

# Renewing

Understanding the context of mission today

**REACH**  
Renewing, Engaging  
and Advocating Churches

Session 1

## Coming Together in Faith to Learn: A Story from South Africa

*Scott Couper*

The fonts of Christian leadership are seminaries, the sources of ministerial formation. Yet, in South Africa, theological education continues to be gutted. The Apartheid regime closed many of the churches' seminaries, leaving precious few, if any choices, for those who sense God's "call." Parents and guidance counsellors discourage youth from studying the humanities. For those few who qualify academically for university, the market pushes them to vocations offering substantive remuneration – not ministry. Universities are grafting faculties of theology with other disciplines, or eliminating them altogether. What is left for our churches? How can they nurture their ministers? Woefully inadequate "theology by extension" or "correspondence" programmes are hardly suitable for engendering "Life Together" or community, as Dietrich Bonhoeffer taught. Ministerial formation is an intentional fusion of spirituality, intellect and morals; it's primarily about relationships, faith-based relationships, which cannot be adequately fostered in secular universities or through a postal service. I work with the Seth Mokitimi Seminary, led by the Rev Dr Mvume Dandala (former President of the South African Council of Churches, former Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church of Southern Africa and head of the All Africa Conference of Churches). Here, in a spirit of mutuality, men and women of different races, ecclesiastic backgrounds, countries and languages strive to groom prophetic leadership for southern African churches. As a people of faith who seek God's reign of justice and peace in the world, we strongly believe that the church is lost without effective spirit-filled ministerial leadership.



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