

# Forging ahead at Dumisani T

**Rev Dr Alistair Wilson invites us to share in his vision for Dumisani.**

## **At the crossroads**

A crossroads is a daunting and exciting place. There are important decisions to be made and these decisions will inevitably have significant consequences. But it is also a place where expectations are raised; dreams of travelling fresh paths and reaching places as yet unexplored.

Dumisani Theological Institute is now at a crossroads.

The beginning of 2007 saw very significant changes at Dumisani: a new Principal recently in place, a reshaped portfolio of courses; the departure of a valued part-time staff member and the prospect of another valued full-time staff member leaving us by the end of 2007. That is a lot for a small institution to deal with!

Although all these changes bring their own challenges and some (especially farewells) are sad, they also present new possibilities and that is what I want to bring before you now.

## **A vision for the future**

I have a vision for Dumisani Theological Institute and I want to invite you to share that vision with me and my colleagues as we seek to go where the Lord will lead us.

Most of you will be aware of Dumisani Theological Institute and the work it has done over more than 25 years providing training and resources to the isiXhosa-speaking churches of the Eastern Cape of South Africa. You may not be aware that we are (to the best of our knowledge) the only institution providing evangelical, accredited theological study at degree level within a radius of approximately 300km. The nearest similar institution is 3 hours' drive from King William's Town. What is more, you may not be aware that the population of the Eastern Cape is approximately 6.9 million people (according to recent statistics, [www.southafrica.info/ess\\_info/sa\\_glance/demographics/popprov.htm](http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/demographics/popprov.htm). Compare the population of Scotland at approximately 5 million people.). That means Dumisani is one of only two evangelical institutions in the province offering theological higher education to some 14.5% of the South African population. Thus, someone from the Eastern Cape who senses God's call to ministry (whether they are amaXhosa, Afrikaans-speaking coloured, Afrikaans-speaking white, Indian, or English-speaking white) does not have many opportunities

for training. I want Dumisani to be available to anyone who wishes to train for ministry and has the necessary equipping to do so. But to be able to meet this need requires resources.

## **What do we have?**

We currently have various physical resources (buildings, computers, books, etc., though not what we would like to have!). But what is really important is who we have. We have some 57 enthusiastic students (approximately 21 full-time and 36 part-time), studying mainly at degree level. We also have a small number of full-time academic staff (3 at present; 2 by the end of 2007) and junior administrative staff (4) who carry a significant workload. The administrative staff members, in particular, need help and further opportunities to develop their training and skills. We also have an excellent supportive relationship with North-West University in Potchefstroom, which enables us to offer a high-quality BTh degree.



*Alistair Wilson*

## **What do we need?**

### *Staff*

We need an appropriate number of well qualified staff, both academic and administrative. How many is enough? Well, perhaps you might compare us with the Free Church College, which is also teaching degree level students. The Free Church pays for five full-time professors to teach the current student body. Do Dumisani students in King William's Town deserve anything less in either quantity or quality than Free Church College students in Edinburgh? When we have sufficient staff in place, we are told by NWU, we may be given the right to teach an honours degree as well as our current ordinary degree, which will help train leaders for the South African church. We also require a senior administrator who can manage the business side of the institution and release the academic staff to concentrate of their responsibilities. Please pray for those (perhaps you?) whom the Lord is preparing to meet these needs.

### *Physical resources*

We need appropriate buildings which can provide a context for education which is conducive to learning and office space with privacy for academic study, writing, interviews, etc. We also need a well stocked Library of approaching 12 000 volumes (we currently have approximately 7500-8000 volumes). This will include sufficient copies of standard textbooks and also sufficient recent books at a more

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advanced level to support more advanced students (e.g., senior BTh students and honours' students) and the research of academic staff. We would also wish to have more African and South African literature represented. Together with the books themselves, we need ample storage and presentation space for books in an environment which helps to preserve the books, along with ample reading, study and writing space for students.

## *Money*

There is no getting away from it! With money we can provide scholarships, subsidised books and all kinds of benefits to our students and further training to our staff, as well as operate our institution. Thanks to the many individuals, groups and organisations who have contributed already to our financial resources and so to our ministry.

## *Interest*

No, not on the money! We need people who become our friends; who want to know what is going on; who may even visit us and provide volunteer help.

In five years' time, I want Dumisani Theological Institute to be highly regarded throughout South Africa and internationally as a quality provider of theological education, a first choice



*Dumisani Theological Institute*

for students regardless of their ethnic background or geographical location.

## **The way ahead**

We have reached a crossroads, but we are not standing still and we are not turning back! We believe the Lord has called Dumisani Theological Institute to be a blessing to the church in South Africa and beyond. Will you stand with us as we forge ahead?



*Teaching a class of students*