Northern Synod

TASK TEAM MAGALIESBERG CAMP SITE

Report

1. Assignment

To manage all matters relating to the Magaliesberg Youth Camp Site.

2. Task Team

Task team leader: Louis Lemmer

Task team members: Theo Oosthuizen

Nicky Hattingh

Corné Bootha

Goosen Thompson

Frans Smit

3. Execution of the assignment

The mandate of the task team is to manage everything related to the Magaliesberg Youth Camp Site located at Bokfontein in the Brits District.

Magaliesberg consists of two adjacent sites that can be utilised separately or together.

Camp 100 has 13 accommodation units, a big hall, a kitchen, braai area, volleyball court, as well as two ablution blocks. Up to 100 people can sleep at this site.

Camp 50 has 10 accommodation units, a hall, kitchen, volleyball court, braai area, and two ablution blocks. This site can accommodate up to 65 people.

There is a big swimming pool, a labyrinth, and hiking trails that can be utilised by both camp sites.

At present we have two full-time staff members on the site, but the oversight and management are done mainly by the task team. We also have a lady who handles our bookings for a commission.

Activities

The camp site's biggest asset is its location in the heart of the Magaliesberg's mountain scenery. Although it is located near to Brits, Johannesburg, and Pretoria, it yet creates the ideal island situation.

We have access to the most beautiful natural scenery, with our own mountain stream and hiking routes in the mountain. The site has many trees and is a birdwatcher's paradise. It is isolated with a beautiful view of the mountain.

Positive

We regard the site as a missional platform that presents the opportunity for the spiritual ministry and development of our youth.

A growing diversity of groups has begun to utilise the site. This includes congregations from the DR Church, other church groups, schools, the Voortrekkers, sports teams, en even tertiary colleges.

In the past year we upgraded the ladies' ablution block at Camp 100. This makes an enormous difference and creates a very pleasing effect. We hope also to upgrade the men's ablution blocks in future, when funds become available.

Challenges

The facilities on the camp site were built around 1972. The infrastructure is therefore quite old and requires much maintenance. The funds for maintenance are, however, exceedingly limited, and this therefore puts constant strain on the finances.

Our greatest challenge is to generate funds to do increased maintenance.

There is heightened pressure on us to comply with national standards, and this puts even more strain on the site's development needs. Again, this is not always attainable due to limited finances.

The site is operational and financially viable, but struggles when it comes to proactive upkeep, big unforeseen maintenance work, and development capital.

During and after Covid there was a tremendous drop in camp activities. The camp ministry is also extremely sensitive to the heightened costs of transport, which has increased greatly due to the war in Iran.

Higher electricity tariffs is our single greatest monthly challenge. Our isolation on the mountain also makes the site vulnerable to opportunistic crime when the camp is empty.

In spite of challenges, we see a systematic and sustained growth in bookings. The fact that we have handled our own bookings in the last three years has resulted in a good relationship with guests, which consequently leads to returning guests and new referrals.

Greater utilisation will put us in a much stronger financial position which will have many advantages for the maintenance and expansion of our infrastructure.

Future

Greater diversity will help us to utilise the site more effectively.

The dream is to develop the smaller site (Camp 50) into a retreat centre. For this, the accommodation units will have to be fitted with en-suite bathrooms, and the present ablution blocks be changed into leaders' units.

This development will make the site much more useful because we will then be able to meet a wider diversity of needs, without losing the site's functionality as a youth campground. It will also create an opportunity for being used during synodal getaways, planning, and other activities such as marriage enrichment camps.

Role and usefulness

Magaliesberg is an unbelievable asset managed by the Synod. ‘

The site itself is ideally located to serve as a ministry base for congregations in Northwest and Gauteng.

4. Further planning

1) The task team is prepared in the new term to continue managing the Magaliesberg Youth Camp Site. The task team will, with the support of the SSC, build further on the approach of putting the site to use as a missional platform that presents opportunities for the spiritual ministry to, and development of, our youth.
2) The task team will, with the support of the SSC, continue to investigate further development of the site.
3) Congregations are encouraged to make use of the site.