Finance Report: Financial growth



Finance Report

Income and Expenditure in 2018



We wholeheartedly thank all our donors for enabling us to render our services.

We serve an impoverished community. Therefore we have to offer all our services free of charge and must rely solely on donations and grants to finance our work.

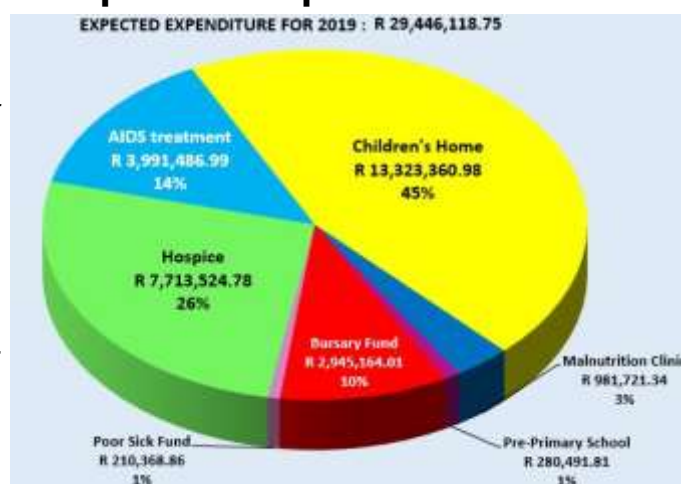
We included the monetary value of the benefits in kind (medicines and laboratory for our AIDS treatment programme) from the Department of Health of kwaZulu-Natal as income and expenditure in the financial report again.

International donations via the PayPal account of our German benefit association are part of the donations from Germany.

Financial Audit:

The Financial Audit of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard and of Blessed Gérard's Care Centre for 2018 had not yet been completed by the time this newsletter was printed. Nevertheless we expect **spotless results** again because of the expertise of the bookkeeping company "Burrows & Associates" (especially Mrs. Angelee Botha) which has kept our books for years impeccably.

Expected Expenditure in 2019

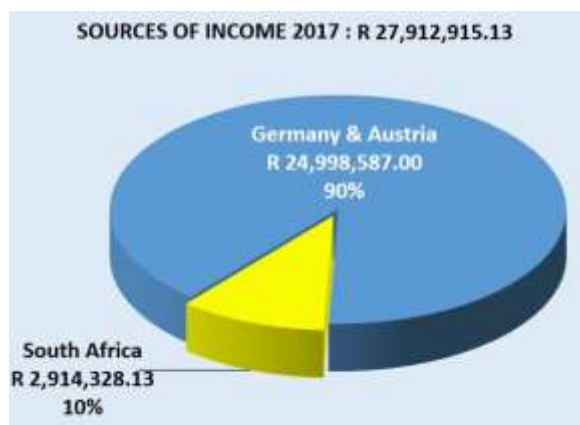


Transparency can be embarrassing when it requires you to admit mistakes that you have made:

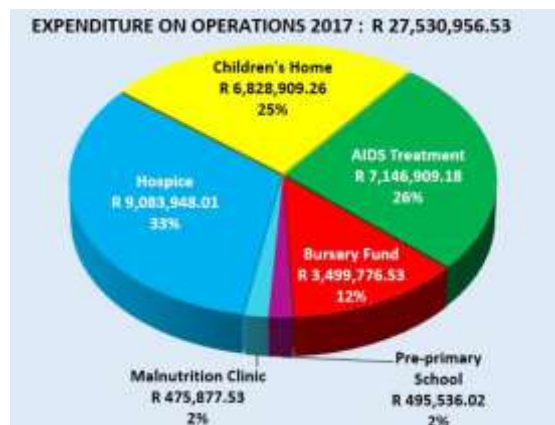
Last year, we made a mistake in our financial report for 2017.

We had the monetary equivalent of donations in kind (received and spent) included in our income and expenses for the first time to document the monetary value of **all** our services.

We were given incorrect figures for the monetary equivalent of the AIDS drugs provided to us by the local government in 2017. Although it was not a financial income and expenditure, but just the monetary equivalent of donations in kind, this single figure depicted our financial situation disproportionate and inflated.



The corrected graphs with correct **income and expenditure** in 2017 are:



Personnel

Membership Statistics

| As on: 31 December 2018 | | increase 2018 | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|--------------|
| 1526 | Active members | +5 | +0.3% |
| 695 | Financial supporters | +1 | +0.1% |
| 363 | Spiritual supporters | -3 | -0.8% |
| 2584 | Members in total | +3 | +0.1% |

Employees

On 31 December 2018 we had 86 employees.
One **employee left** us in 2018:
Phindile Mthembu (Receptionist).

Three **new staff members** were welcomed:



Annelene Joseph
Personal Assistant to the General Manager



Nontsikelelo Manqele
Enrolled Nursing Assistant



Ndlelanhle Shezi
Caregiver

Public Relations

Internet:

Our **homepage** is www.bsg.org.za

You will also find us on **Social Media:**

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/BBG.ORG.ZA>
Google+: <https://plus.google.com/110017496259664788354/posts>
LinkedIn: <http://www.linkedin.com/groups?gid=1833474>
Twitter: @FatherGerard · <https://twitter.com/FatherGerard>
YouTube: <http://www.youtube.com/user/FATHERGERARD>
XING: <https://www.xing.com/net/priffc80x/brotherhood/>
Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/lagleder/?hl=en>
Blogger: <http://patergerhard.blogspot.com/>
issuu: <https://issuu.com/fqtl>

Press:

3 Januar 2018: North Coast Courier:

Letter: **Thank you for the support:**

<https://northcoastcourier.co.za/100244/letter-thank-support/>

We care in any case



Our Chronicle

Special Events in 2018:



10 February 2018:

Our member Father John Paul Mwaniki Gutu O.S.B. was elected abbot of the Abbey of Inkamana.



16 March 2018:

Father Gérard was invited as a representative of the Order of Malta when the Most Reverend Dr. Thabo Makgoba, Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, was appointed as Prior of the Order of St. John in South Africa by his Royal Highness, Prince Richard Duke of Gloucester, GCVO GCStJ, at a ceremony at the Christ Church in Constantia, Cape Town.

Our Chronicle — continued

Special Events in 2018:



21—26 March 2018:

Dr. Nzimande (Medical Superintendent of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard) and Father Gérard represented (South) Africa at the **International Hospitaliers' Conference of the Order of Malta** in Budapest / Hungary

31 March 2018:

Father Gérard baptised **24 children of Blessed Gérard's Children's Home** at the Easter Vigil.



4—8 May 2018:

Father Gérard participated in the **60th International Lourdes Pilgrimage of the Order of Malta**.

It was for the ninth time that he joined the Austrian Grand Priory of the Order of Malta in their Lourdes Pilgrimage.



12 July 2018:

Our government ran into delivery problems and could no longer promise that we would always get the anti-retroviral drugs in time and completely that our AIDS patients need to survive. We had to guarantee the care of our patients and had to buy medicines ourselves until the Department of Health gave us full supplies again. We did a big fundraiser that was very successful.



5—7 October 2018:

Maresi Rehder (in her capacity as the newly appointed Communication Officer of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard) and Father Gérard represented (South) Africa at the **International Communicators' Conference of the Order of Malta** in Rome.

18 October 2018:

Father Gerhard was appointed as a member of the Working Committee of the Metropolitan / Provincial **Caritas Association** of kwaZulu-Natal.

Kindly Help Us to Help!

All our services entirely depend on your support!

How You can help us to help:

By joining us

- as an **Active Member** if you are able and prepared to help in our projects to serve the poor as a volunteer and agree with our principles. In this case, please call us for an interview.
- as a **Donor member** if you want to support our service financially on a regular basis.
- as a **Spiritual Supporter** if you want to help us through your prayers regularly.

By a donation

towards our charity work.

Financial contributions are most needed.

If you want to donate goods, kindly contact us beforehand to make sure that the donation will be really useful.

By making us a beneficiary

in your Last Will and Testament.

By your prayers

that God may bless our service and those we serve.

Making a donation

If you live in **South Africa**:

Donations to Blessed Gérard's Care Centre are tax deductible.

[Reference 18/11/13/2777]

We can issue South African donors with tax receipts for their donations, which they can use for tax deduction from the SARS.

If you are a taxpayer in South Africa and want to utilise this facility, make sure, that you make your donation to **Blessed Gérard's Care Centre**. (not to the **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard**!).

For donations of R500.00 and above we will issue such a receipt automatically.

You may make a donation directly into our banking account:

Name of Account: Blessed Gérard's Care Centre

Type of account: Current Account

Bank: First National Bank

Account number: 529 4004 0349

Branch: Mandini

Branch code: 220 429

Please ensure that you put your personal details on the deposit or send the information directly to us, so that we can acknowledge and assign your donation properly.

If you want to donate regularly, please organise a stop order on your account.

If you live in the **U.S.A.**:

Thanks to the generosity of the Benedictine Mission House in Schuyler, Nebraska, we can offer you a convenient way of making donations towards our work inside the United States, with the possibility of declaring your donation on your tax return. Checks should be made out to "Benedictine Mission House" with a remark Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard. (Please do not forget this!)

These should then be sent to:

Benedictine Mission House

P. O. Box 528

Schuyler, NE 68661

People who have made a donation of more than \$200 will receive a tax certificate immediately from the Mission House and donors of smaller amounts would receive one at the end of the tax year, if they want to declare their donations on their tax returns.

If you live in **Canada**:

Make out a check to the "Order of Malta", mark it for the "Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard" and send it to:

Order of Malta

1247 Kilborn Place

Ottawa ON K1H 6K9

You will receive a Canadian tax receipt

If you are subscribed to **PayPal**,

you may send us a **donation online** using our e-mail father@bbg.org.za

Pledge to donate

Kindly indicate ☒ how you would like to support the patients of the **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard**:

☐ I want to support the **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard** as a **Donor member** through an ☐ annual ☐ quarterly ☐ monthly donation of (amount): _____ (currency): _____

Title (Mr/Mrs/Miss/Dr): _____

First Names: _____

Surname or _____

Company/Society: _____

Date of birth: _____

(use letters, not figures for the month) _____

Postal address: _____

Postal/ZIP Code: _____ Town/City: _____

State/Province: _____ Country: _____

☎ (home) Code _____ No. _____

☎ (work) Code _____ No. _____

Fax Code _____ No. _____

E-mail Address: _____

Homepage URL: <http://> _____

Signed at: _____ Date: _____

Signature: _____

Please send this form to the **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard**
P O Box 440 - Mandeni 4490 - Republic of South Africa

Fax +27 86 6938940

See <http://bbg.org.za/finance/donation.htm> for information about obtaining tax deductible certificates in several countries.



Today is a Feast Day, I Have Meat.

Snippets from Maresi Rehder's Diary



One afternoon our social worker Mrs. Masikane was visited by an elderly woman seeking help for herself and her grandchildren.

Her neighbours had told her about our work and had sent her to our Care Centre.

She had two daughters who had passed away and left her and her son with six children, the youngest of whom was just six months old.

Our social worker went to see the family and to learn about their situation:

The son is unemployed and only two of the children have birth certificates.

That means she only gets child care grants for two of them.

The grandmother has a very small pension.

The eldest boy should go to school, but he doesn't, because of the missing birth certificate and there is no money for school fees, books nor for school uniforms.

The first thing we did was that we supplied the family with food parcels, baby formula and clothing for the children and blankets for all children.

They had to share beds and blankets before.

After the most pressing needs were satisfied our social worker started counselling them and helped them to apply for the missing birth certificates in order to get child care grants for all six children.

She also went to see the school, talked to teachers and informed our bursary fund about the needs of this little boy.

He can start school now.

We stay in close contact with this family until all problems will be settled.

A few weeks ago, we received an email from Germany. A group of dedicated people planned a small charity campaign in our favour. The topic was the different breakfast habits in Zululand and in Germany. I started a small survey among our volunteers, among the staff and learned a lot about the traditional eating habits. In the classic family, men and women eat separately. The staple food is maize in many different forms. uPhuthu, a thick porridge, or mealie pap, a smoother porridge, or samp, coarsely chopped maize kernels. There are vegetables, a lot of pumpkin or beans and very rarely meat with it. The number of meals and what is eaten depends on what is there. Often it is only the remains of the day before. Many families only have one meal a day. For some of our patients, not even this one meal is guaranteed. I remember a visit to one of our patients, Busisiwe, whom we visit regularly. She is too weak to find work and has no relatives to look after her. We visit her because she is in our Home Care Program; she suffers from diabetes and AIDS. We take care of her medication and we provide her with food parcels to alleviate the worst need. In the hut, a saucepan simmered on a decrepit hot plate and it smelled a bit. I was curious and asked what she was cooking. She smiled at me and lifted the lid. **"Today is a feast day, I have meat,"** she said. There were chicken heads in the saucepan and chicken feet raised their claws. Nothing else. Busisiwe's meal of the day.



NB: The picture above is NOT related to this story. It just shows a granny with grandchildren.

By the way:

We would not have published any pictures and told any stories of our patients had they or their legal guardians not given us permission to do this and to mention their real names.



Good Palliative Care is a Matter of Heart

Snippets from Maresi Rehder's Diary



One of our most important tasks in the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard is our care for dying patients. Dying people are often left to their own devices. Many Zulu are afraid of diseases and are convinced that the evil spell will pass on to them if they take care of a sick person. We often find patients in a badly neglected state. Large bedsores are not uncommon. We bring these patients into our hospice. When they come in, we bathe them carefully and take care of their wounds. They get a clean bed. Our patients are often used just to sleep on the floor in their home. **Good palliative care is a matter of heart** for us: We provide relief from pain and other distressing symptoms. We affirm life and regard dying as a normal process. We neither hasten nor postpone death and we address all psychological and spiritual needs of our patients.

We take our time to sit by the bedside of our patients. We hold their hand. We try to take their fears. We enable them to die in peace and comfort.



Nonhlanhla's short life is representative of the life of many poor Zulu in KwaZulu-Natal. Nonhlanhla grew up as an orphan. She lost her mother when she was two and she never knew her father. She lived in her aunt's house but never felt welcomed. She never attended school. Fees were too expensive. From childhood on, she always tried to make a living with small jobs. It was hard and hunger was a constant companion. Being young, she had friends and she had a big love but they all left her, left her with five children and AIDS. Her first child was born when she was twenty, eighteen years ago. Her youngest daughter is three. She learned that she has AIDS in 2014. She was very sick at that time. After taking medication for a while, everything became better but in October 2017, AIDS was back. Maybe because she had forgotten to take her pills from time to time, maybe because she could not take them when she was too hungry, maybe because she was not informed enough about the importance of taking the medication with absolute regularity. There are many reasons and they all show us the importance of good accompanying and supporting programs for the patients, like we have them with our AIDS Therapeutic Counsellors. In October 2017, our social worker visited her for the first time. Mrs Masikane made sure that all of her children can go to school. She visited Nonhlanhla regularly and counselled her and the bigger children. We supported the family with food parcels every month. When Nonhlanhla became too weak and unable to care for her smaller children we admitted her into our hospice and her two younger daughters were admitted into our children's home. I talked to Nonhlanhla a few days before she died. She told me that she feels so calm knowing that her little ones are here in the Children's Home and that Mrs Masikane will continue to counsel and help the other three children.





No One Else Would Have Gone So Far to Help Somebody in Need

Snippets from Maresi Rehder's Diary



It is often a challenging task for our Home Care Team to find and to get to our patients in the remote small settlements outside Mandeni.

It was a grey and humid day when we were called to a patient somewhere in the hills, about a 45-minute drive away by car.

After a short drive, the ambulance turned off the tarmac road and started to climb uphill on a very slippery wet dirt road that was obviously mainly used by pedestrians. We drove uphill and downhill, every now and then we went past some mud huts.

After a few miles, we reached a school, situated on a hilltop.

There was no other house, no village that you could see. We stopped.

A little girl aged between eight and ten was expecting us and climbed into the ambulance.

She was the patient's daughter and showed us the way to her house.

She walks this way every day to school, one and a half hours each way.

Right behind the school the dirt road turned into a narrow path.

We drove slowly, carefully, and very grateful that our ambulance is a good off-road vehicle.

This went on for about 15 minutes when after a sharp left turn the path became very steep downhill.

Sindi, our ambulance driver decided that this was as far as she could drive; we would have to walk the last bit.

We took the stretcher and all the other equipment with us and made our way downhill through the bush.

We found our patient lying on a mattress in his hut.

There was nothing else in this hut, no chair, no table just the mattress with a very dirty blanket.

The man, lying on this mattress was in his thirties and so weak he was not able to sit or to stand up. We decided to admit him into our hospice right away.

Two neighbours helped us to carry him the steep path back up to the ambulance and it was heart-warming to see how happy this young man was that we really made it to his place.

No other ambulance team would have gone so far to help somebody in need.



Bongiwe is an old woman, living in the informal settlements of Mandeni. She lives in a small one-room house with one of her daughters. All the other children live in Durban or Johannesburg. None of them has a job and is able to support her. The daughter who lives with her leaves the house in the morning and returns often late at night, always looking for jobs. The house has no water. They have to collect water in buckets from the next water tank, walking distance 15 min on a small steep path. Bongiwe suffers from diabetes, which was not properly treated in the past. Due to that, her right foot had to be amputated right below her knee. She has no crutches and they can't afford a wheelchair. She couldn't even use it because outside the house the terrain is very rough. Bongiwe crawls in her house and outside in the garden. She lives on a mattress on the floor. Next to the mattress stands a bucket of water and a plate with some cooked sweet potatoes, which is all she has for the day. Sweet potatoes are poison for diabetes but she has nothing else to eat. A few weeks ago, she became one of our patients and since then we see her regularly to help her with her medicine and to supply her with some healthier food from our food parcels.





Making Children Feel at Home and Safe and to Give Them a Good Start in Life

Snippets from Maresi Rehder's Diary



Almost once a week we receive a call from the Department of Social Development and we are asked whether we could take another child into our care. Nonhlanhla and Ntombifuthi* are two little girls, sisters, who came to us a few months ago. Their mother was terminally ill with AIDS and was admitted into Blessed Gérard's Hospice. The family situation had already been very difficult and our social worker had been counselling the mother for some time. Nonhlanhla and Ntombifuthi were the two youngest of five siblings. They have two elder sisters seventeen and fifteen and a brother of fourteen. When their mother was admitted into our hospice, relatives agreed to take care of the three older children but refused to take any responsibility for the two little ones.

We were happy that they were given into our care so we could make sure that they could be with their mother as often as possible.

After their mother's death the two girls are now staying with us and we will do our best to **make them feel at home and safe and to give them a good start in life.**

* Not their real names



The institution that has grown the most over the last two years, is our Children's Home. In recent years, all children's homes in kwaZulu-Natal had to apply for a new license. It was a long and tedious process but in the end, it has meant that the department of social development perceives us as a particularly good children's home.

26 children were living in our care at the end of 2016. Since our re-registration on 23 December 2016, the number of children has grown steadily.

Today we have 64 children in our custody. The age range currently is between six months and eighteen years.

They come from very different family backgrounds. Few of them are orphans. Some of them were abandoned but most of them were badly neglected, often abused.

That means for us, we need a lot more of everything. We need more food, more clothing more money for school fees but especially we need more well qualified staff in the children's home.

The number children losing their parents has dropped in general, thanks to the better provision of AIDS medicine, but the number of heavily neglected children who are given into our care is increasing.

Special children need special care. Our dream for the future is to get a good child psychologist to work in our Children's Home.

Just before this newsletter was printed we employed a second social worker for our Children's Home.

Each of our children is worth a special effort, and thanks to the help of many donors, we can give them the space and security they so desperately need.



Our Pre-Primary School & Crèche Children Do Remarkably Well When They Start School

Snippets from Maresi Rehder's Diary



Our pre-primary-school and crèche is located outside Mandeni in a very rural area. Widely scattered huts in green sugar cane fields, red loamy dirt roads and a wonderful view of the Indian Ocean. However, the idyllic location is deceptive.

People live here in extreme poverty and many families are fatherless. Be it because the fathers work far away or that they never wanted a family. The mothers work and the children are cared for by grandmothers or left to their own devices.

We looked after 80 of these children last year. We offer them preschool education to enhance their skills; we prepare the children well for school. But our kindergarten is also a place where children can play and have fun. Very important in this daily education program is the daily meal together.

Since many children at home do not get enough to eat or are not fed well, they receive a special porridge from us, which contains all the necessary vitamins and nutrients to keep them healthy. We are proud that **our pre-primary school & crèche children do remarkably well when they start school.**



One of my favourite places when I visit Mandeni is Blessed Gérard's Pre-Primary School and Crèche. It is located seventeen kilometres outside of Mandeni in a very rural setting with views of the Indian Ocean. The scenery is wonderful, green hills full of sugarcane and in between the dark red of the earthy roads. However, no beauty can hide the fact that the people who live here are bitterly poor. There is very little work. Most of the fathers are migrant workers in the big cities and the mothers stay with the children. Blessed Gérard's Pre-Primary School and Crèche is an encouraging educational opportunity in this poor area. Over 80 children have a safe place to not only play, but well-trained educators also prepare them for school and they get a hot meal, a calorically enriched porridge, because for many it is the only meal of the day. When you visit the Crèche some brave children surround you immediately, others prefer to look at the visitors from afar. Nevertheless, one thing is common to all; they are burning to show off what they learned: writing, calculating and knowledge of local animals. What they like most of all is dancing. Zulu children are great dancers. To the educators' drum their legs are flying high, they stamp their feet to the ground and they laugh. It is a pleasure to watch.



Solemnity of St. John the Baptist

24 June 2018

Video online at: <https://youtu.be/NLxDYUO73cc>



Johanna Klug was solemnly accepted into the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard during the solemn Mass.



From the youngest to the older semesters, we celebrated with gratitude the Feast of our Order of Malta Patron Saint.



Children of our children's home entertained the festively gathered community with songs and dances.



Thank You, Sr. Augustine!

by Maresi Rehder



On October 6, 2018, we received the sad news that Sister Augustine Bhengu OSB died in a car accident on the way from her home monastery in Twasana, where she was on re-



prays with the patient. "

That is how I have often experienced it.

Mr Mathonsi, deputy manager of the children's home, emphasized in his tribute at the memorial service that it was always important to her to see the good things in the children. Although not always easy, she has always been an advocate. The religious education of the children in the children's home was very important to her. She had clear religious beliefs and her commitment was great to inspire "her" children for the faith.

Unforgettable are Father Gérard's dinners with the sisters on the Saturday evenings after Holy Mass. Sr. Augustine's joviality and also her seriousness when she told us Zulu peculiarities.

Unforgettable even with what joy she sang and with what ease she fell into dance movements when the last song sounded at the end of Holy Mass in Zulu. When their evenings with Father were drawing to a close, it was her phrase, "Father, may we ask for a blessing," reminding us that it's time to go now. For a polite Zulu never says, "I want to go now."

In recent years, she became more frail and old age began to become burdensome, she began to speak of her death. The last time I said goodbye to her, a few days before the accident, she said to me, "When you come back I may already be in heaven."

Thank you, Sister Augustine, for your happiness and your warmth and for the goodwill you have always extended to us guests.

treat with her sisters, to the Care Centre.

Sister Augustine was one of three sisters from Twasana, who are not to be missed here in the daily life at the Care Centre. On 15 January 2012, Sr. Augustine joined the Care Centre of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard as a Pastoral Assistant in the Hospice and as an Educator in the Children's Home. I met her for the first time in the hospice. She sat at Phumlani's bed, holding his hand, telling stories and laughing with him. Phumlani was a small boy who had a brain tumor and was blind. He was here at the hospice until his death. Sr. Augustine replaced the family visits that never came. In my first report from Mandeni, I wrote about Sister Augustine: "He (Phumlani) lies here with an inoperable brain tumour, goes blind, is in constant pain and never gets visits except Sr. Augustine. Sr. Augustine is a powerful figure, booming when she laughs, filling the room when she sings. Often I see her in the wards, she does not nurse, she cares for the souls. She goes from bed to bed and, if it is wanted, she stays, converses, listens, and at the end





Feast of Blessed Gérard

and memorial service for Sr. Augustine

on 14 October 2018



The celebration of our patron saint was also a memorial service for Sr. Augustine, who had been fatally injured eight days earlier.



We solemnly receive our new members on this Feast. The main celebrant, Abbot Denis Ndomba O.S.B. from Tanzania, who has been a member of our brotherhood for more than nineteen years, and all the new members received our members' medal and a special blessing.



Long service award certificates were handed over to employees.



Knight of Malta and Diplomat Dr. Antonio Rapisardi, who had come all the way from Cape Town, presented us a rosary made of lava beads as a gift from the Order of Malta's Sicilian Delegation.



Sr. Conradine Mkhize O.S.B. was honoured with the President's Award of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard in gratitude for her outstandingly faithful service as a professional nurse at Blessed Gérard's Hospice as the Best Volunteer.





Dr. Khaya Nzimande was honoured with the President's Award in gratitude for his outstandingly faithful service as Medical Doctor and Manager of Blessed Gérard's Hospice as the best full-time employee.



Thuli Thabethe with Abbot Denis Ndomba O.S.B., the main celebrant of our festive service.



Children from our children's home recited an obituary to their deceased governess, Sr. Augustine.



Twasana sisters with their Superior General Sr. Bonaventura Tshabalala O.S.B. at her thank-you speech.

The deputy manager of our children's home Philani Mathonsi eulogized her on behalf of Blessed Gérard's Care Centre.



The prayer of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard

Lord Jesus Christ, through your grace you have called me to serve you as a member of the Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard. I thank you for counting me worthy of this task. I ask you humbly, with the intercession of Our Lady, St. John the Baptist, Blessed Gérard and all the Saints that the spirituality of our Brotherhood may pervade my life and my actions to be always dedicated to your service to whoever needs my help.

Trusting in your help I always want to protect the faith and have an open heart for my neighbour, especially the Poor, the Sad, the Lonely, the Handicapped and the Sick.

Grant me the strength needed to live according to this resolution as an upright Christian selflessly in the Spirit of Your Gospel, for the honour of God, for the peace of the world and the benefit of our community. Amen.



You are cordially invited
to join us at the celebration

of the
patron saint
of the
Order of Malta

**St. John
the Baptist**

on Sunday
30 June 2019



of our
patron saint

**Blessed
Gérard**

on Sunday
13 October
2019



at Blessed Gérard's Church,
61 Anderson Road, Mandeni 4490, South Africa.

9:30 am Festive Holy Mass
followed by lunch and entertainment.

We, the children of **Blessed Gérard's Children's Home**, express our gratitude for all your benevolence and support on behalf of the several thousands of people, who have been helped, cared for and looked after by the **Brotherhood of Blessed Gérard**.



Kindly update your current contact details

by sending an e-mail to bbg@bbg.org.za or a SMS or WhatsApp message to Father Gérard at +27 82 4924043
That will make it much easier for us to contact you. We will never share your private details with anybody.