

Erlo Hartwig Stegen:

Pioneer, missionary and revival preacher
in an apartheid South Africa

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Abstract

As not much academic attention has been paid to the life and ministry of Erlo Hartwig Stegen (1935–present), this paper seeks to provide more insight into Erlo Stegen’s pioneering journey towards a self-sustainable protestant rural Zulu mission station, KwaSizabantu Mission, in an apartheid South Africa. Data was gleaned from interviews, documents, newsletters, reports and sermons. Thematic content analysis provided more insight into Erlo Stegen’s pioneering, missionary endeavours and his journey towards an awakening among the Zulus in KwaZulu-Natal. We argue that the missiological impact of Erlo Stegen’s ministry had benefitted the Zulu nation greatly.

Key words: Apartheid, Erlo Stegen, Pioneer, KwaSizabantu Mission, missionary, revival, self-sustainable Mission, South Africa.

1. Introduction

Although the gravitational shift of Christianity to the Global South is common knowledge (Zurlo, Johnson & Crossing, 2020), the life, ministry and legacy of the South African Erlo Hartwig Stegen has been largely overlooked in academic work. Yet Stegen’s KwaSizabantu Mission has become one of the southern hemisphere’s largest self-sustainable evangelical mission stations (Hammond, 2006; Barron, 2007). During 2020, KwaSizabantu Mission had been criticised and labelled by the media as a cult, with the effect that Adriaan Basson, news editor of News24 called for a nationwide ban on products of the Mission (Basson, 2020). The question arises if such a ban has been justified. Apart from recent studies of Fleischmann, Ferreira and Muller (2021a) and Fleischmann (2021), there remains a paucity of academic writings pertaining to KwaSizabantu Mission and its founder Rev Erlo Stegen. To fill this lacuna in academic literature, this paper provides a brief description of Stegen’s work as a missionary, pioneer and preacher, and the development of KwaSizabantu Mission into a self-sustainable mission station. To present a complete picture, it relies on archival sources, sermons, other documents, and interviews.

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2. Ancestral roots and Christian influence

Louis Harms (1808–1865), a revival preacher from Hermannsburg, North Germany, who wanted to send missionaries to Africa, built a ship, the *Kandaze*, to transport people there. In 1871, Erlo Stegen's maternal ancestors, the Withhöfts, arrived on the *Kandaze* at Port-Natal (now Durban), South Africa (Du Toit, 1986; Kitshoff & Basson, 1985). They planned to support the Hermannsburg Mission Society (HMS) through agricultural activities (Volker, 2017; KSB, 2016).

Putting savings from their meagre salaries aside, Heinrich and Catharine (Stegen's paternal grandparents, who also came to South Africa for mission work) managed to purchase a small-holding of about two hectares after some years of hard labour (KSB, 2016). Then, after additional years of productive farming, they bought and relocated to a farm at Paardefontein called Mbalane (KSB, 2016), which Carl, their son, inherited.

3. Early years and education

Erlo Hartwig Stegen was born on the Mbalane farm on 2 March 1935 as the fourth of Irmgard and Carl Stegen's six children. Owing to his liveliness, Erlo experienced several close encounters with death. He nearly choked to death; a few times, he suffered concussions, and he was once paralysed for a few days (Kitshoff & Basson, 1985). These accidents left him with recurring headaches, which clouded the rest of his childhood.

On more than one occasion, Erlo's parents related the history of Louis Harms and the Hermannsburg revival in northern Germany to their children (Kitshoff & Basson, 1985). The Stegens, although well aware of their historical family ties to the Hermannsburg missionaries and their missionary calling to minister spiritually to the African people, became more focused on attaining higher economic status. As a regular churchgoer and popular in his social circles, Carl filled the position of chief elder of the Lilienthal congregation for over 27 years (Fleischmann, 2021).

The Lilienthal congregation performed, along with its primary religious function, a strong social sub-function. Being German, the Lilienthal congregation found themselves isolated from other South Africans. South Africa had fought two world wars against the Germans, with World War II (1939–1945) still fresh in their minds. Therefore, these Germans focused on their church and its history to sustain their unified identity, which provided them with a sense of security during this tremulous time (Oosthuizen, 1985). For this reason, the congregation became relatively isolated from other Christians, finding safety in their Lutheran orthodoxy.

4. Conversion, calling and a thorn in the flesh

Through the inspired preaching of Anton Engelbrecht, their new Minister, Erlo Stegen, became increasingly aware of the evil in his own heart and his ongoing sinfulness, even after taking communion. He realised his need for the working of the

triune God in his life. Although he desired to live a life pleasing to God, he found his nature pushing him in the opposite direction. Realising the scriptural truth that it is not just enough to realise one's own sinfulness and leave it at that (James 1:22-24), Erlo experienced a notable conversion at age 15. He came under such conviction of sin that he woke his parents up to put things right with them, asking their forgiveness for his disobedience and rebellious life. Stegen realised that keeping only some of the commandments is to no benefit. He perceived that God requested a higher standard, and that he was guilty of falling short of this (James 2:10). He struggled with his anger and fits of rage. According to his reading of Matthew 5:21-22, he stood condemned. Ezekiel 18:4 made a profound impact, causing him to recognise himself as the soul that had sinned and deserved judgement, and that he needed salvation (Stegen, 2016). In desperation, he turned to Christ as his Saviour, and Christ saved him.

However, Stegen also received a 'thorn in the flesh,' as the Apostle Paul did. Due to his persistent headaches, he was forced by the doctor's orders to quit school. This came as a severe test for him. He wondered why God would confine him to his farm, but he shortly found the answer. Meeting up with some of his friends returning from school, he overheard them boasting about their unseemly social activities. Hearing them speaking as they did, Erlo realised that God, in His wisdom, had protected him from such a lifestyle (Fleischmann, 2021). While his peers were at their school desks, Stegen studied the Bible, memorising some chapters. Working from home, Erlo became a successful farmer and businessman (KSB, 2016).

Stegen received his calling soon after his conversion, but being confronted by the prospect of a poor life, he disregarded it (Stegen, 1982). Stegen cherished three activities: farming, making money, and his prized sport, tennis, which he expected would become his career (Fleischmann, 2021). For eighteen months during 1950 and 1951, Stegen experienced inner torment, as he rebelled against his spiritual calling (Stegen, 1988). In an attempt to set his mind on something else, he dedicated himself to tennis and was selected for the under-16 South African team (Du Toit, 1987). Even though he accomplished this goal, he remained restless and profoundly unhappy. This state would continue until he repented of his disobedience towards God, accepted his calling and turned his back on his family inheritance (Stegen, FPA/D33).

5. Awakening among the Zulus in Zululand

After completing a missionary training course, Stegen worked under the banner of Bibelhaus (Kitshoff & Basson, 1985) and felt a distinct calling regarding the Zulu nation (Khwela & Dube, 2019). Stegen ventured out for God with much zeal as a travelling evangelist, evangelising areas on both banks of the Umvoti river in Zulu-

land. He stated that he would preach until fire came down from heaven (Stegen, 1988). However, after twelve years of intense preaching, no revival fire had come. Exhausted by his own efforts, he became despondent, believing his ministry was a failure (Stegen, 2016).

Deeply troubled by this sense, he shared his burden with a small Zulu congregation in Maphumulo (Stegen, 1997) and asked them to search with him through Scripture for the key to revival (Stegen, 1984). As they studied the book of Acts, they came to appreciate the high standards of the first church. Grieved by their own infirmities, they cried out to God for His mercy. They mended their ways, recognising that their lives had been dishonouring and unscriptural before God. They prayed, "O God, please, we know that we could not do it in our strength. Our only hope is in You. . . . O God, we ask You for Your Name's sake, that You would work" (Stegen, 1977).

During his search for revival, Stegen became increasingly aware of his own pride and his lack of love for and genuine empathy towards the Zulus. Although he worked amongst them, Stegen found himself unwilling to serve them as their missionary. A great inward struggle arose. Stegen perceived that God was asking him to serve the Africans, by attending to their physical and spiritual needs, and yet his upbringing put him in opposition to that. He pleaded with God to send him to a country other than South Africa, promising that he would serve the indigenous group there. Yet, Stegen sensed that God was persisting in that he should become the least among the Africans. Finally, after some weeks of struggle, he bowed and accepted God's will. As he left his room, an elderly Zulu man approached him and addressed him as "Baba," which means father. Stegen marvelled that a man old enough to be *his* father should use that title for him. From that day on, Stegen was held in great respect by the Zulus from Zululand, being widely referred to as *Baba uMfundisi* (Father Preacher) (Fleischmann, 2021).

After months of studying the book of Acts and through honest introspection, revival came in 1966 to Stegen and his little congregation at Maphumulo. While they were on their knees praying, they suddenly became aware of His presence (KSB, 2016; Dube, 2019). They felt gripped by God's holiness and at the same time aware of their own unworthiness. They experienced a 'wind' blowing through them and realised that God was in their midst (KSB, 2016).

The first person to approach Stegen for help was the director of a school for witches (Stegen, 1979). She was thoroughly convicted of her sin and walked some distance to ask Stegen if God could forgive her for her evil deeds. She stated that she was to die soon and was on her way to hell. After sharing her story, she said, "Pray for me, that Jesus will rid me of these evil spirits." The co-workers prayed and cried out to God, "Oh Lord, set this person free!" Unexpectedly, these demons made an

extraordinary declaration, using the woman's voice: "We knew of God the Father, and even of God the Son, but since the Holy Spirit has come, we are burning. His fire is too hot for us. We must go" (Kitshoff & Basson, 1985).

After this incident, Erlo Stegen understood the deeper meaning of the text, "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, sayeth the Lord of hosts" (Zechariah 4:6). Stegen experienced in real life the meaning of Ephesians 6:12, "For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places." Through this incident, he realised that this was not a battle of the flesh against the spirit, but of God's Spirit against evil principalities (Kitshoff & Basson, 1985). The witch, now saved, returned home with much joy. This event was witnessed by Emanuel Khwela, Jabulani Dube, Hilda Dube, and Lidia Dube (Koch, 1981).

Simultaneously, the Holy Spirit brought other individuals to a realisation of sin, righteousness and judgement, a process that began in the strongholds of evil. For weeks, many witch doctors converged on Stegen, with a deep conviction of their own sin (Van Rooy, 1986), asking him if there was still hope for them. As they confessed their evil practices one by one, they received prayer and experienced the lifting of their burdens, replaced by deep joy and peace. Having obtained peace with God, they returned joyfully to their various communities (Fleischmann, 2021). This transformational change was soon noticed by the community (Fleischmann *et al.*, 2021b). To their amazement, these converted witches and witch doctors burnt their occult materials publicly, declaring their newfound faith in Christ (Van der Walt, 1978). This was unheard of in the Zulu tradition, and community members expected a fierce storm to demolish these converts. To their further astonishment, the anticipated storms never came. This turn of events, which seemed to shatter their previous beliefs, precipitated an interest in the God of the Christians.

6. The founding of KwaSizabantu Mission

The building at Maphumulo was too small to accommodate all those seeking peace with God. For this reason, the non-denominational KwaSizabantu Mission was established in 1970 to provide more space for those seeking God's mercy (Stegen, 1979; Dube, 2016). The place was wild and undeveloped, ranked with wattle plantations, and had no electricity or tap water available (Stegen, 1979; Dube, 2016). Over the years, the Mission has become a hub of activity, with semi-annual youth conferences for seven days of services which draw between four and six thousand youth, who do not have to pay any conference fees. Various national and international outreaches are also carried out from this Mission. Stegen, fulfilling his role as a pioneer, has, through experimental farming (Joubert, 2010), equipped the Mission to sustain itself and its branches by generating an income through multiple projects.

7. Divergent opinions

Since the start of the revival in 1966, two themes emerged in Stegen's ministry: rivers of life and opposition. Kitshoff and Basson (1985) state that the triune God being proclaimed at KwaSizabantu entailed love and a consuming fire. This became evident within the revival. As Stegen preached intrepidly in the Zulu vernacular, the message of salvation through Christ awakened the people to their lost and miserable state. Some loved Stegen for it, whereas others detested him for refusing to compromise God's standard as laid down in Scripture. From the latter group, Stegen experienced constant criticism. The severest criticisms arose from disgruntled former members who broke away from the Mission. Within this group, many could not accept the work among the mainly Zulu drug-addicted youth, sometimes two or three hundred at a time, who flocked to the Mission at a specific time for help (Fleischmann, 2021).

These criticisms sprout mainly from three sources: firstly, some did not welcome the idea of serving an African as a European missionary. Secondly, having a business mind-set while neglecting the needy soul of poor people, and thirdly, missionaries who recoiled from going through God's purifying fire and wanted to remain in charge of their own lives. The criticisms reached a breaking point when God led Stegen to provide free accommodation and meals to drug addicts who realised that they needed help. There was a choice at hand: either form bigger and better business enterprises to fund the work, or a scenario where income generated from various projects is being poured out to help these drug addicts find Christ (Fleischmann, 2021). This led to a break in the Mission, as discontented missionaries departed, some of them fearing that the addicts might endanger their lives and the peaceful atmosphere at the Mission. Although these discontented missionaries spread rumours through the media during 2019–2020, their various allegations were shown to be incorrect by an independent panel (Shazi & Mottee, 2020) and other investigative journalists (Welz, 2021; Puren, 2021).

Within an increasingly pluralistic world, the revived church's uncompromising message and the accompanying proclamation of power would be loathed by many. Armstrong (2001) stated that he could "only imagine how the media would respond to a genuine outpouring of the Spirit in our time." In seeking possible reasons for the opposition faced by these revival preachers, Tracy (1842) provides the following insight in relation to opposition against the revival of Edwards at Northampton:

If this was true doctrine and true religion, their own hopes were delusive, and their souls in danger of perdition. They must of necessity think ill, either of the work at Northampton, or of the religion which they professed, and perhaps taught. It was inevitable; therefore, human nature being what it is, that evidence should be sought

and found against the work at Northampton; that all real faults should be gathered up and reported; that a lousy interpretation should be put upon everything that the hearer or beholder could not understand; and that every evil report should be exaggerated, till the sum total met the wishes of those who were anxious to condemn the work, lest the work should condemn them. In the following years, we shall find the same principle in vigorous operation, and on a larger scale, and with more permanent results.

This quotation from Tracy would be borne out in the ministry of Stegen as well. During 2019, disgruntled former members contacted various media outlets, raising serious allegations of money laundering and sexual abuse that allegedly stretched over the years. An independent panel consisting of two high-profile investigators found these allegations not to be true (Shazi & Mottee, 2020). Although these attacks, some of which came from some of his own brothers, deeply hurt him, Stegen continued to serve the Zulus of KwaZulu-Natal and quietly continued to go about his own missionary tasks. Although he did not seem to harbour bitterness against his attackers, he wept over them. As of his family forsook him in this way, the Zulu co-workers stood by him, as he had stood by them during the apartheid period.

Prince Buthelezi, of the Zulu royalty, observes that “despite extraordinary burdens wrought through spiritual battle, Stegen has flourished and his life’s work at KwaSizabantu has flourished with him” (Buthelezi, 2015). In agreement with this line of thought, Hammond (2006) observes that “it [the mission] has thrived in spite of times of great opposition and slanderous campaigns against it.” Regarding opposition, Stegen remarks that “wherever God is at work, the devil is also there to do his dirty counter work” (Hammond, 2006). He is of the opinion that the depth of God’s work is often equivalent to the amount of opposition encountered.

Although the work thrived, Stegen’s health, after long hours of hard labour, gave away in his 80s. To add to this burden, three of his own brothers struggled with the thought of Stegen serving the Zulus and empowering them to become trustees of a self-sustainable mission.

8. A non-apartheid Mission in an apartheid South Africa

Experiences in multiple dimensions provided Stegen with a conceptual lens for making sense of the hurt caused by the racial hierarchies of the apartheid regime. Having grown up under a mix of apartheid and entrenched nationalistic German culture, Stegen first had to come to grips with the issues of racism and nationalism in his own life (Fleischmann, 2021). Confronted by the Holy Spirit and having accepted God’s calling to service amongst the Zulus from KwaZulu-Natal, he experienced the power of God’s resurrection in his life to overcome his own pride and

nationalistic tendencies. As he experienced God's transforming power in his own life, it became his constant prayer to be able to see as God sees.

During the apartheid era (which cut through both laws and culture), whites did not mix with other races. As the country was polarised within an increasing apartheid regime, God called upon Stegen to bridge the widening racial gulf through sacrificial living and service to his Zulu neighbours. In this respect, and being awakened to the reality of eternity, he was half a century ahead of his time, breaking new ground and preparing the way for others to follow. Stegen's example of *servicing* the Africans as a missionary influenced other farmers to the extent that they too allowed African people to sit in the vehicle's front seat with them as they travelled. This took place during the height of apartheid, even though they were despised for their stance (Duvel, 2019).

During the apartheid years, the law forbade mission outposts to be within three miles of one another (Van Rooy, 1987). This law restricted Stegen from preaching in the more densely populated Umvoti River area, which other churches jealously guarded. Any attempt by a missionary to work in their area was seen as trespassing and was immediately reported to the government. Although Stegen took up no collections and did not aim to steal the sheep of other congregations, he was barred from reaching out to people in this densely populated geographical area (Du Toit, 1987). Through the Mission Stations and Communal Reserves Act of 1909 of the Cape of Good Hope, any religious organisation, other than the established church, was required to seek special permission to hold any service attended by more than five members, the consequence being that a number of people were punished for doing mission work (Kaplan, McLaughlin, Marvin, Nelson, Rowland & Whitaker, 1971). As Stegen was meeting with the Zulu brethren at the height of apartheid, he was frequently interrogated by the South African police, who suspected him of being a communist. According to the Native Administration Act of 1927, meetings of more than ten persons in native areas were allowed only by permission of the Native Commissioner or Resident Magistrate (Landis, 1957). Moreover, the Group Areas Act No. 41 of 1950 provided for the establishment of group areas, setting up the basis for the construction of a segregated society (Kaplan *et al.*, 1971). This legislation coincided with the time of Erlo's conversion, which laid the foundation for the construction of his multi-cultural society amid apartheid. In 1957, a new regulation was issued by the Minister of the Interior to further restrict mission stations other than those of the established church.

As a result of the prohibitions imposed by segregationists and apartheid legislation, the only remaining option for Stegen was to pitch his evangelical tent at King-cliffe, south of the Umvoti valley, on the premises of his eldest brother's shop. There he would preach daily for fourteen months. Then he moved his tent to Maphumulo, north of the river, also on one of his brother's shop premises (Fleischmann, 2021).

As no mainline church was financing this ministry during this era, Stegen had no other option than to utilise his farming skills to provide the necessary means of support for his outreach to mainly the Zulu people of KwaZulu-Natal (Joosten, 2019). In addition, throughout the apartheid (1948–1994) and post-apartheid (post-1994) years, Stegen provided skills training in agriculture to the Zulu nation from Zululand to elevate them from poverty. However, by simply living amongst the Zulus, he became an object of scorn for many whites. Dube (2019), an advisor to King Goodwill Zwelithini, remarks that “others can say anything they like, whether good or bad about Baba uMfundisi [Stegen], but the testimony of his life before our very eyes has spoken volumes to our Zulu nation.” Through Stegen’s humility and love for the Zulu nation, the once-proud and hard hearts of Zulu men, who were clinging to their traditions, habits and customs, were won over (Ngubane, 2019). Ngubane states, “But once we came across this light [of the Gospel], things changed in our lives and the way we look at things . . . we looked differently, putting God first . . . what we cling to is in a good relationship with God” (Ngubane, 2019).

Apartheid legislation could not stop the working of the Holy Spirit (Fleischmann, 2021). Stegen, through his example, eradicated the racism lurking within not only the hearts of his multi-racial congregation under apartheid decades before these laws were abolished (Ngubane, 2018), but also at Ellis Park Stadium in Johannesburg on 21 September 1986, where he preached to a multi-racial Christian gathering (Stegen, 1986). The importance of the things of this world had vanished, and converts became one sanctified body in Christ, meeting together in hearing God’s word. Like Beyers Naude (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994), Stegen fearlessly condemned racism from the pulpit as an invited preacher in Afrikaans churches during apartheid. Likewise, to Father Trevor Huddleston (Hofmeyr & Pillay, 1994), no segregation legislation could separate Stegen from his congregation or from Christians of other races.

9. Stegen’s idea of a self-sustainable mission station

Stegen endeavoured to make his Mission and its branches self-sustainable. In training his missionaries, he taught them, through example, not to request funding from people, but to work diligently and request things from God through prayer (Ngubane, 2019). This aligned Stegen with George Müller’s and Louis Harms’ stance never to solicit donations for missionary work. In his over 60 years of mission work, Stegen never took collections during services, whilst providing accommodation and meals free of charge for those seeking God (Fleischmann, 2021). In newsletters of 1985 and 1992, Stegen stated that none of his co-workers would request donations, and if someone does, they are not co-workers, but are abusing the Mission’s name for their own gain (Stegen, 1985, 1992a, 1992b).

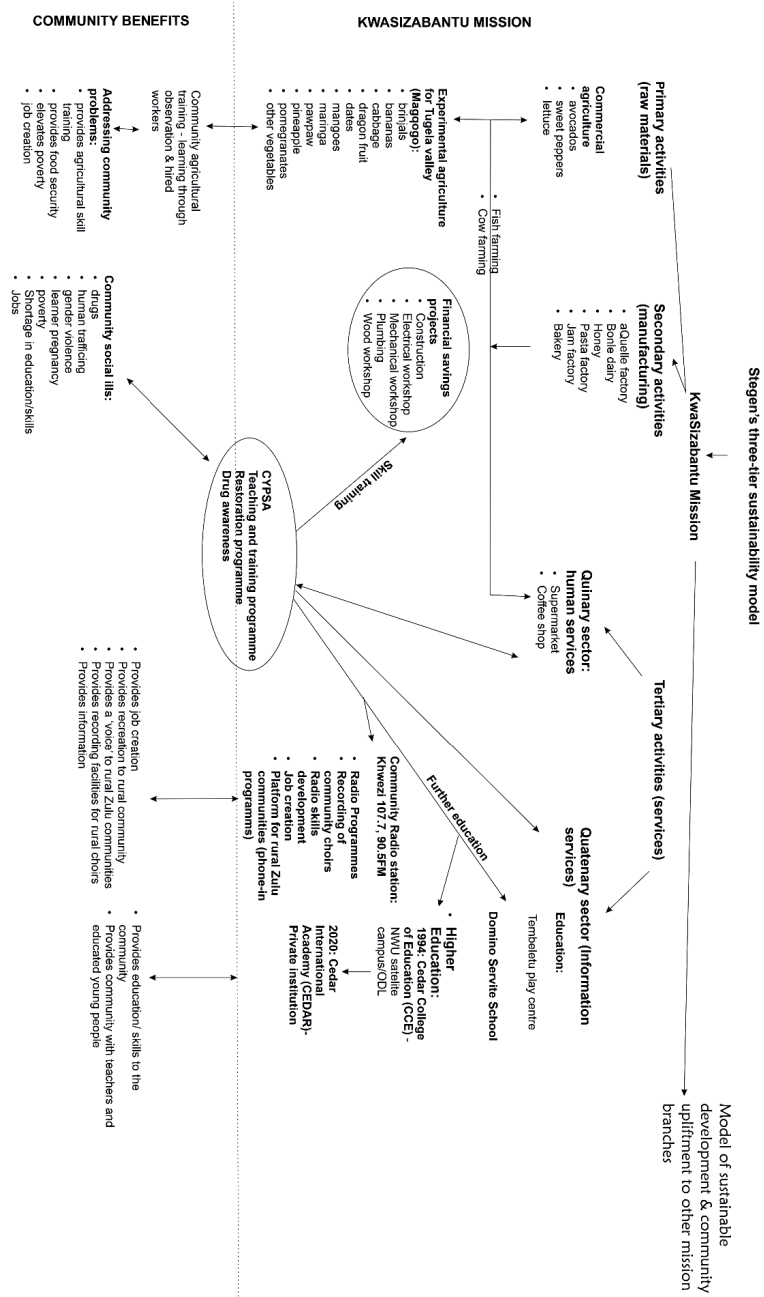


Figure 1: Synopsis of Erlo Stegen's KSB project dynamics and benefits to the Zulu rural communities (Fleischmann, 2021)

As shown in Figure 1, there is a multifarious dynamic between different groups of projects and the community. The diagram shows several benefits for the rural community from Erlo Stegen's projects, such as support for communities facing social ills, acquiring agricultural and other skills by means of radio presentations and demonstrations, job creation, provision of information, and the provision of high-quality primary, secondary and tertiary education. In addition, this model of sustainable development and community upliftment is being rolled out to other branches in varying degrees, depending on the environment and the needs of the branch and its community.

The Mission started mainly with primary activities (agriculture) to provide finances for the development of secondary (wood carpentry, water bottling plant etc.), tertiary (education), and quinary activities (research activities). Stegen, under God's guidance, laboured tirelessly to experiment and commercialise various projects such as aQuellé (a water bottling plant) and Bonlé (a dairy). The income generated from these projects provides support to the Mission and community projects. In this way, the Mission provides support and sustenance to thousands in a greatly impoverished rural landscape. As Prince Buthelezi stated:

Erlo Stegen has given the greater part of his life to serving our people in this community and communities around KwaSizabantu. He has worked hard and served with humility. . . . I admire his character and strength. I admire his leadership and humility. I am grateful for all he has done for my people in KwaZulu-Natal, for my family and for me (Buthelezi, 2015:2-3).

On visiting the Mission, Prince Buthelezi and other Zulu chiefs and community leaders saw to their astonishment how whites, blacks, coloured people and Indians would join in the same lines for their food and eat together in one big dining hall. Stegen had abolished apartheid on his mission station during the high tide of apartheid.

In an effort to avoid financial dependency, Erlo Stegen focussed his attention on three spheres:

- sustaining the mission and mission activities with various agricultural projects and experimental farming;
- developing sustainable indigenous missionaries, educating them on how to generate an income and set up a business to support their own families; and
- using his agricultural skills to teach impoverished people how to sustain themselves.

Stegen showed himself to be a visionary leader with endurance, patience, and a firm assurance that God is with him as he experiments to find means of sustaining various indigenous mission stations, visitors and missionaries with their families

		Control	
Funding		Foreign	Local
	Foreign	Colonial/paternal or pioneer stage	Sponsorship model
	Local	Young/developing church	Indigenous/sustainable church

Quadrant 1: Foreign control + foreign funding = colonial/paternal model or pioneer

Quadrant 2: Local control + foreign funding = sponsorship model

Quadrant 3: Foreign control + local funding = young, developing church

Quadrant 4: Local control + local funding = indigenous/sustainable church

Table 1: Location of control and finance in mission efforts (Stout, 2008)

(Joosten, 2019). From KwaSizabantu's inception, the location of control and finances in mission efforts is that of an indigenous sustainable mission station, as seen in quadrant 4 in Table 1.

KwaSizabantu Mission has developed into a self-governed, self-supported, and self-propagating mission station as formulated classically by Rufus Anderson and Henry Venn a century and a half ago. Yet, contrary to the observation that most such churches could barely survive and tend not to become self-sufficient (Bosch, 2018), KwaSizabantu Mission has developed into a sustainable mission under Zulu co-leadership.

10. Obedience to God's actual call, not to strategic concepts

To Stegen, God's call to obedience and right standing with Him through the Blood of Christ was more important than any project or prospect. Stegen held the view that if there was no unconfessed sin between him and God, he would be usable in God's hands to accomplish His purposes. Stegen, therefore, prioritised caring for his relationship with God. When the relationship with God is right, he believed, then life can flow to spiritually arid areas. One such example was witnessed by Nkosi Mabaso (Ndabezitha Mntungwa), chief of the Mntungwa clan, who colourfully describes how Stegen as "a pioneer missionary" reached out to his area, often referred to as the "devil's palace" due to its tribal feuds. Mabaso testified how God worked mightily through Stegen to end over 100 years of tribal wars between the Bathembu and Mabaso clans (Nkosi Mabaso, 2011). Mabaso stated, "I can point to many graves in my family, but because of the Gospel, death stopped. There is nothing greater than that closed chasm where many souls plunged in day after day" (Nkosi Mabaso, 2011).

11. Mission as living a counterculture informed by the Word of God

Stegen stresses the importance of living a holy life, so that the Holy Spirit is not grieved and His working thereby quenched. Stegen often refers to Acts 1, where Luke spoke about all that Christ *did* and *taught* (in that order), suggesting that we should likewise follow this example of “walking our talk.”

12. The Legacy of Erlo Hartwig Stegen

Erlo Hartwig Stegen is leaving a missiological legacy behind in Evangelical circles and rural Zulu communities of KwaZulu-Natal, which will continue to impact missions in the future. His stance that mission stations should be self-supporting bore fruit. At the time of writing, KwaSizabantu Mission consists of a water bottling business of 18,000 sqm, a dairy, over six hectares of hothouses, a community radio station (Pate & Dauda, 2013), a school, and tertiary higher education centre. In addition, over the past seven years, more than 18,500 drug-addicted young people have attended a 21-day restoration programme at the Mission free of charge, with over 5,500 schools visited during a national drug awareness campaign in these same years (Fleischmann *et al.*, 2021b). The revival also spread to other areas as many have been helped and inspired to go back home and “ignite God’s fire” within their communities (Cibane, 2019).

For over 60 years, Stegen trained Zulus, whom God had equipped through the revival amongst their people to become bearers of the Gospel to the Global North and the rest of the world. This training coincides with the vision of Louis Harms to bring the Gospel to Africa, so that Africans in due time might return the Gospel to Europe (Grundmann, 2012). In 2007, Stegen received the Robert W. Pierce Award for Christian Service, which recognised his 56 years of labour amongst the Zulu nation as missionary, preacher, educator and man of compassion (Witness Reporter, 2007). In 2013, Stegen received the North-West University’s Chancellor’s medal in acknowledgement of his outstanding and continuing contributions to educational development, community uplift and outreach in rural and impoverished areas in Southern Africa (North-West University, 2013). Despite receiving these awards, Stegen is known for his humility (Ngubane, 2019) and well-loved for his fearless preaching of Scripture (Ngubane, 2018).

13. Missiological Impact of Stegen’s Ministry

The impact of Stegen’s ministry can be witnessed in several ways, including the lives of numerous converts and missionaries. From the inception of the revival, the Gospel has radically changed the lives of the worst of sinners (Majola, 2019), as Kurt Koch’s extensive research on numerous cases during the 1980s demonstrated (Koch, 1981). Moreover, Stegen has been on extensive mission trips and outreaches

on invitation, reaching out to all continents. With the coming of the digital age, his sermons have been indexed on numerous digital platforms and have been downloaded worldwide. The KwaSizabantu Ministers' Conferences held every second year have drawn an international network of preachers, ministers, and Christian workers from all denominations, providing a platform for dialogue, discussions and strong friendship. The Mission has become a home for missionaries and many other Christians from such countries as Australia, Belgium, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, France, Germany, Italy, Malawi, Mozambique, Paraguay, Romania, Russia, Switzerland, the Netherlands, and the USA (Fleischmann, 2021). Working shoulder to shoulder with missionaries from a variety of cultures and denominations, Stegen has provided opportunities for co-workers to participate fully in the mission work.

KwaSizabantu's non-denominational, inter-racial ministry provides a variety of rural ministries and inter-cultural teamwork. It has proved to be a suitable option for extensive exposure to students in missiology over a relatively short period within one geographic location (Barron, 2007). Barron attests to the fact that delegates visiting the Mission have returned inspired to implement similar humanitarian and community development projects within their own areas.

14. Conclusion

The life and ministry of Stegen indicate that God requires an obedient and willing heart. In His sovereignty, God can use any sanctified vessel to impact the world through a revival and missionary endeavour. Man cannot stir up an authentic revival, but it may be prayed for from God, who in His mercy may decide to answer the prayer for revival. Since the inception of the revival among the Zulus from Natal in 1966, Stegen has not been preoccupied with expanding his own reputation, but rather concerned that his life remained in the centre of God's activity. Stegen was willing to have his life radically adjusted from a self-centred to a God-centred one. Although unfounded, slanderous attacks may have seemed to damage the work for a short time, they could not change God's opinion about the workers upon whom He bestows His blessings if they keep on serving Him with an undivided heart. Only eternity will reveal the true extent of the missiological impact and legacy of Erlo Hartwig Stegen.

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