

Dear Daniel,

I sincerely apologise for taking such a long time to respond to your original email of 15 August.

I would like to explain how we foresee the future will be in Shiselweni, but to do so, I need to say something about how things worked in the past.

Since arriving in Swaziland in 1985, I have been the minister of the Shiselweni congregation as well as chairperson of the church council. Since 2006, after Shiselweni Home-Based Care (SHBC) came into existence, I have also acted as the founder and CEO of the organisation. However, I have been fully aware that I will not remain in Swaziland forever and therefore, since 2013, I have deliberately been working towards implementing a succession plan whereby I can assure that the congregation as well as SHBC can go forward when I am no longer there.



In June 2023 I reached the age of 65, the normal retirement age for ministers in the church. I have applied and received permission to remain in the capacity of minister of the Shiselweni congregation until the end of February 2024. As part of our succession plan, we have ensured that the five branches (or preaching posts) of the congregation (Dwaleni, Matsanjeni, Hlushwana, Qomintaba and Big Bend) become less

dependent on the church council and become more autonomous. Each of these branches has a branch committee (a mini-church council) and they nominate two people to represent them on the congregation (Shiselweni) church council. The direct result of this decision was that the branches had an increase in their finances through Sunday offerings and tithing and the number of attendees also increased. In the past year, a church building was erected at Qomintaba to accommodate the church members and at Dwaleni plans are being made to build a new church, as the old building has become too small.



One of our church members at Big Bend, Michael Mtsetfwa, recently received his bachelor's degree in theology and he has now enrolled for his master's degree in theology. He has since been approved by the Synod of the Swaziland Reformed Church as a candidate minister and will soon be installed as a full minister in the Shiselweni congregation. Until the time that I leave, he will work together with me to lead the congregation and then, from March 2024, he will become the official minister of the congregation.



A further development that has taken place is that Mduduzi Lukhele, (whom you met at Big Bend on your previous visit to Swaziland a few years ago), has been appointed by the church council to be the coordinator of the entire congregation. He has actually been doing this work for several years and has proved himself to be reliable and exemplary in this capacity.

Shiselweni Home-Based Care (SHBC) – the organisation with which you became involved some years ago, will also be affected by my going on pension. SHBC came into being in 2006 through a vision which I believed came from God and since then it has made a huge impact in Swaziland.

SHBC is a registered NPO (RT/12828) which functions independently from the Shiselweni congregation but simultaneously is also regarded as a distinct ministry of the congregation. At our last board meeting, it was decided that Mduduzi Lukhele would take over from me as CEO of SHBC as of March 2024. We

have been working together for many years and he has also served on the board of SHBC since 2018. Mr Lukhele has full support from the board for this new role which he will be playing. For the foreseeable future, my wife and I will still be living in the house where we presently reside and we have been asked and agreed to assist with advice when needed to ensure that the work proceeds seamlessly in the future.

SHBC trained approximately 2,500 people from 2006 to 2021 in skills which enabled them to become efficient home-based caregivers. At the moment around 1,500 of these caregivers are still active in SHBC. It will be impossible to calculate how many thousands of lives have been saved through their work, mainly through the intervention of the caregivers in the lives of people who are HIV+, eradicating the stigma involved with AIDS and encouraging people to be tested and if they then test positive, motivating them to start and continue with an ART regime. This has resulted in Shiselweni becoming the region in Swaziland with the lowest death rate resulting from HIV and AIDS.

Apart from the home-based caring ministry, SHBC also has three preschools for which it is responsible (Dwaleni, Hlushwana and Big Bend) where we strive to follow a proper early childhood development curriculum to enable these children, who would most probably not have had any access to these opportunities, to later attend schools with a high academic record.



In 2020/21 a new wing was added to the existing preschool at Dwaleni with two new classrooms. In 2023 work was started at Hlushwana to build two new classrooms there as well. Up to now, the preschool has been run in the church building, but the building is not conducive towards the type of learning which is essential for these young children. The building project is almost finished, apart from the ceilings which still need to be fitted after which the building will be painted.

Since 2012 SHBC has also had the responsibility to run several feeding projects - at one stage as many as thirteen kitchens were run where around 750 children were receiving hot meals every day. Due to the donor organization who had assisted with this project annually reducing their financial assistance, many of these kitchens had to be closed down and since the start of 2023, we were forced to decide to continue with the feeding of children only at the three venues where we also have our preschools.

A further major project which was started in 2023, was that of replacing the existing pit latrines at the school at Hlushwana with flushing toilets. This decision was made shortly after a small boy fell into a pit latrine (fortunately not on our premises) and drowned. This project is still ongoing as new toilets are now being built. We have also installed a borehole with an electric pump on the premises to ensure that there is clean water available for the children at all times. (Dwaleni and Big Bend both have access to clean water.)



Another major challenge we are facing is to ensure that the preschool teacher at Hlushwana becomes fully qualified. Although she has committed herself to the children over many years, she is not yet qualified according to the standards set by the Department of Education in Swaziland. This needs to be urgently addressed, especially as the school will from 2024 move out of the church into the new classrooms. A second teacher will also need to be appointed.

As can be seen, apart from our main ministry focused on people living with HIV and AIDS, SHBC is continuing to invest extensively in the younger generation in Swaziland. This includes:

- Buying and cooking food for 150 children per day at three preschools

- Completing the work on two new preschool classrooms at Hlushwana
- Supplying fresh water to the school at Hlushwana
- Replacing pit latrines with flushing toilets
- Appointing a second teacher at Hlushwana
- Ensuring that all teachers receive the training and skills required by the Swaziland Department of Education

We are extremely thankful that Share Stichting is once again considering supporting SHBC financially. As can be seen from the report above, there is a special need for funds for our preschools to ensure that they comply with the required standards as well as supplying the basic needs of the children, including food, hygiene and safety. Any support from *Share Stichting* will therefore be allocated for these needs.

On a personal note: I fully realise that the initial involvement of *Share Stichting* came into being because of my friendship with Sonya (who had been at school with me in Durban) and through her with her husband Daniel. Now that I am preparing myself to go on pension in March 2024, I want to request that *Share Stichting* continue its support to SHBC, even when I am no longer the CEO of the organisation. Although the position of CEO is important in terms of ensuring that the vision of the organisation remains alive, ultimately any support given has very little to do with a person. I have always seen SHBC as a ministry of God which He entrusted to our congregation, and whether I am there or not, the work must and will continue.

I am including Mduduzi Lukhele in this mail to ensure that he is brought into the picture. As of March 2024, he will be the one with whom you will have official contact, but even then you are more than welcome to include me in any correspondence if you wish. As mentioned above, I will still be serving SHBC in an advisory capacity for as long as this may be necessary.

With my warmest regards



Arnau van Wyngaard