

MORIJA TIMES

JANUARY 2012

“Even the sparrow has found a home, and the swallow a nest for herself, where she may have her young - a place near your altar...” (Psalm 84:3)

Dear Friends,

On my first Sunday in church in Morija in late November, my eyes noticed a bird flying in through a broken window and heading straight to the right front pillar where on the ledge at top there was a nest. Many times throughout the service a pair of Red-winged Starlings flew in and out, unperturbed by our presence and worship. A few weeks later the starlings had become parents and were even busier flying to and fro with food for their chicks. Indeed, they had found a place near the altar to have their young!



The Morija church, the oldest in the Lesotho Evangelical Church (LEC), was completed in 1858 and has endured all these years. The pillars in the church came from teak masts of ships and were hauled by ox-wagon from the coast in 1864 when a new roof was put on after a storm.

There are a few differences in the services compared to those at Masitise. For one thing, during the offering time the amounts given by each prayer section are announced after all the sections have been called. There are no second chances to boost a group's total! They also don't have separate calls for just the men, the women and the youth. In total there are more groups than at Masitise, so the offering still takes quite a while, but considerable time is saved by not counting each group and announcing it before moving on to the next group. The services usually last around 2½ hours. The hymnbook has 449 hymns in it and at Morija we've been singing some we did not sing at Masitise. On a recent Sunday I was pleasantly surprised to find myself singing (in Sesotho, of course), “Let the Lower Lights Be Burning”, an old hymn by Philip Paul Bliss, that I hadn't sung in many, many years.



My house in Morija is a small, white, 1-bedroom building surrounded by trees that have kept the house quite cool even in the midst of the summer heat. Free lawn “mowing” and fertilizer come

courtesy of a few dairy cows belonging to the church president. His herdsman usually brings them by a couple of times each week.



My house is located on the same plot as my neighbors, Rev. Motumi, his wife Mampinane (“mother of Mpinane”), daughter Mpinane and son Bakoena. Rev. Motumi is the HIV/AIDS Coordinator for the LEC. He works on behalf of the LEC with partner churches, non-government organizations and government agencies in providing HIV/AIDS education and training workshops. Lesotho remains one of the countries most severely impacted by the AIDS crisis. Mampinane works at the Morija Printing Works, one of many LEC institutions based in Morija. Mpinane, almost 9, has just started 3rd grade and Bakoena, turning 4 soon, is attending pre-school.



The Morija area is nestled below the mountainous Makhoarane plateau (*above*). There is a small village at the top accessible by a rocky trail which I hike when I can for exercise and birding. The views from the top are well worth the exertions of the climb. My house is situated around 5500 feet above sea level and the top of the plateau is about 1300 feet higher. The photo at left shows a view of the Morija area from the plateau. At right is a scenic vista of another plateau from one of the viewpoints on the trail.



Like the birds I mentioned at the beginning, I've found a new church home and I'm enjoying living in Morija. At the moment I'm dividing my work days between home and the LEC office in Maseru. I will share about my new work as the LEC Planning Officer in the next newsletter.

Bliss' hymn was inspired by a sermon illustration of the great evangelist Dwight L. Moody. "Brethren," concluded Moody, "the Master will take care of the great lighthouse. Let us keep the lower lights burning." God provides the Great Light, Jesus, to show us the way. And we, as servants of Christ, can help others to find Jesus, whose words proclaim in Sesotho from the front of the Morija church, "*I am the Way, the Truth and the Life.*" (John 14:6)



Yours in Christ,

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