

# **ECUMENICAL INSTITUTE OF DISTANCE THEOLOGICAL STUDIES**

## **REPORT TO NZATS AGM      JUNE 2007**

The Ecumenical Institute of Distance Theological Studies continues to deliver courses leading to the L.Th Diploma (a three year tertiary level qualification) and also offers an S.Th (which requires a dissertation of some 25,000 to 30,000 words). All of our L.Th courses are delivered by distance study with study guides and sets of readings provided to students. Each course also has a set textbook which students are expected to purchase for study during the year. Tutors are assigned to assist students as necessary and to mark and assess their work.

We seek to provide courses that meet a wide spectrum of theological interest and tradition. In earlier years the course material was primarily sourced from Coolamon College (the distance education arm of the Uniting Church in Australia) and used by agreement with Coolamon. In recent years we have been able to have most our courses written here in New Zealand with the material reflecting a New Zealand context.

Currently we have some 120 students enrolled with EIDTS. The majority of our students are “adult learners”, many being lay people seeking to equip themselves for parish work within lay ministry teams. In recent years we have had a growing number of students enrolling for “one-off” subjects rather than for the full L.Th qualification. In some cases this has been to fulfil the requirements of their particular church or denomination while for others it is a way of “exploring” their own particular interests. It seems that fewer of our students are looking for an academic qualification and with the full L.Th consisting of 15 subjects many find that a daunting project to undertake.

As a registered tertiary Private Education Provider we face the on-going and ever-changing compliance requirements of NZQA and TEC and the financial cost that that involves along with the cost in time and energy of our staff.

Although we are a distance deliverer we do offer Residential Schools that are part of the requirements for certain courses such as Homiletics and Worship and Liturgy and Pastoral Theology. This year we also introduced a Residential School in Biblical Studies. We decided to offer this as an opportunity for students at the beginning of their study to benefit from a face-to-face experience with their tutors and the chance to interact with other students, as well as gaining hints on distance study and an understanding of the expectations and processes of study with EIDTS.

The Ecumenical Institute continues to function under the oversight of the Ecumenical Board of Theological Studies with representatives from the Methodist, Anglican and Presbyterian Churches and the Salvation Army.

Bruce Hansen  
Director EIDTS