

## **Tribute to Tom by Whitley principal, Rev Professor René Erwich**

Today we farewell Tom, one of our very loved students at Whitley College. Tom was special in so many ways. We are thankful for what he brought to our Whitley community over the years. My first encounter with Tom was quite a while ago when I stood waiting in the morning at the entrance of my office. It was a Tuesday morning and, there was a knock at the front door of the College. One of our staff opened the door and there was Tom. I did not know it was Tom. I thought reception had ordered lunches for the meetings of that day. I was totally wrong. It was Tom and he turned up with tray loads of pastries for students to enjoy in the breaks between classes. And this was not just that one time. Tom kept coming in on Tuesdays, with trays of pastries and with this wonderful smile. This generous smile. A smile of grace.

Someone else said, Tom was also participating in the Field Education for ordination in the BUV at the College: 'my first meeting with Tom was a little confusing - I couldn't work out why this person I'd never met before liked me so much!! I'm sure I won't be the only person to observe how engaging Tom's smile and his effervescent personality were. He brought to our STFE group an openness to growth in himself and to learning from others, and a much-appreciated positive presence'.

This openness to learning and growing with a humble heart was noticed by many. We are already missing Tom like all of us here.

I would like to convey our condolences from the whole Whitley community, staff, students and Council to you Thanh, Timothy, Toby and Troy. Above all I wish you God's comfort and his loving presence with the words of Psalm 23 (The Message):

1-3 God, my shepherd!

I don't need a thing.

You have bedded me down in lush meadows,

you find me quiet pools to drink from.

True to your word,

you let me catch my breath  
and send me in the right direction.

<sup>4</sup> Even when the way goes through

Death Valley,

I'm not afraid

when you walk at my side.

Your trusty shepherd's crook

makes me feel secure.

<sup>5</sup> You serve me a six-course dinner

right in front of my enemies.

You revive my drooping head;

my cup brims with blessing.

<sup>6</sup> Your beauty and love chase after me

every day of my life.

I'm back home in the house of God

for the rest of my life.

May our Lord Jesus be with you in all things.