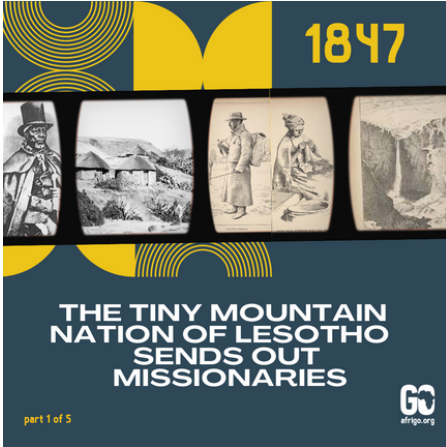


1847

# 1840S: LESOTHO SENDS MISSIONARIES



## The tiny mountain nation of Lesotho sends out missionaries

Part 1: Lesotho is a small, mountainous kingdom landlocked within the country of South Africa. It comprises the Basotho nation which began in the 1830s. Early on, a partnership formed between local pastors of the Paris Evangelical Missionary Society (PEMS) in partnership with Morena (King) Moshoeshoe. God used these early Gospel teachers to inspire Basotho men and women to share the Gospel with those around them. A strong local church emerged across Lesotho, even in the remote mountainous areas of the country!

The local outreach, which involved evangelization, discipleship and church planting, was so successful partly because Moshoeshoe saw the missionaries as important partners and co-nation-builders with him. Though tensions certainly existed, and Moshoeshoe only converted near the end of his life in 1870, he provided the opening and support required by the PEMS to carry out its work effectively.

Secondly, the mission succeeded because of a pattern of evangelization, discipleship and leadership development started by French missionary, Thomas Arbousset. This method began with outreaches and small scale evangelistic works, which grew to the point where close to 100 Christians from Morija Parish, organized into 22 small teams, would go out regularly to spread the Good News. They would visit 28 areas, covering 280 villages, sharing the Gospel with large numbers of unreached Basotho.

The fruit of the outreaches across this large network of villages produced pockets of 'hearers', 'inquirers' and then baptized Christians. Leadership developed from within the evangelistic teams and the various newly-reached communities. Gradually, church elders or deacons were recognized, as well as teachers and evangelists. Schools also began to emerge in remote areas, run by local Christians who asked for no payment in return.

It would not take long for the efforts of these contagiously passionate believers to venture further, taking their beloved Gospel of Christ into many parts of Southern Africa as well.

French missionary Thomas Arbousset ignited the spark that set countless Basotho alight in sharing the Gospel with fellow Basotho. When Arbousset returned to France in 1860, a Swiss missionary, Adolphe Mabile, continued to build upon the strong foundation laid by the first generation of Basotho Christians.

During Mabile's tenure, the PEMS (Paris Evangelical Missionary Society) and local pastors realized that for the church to become fully mature, they had to pursue taking the Gospel to areas further than their own country. The goal was that Basotho Christians should become a 'sending church' not only to their own people but also to those further afield who had never heard the Gospel!

And so, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, which was first brought to Basotho by foreigners, would so impact their lives, that they themselves would become foreign missionaries in attempts to share the message with other nations. Through this, the Good News was taken to Mankopanes people (Ndebele) in 1864; and then to the Magwamba (Tsonga), Banyai (Zambia) and Barotse (Zimbabwe) in a larger more concerted effort, which started in 1873 and continued for many years thereafter.