

The Mukhanyo Distance Vision

Building Local Churches by Equipping Godly Leaders

How can your church partner with others to build local church communities in Africa? We would like to share with you a developing vision of Mukhanyo Theological College and its strategic importance in southern Africa. It is a vision designed to assist the mission of your church.

Africa's Need for Theological Education

In the last century, the Church in Africa has expanded very rapidly – so rapidly that an overwhelming majority of churches lack properly trained leaders. More than 200 million people meet for church every Sunday and are led by someone with very little Bible knowledge. Even pastors who desire to study are almost always hindered because they cannot leave their families, churches, and communities in order to be properly trained. Research has also shown that at least 60% of those who are able leave home for further training will never return to their community of origin – the place where the need is the greatest. Most African churches are overwhelmed by theological ignorance, biblical error, and spiritual confusion since even the leaders lack basic Bible knowledge.

In the past, this challenge has been addressed by developing various correspondence programs for rural church leaders, by supporting traveling evangelists or teachers, and by bringing a select few students to the city for various levels of theological education. The Lord has greatly blessed many of these methods. But their success remains small when compared to the great need. Also, these programs are very expensive to maintain and often very ineffective in addressing local challenges. So a different method is needed to give basic Bible instruction to church leaders in southern Africa.



Mukhanyo's Vision to Distribute Education

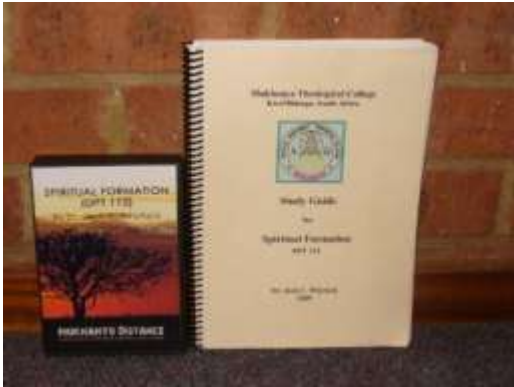
Mukhanyo Theological College has been providing Bible instruction to church leaders for more than fifteen years. High-quality and Reformed Bible teaching with contextual application has been given to hundreds of church leaders. But we can only reach those who live within traveling distance of the college. Some have come from greater distances, but this increases the overall costs and ineffectiveness of education. Church leaders should not be required to come to us; We need to take the education to them.

Our new vision – Mukhanyo Distance – is designed to do this. The goal remains the same: (a) to equip church leaders with in-service training in their own ministry context; (b) to help churches provide quality discipleship and biblical training; and (c) to provide quality academic content in an acceptable format that also addresses the importance of a godly Christian character and the immediate contextual application of what is learned.

There are three important parts to the Mukhanyo Distance program. Each of these three parts is vital – like the three legs of a stool – for providing a stable learning platform:

1. **DVD Courses.** We offer videos of actual lectures at Mukhanyo together with a study guide and/or textbook. This provides the delivery of high-quality Reformed content at the same level of learning as on Mukhanyo's campus. It also ensures that the content is not changed in any way before it is taught.

2. **Group Learning.** It is difficult to study when you are all alone. There is a high 'drop out' rate when studying alone. But learning is much easier, productive and rewarding when studying in groups. This provides an environment for discussion, debate and encouragement with your fellow students. These learning groups will form naturally when local church leaders around southern Africa gather to watch DVD courses together. This group learning also encourages churches to come together, enhancing unity and co operation at various levels.



3. **Local Mentors.** The facilitator/mentor will be a suitably qualified, experienced man who watches the DVDs together with the students. He will coordinate the learning with Mukhanyo's administration and provide support, guidance, and encouragement to the students.

Not only is this model of distribution very effective for learning, but it also lowers the overall cost of biblical education by bringing Bible instruction to church leaders in their own ministry contexts. This model would not have worked in the past, but now DVD technology is available almost everywhere in Africa. We need to take advantage of new technology to be more effective in training African pastors and churches.

What has Mukhanyo Distance already done and what do we want to do to implement this vision? The vision is big but we have, by God's grace, begun to turn it into practical ministry.

We have already video recorded many courses at Mukhanyo on the certificate and diploma levels of learning (where the need in Africa is the greatest). These courses are taught by our multiethnic staff and further edited for increased quality. We are busy developing the video footage into high-quality DVD lectures. We are also busy developing some additional study material for each course.

We have also tested the DVD courses in several learning sites, and have made some important improvements. The first course is presently being reviewed in several additional sites in South Africa, Zambia, and elsewhere.

We now need to develop at least ten more DVD courses in the next year. But we cannot rush this process since we want to maintain the quality and Reformed content. We also need qualified people to help us improve the course study guides.



We are now speaking with a number of different churches, mostly in South Africa, who want to start using the Mukhanyo Distance program in their ministry. The need in Africa is great, but by working together in God's kingdom we hope to make a difference for many.

The potential result of this program is like the two sides of a double-

edged sword. The first 'edge' is reaching the untrained pastor who has no other access to theological study. The second is that with the LORD already gathering millions of people in churches all around Africa every Sunday, they may for the first time, as a result of their pastor being trained through Mukhanyo Distance, hear the Gospel clearly preached and the whole counsel of God taught. Who knows what the LORD can do with this vision?

The way to do this is to invert the current process of a small centralised group trying to find donors to fund and oversee the projects. This is an inefficient, cumbersome and non scalable method. Instead of us sourcing potential sites and 'running' them ourselves and then trying to mentor and raise funds for them, we should approach GKSA churches, communicate the vision and encourage them to take ownership of implementing the model from the base of their own church. They themselves would identify a potential site near to them set it up and support it from the start. This will encourage local churches and their councils to grapple with important issues regarding church order, theology and missions. Each local church can be directly involved in training pastors and missions.

Prayer, Planning, Production, and Promotion

The Mukhanyo Distance program is dependent for success on the gracious blessing of our sovereign Lord. Only with the Lord's favor will our plans become a blessing for many churches in Africa. As I see it now, there are presently four focus areas that need attention:

1. **Prayer.** Please join with us in praying for the development and distribution of the Mukhanyo Distance program. Pray that good teaching material will be produced quickly in the next few months. Pray for the mentors at each learning site. Pray for the many students who are now beginning their studies. Please pray for God's gracious blessing on this program.



2. **Planning.** We at Mukhanyo need to keep planning for the further development of modules and for additional mentors and learning sites. It seems the Lord has brought several key people to our Mukhanyo Distance team. Now we need to step forward in faith into new areas. The need is enormous, and we need wisdom even to know where to start.

3. **Production.** The most important step right now, I feel, is to develop at least ten more DVD course modules in the next year. This takes time and money, but we are hoping to be able to accomplish this goal.

4. **Promotion.** We are presently sharing the Mukhanyo Distance vision with many established churches in South Africa. We feel this program will give these churches the tools they need to reach out to uneducated church leaders in their own neighborhoods. We are also prayerfully looking for additional supporters, since this all cannot be done without money.

Mukhanyo Distance is a developing vision that has stirred much interest in southern Africa and abroad. Please pray with us that God will bless this vision abundantly for His greater glory. Feel free to contact the Mukhanyo Distance staff for more details about this new program.

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