



## Editorial

### In memoriam

*On 24 October 2010, Professor Callie Hugo of the Department of Practical Theology at the University of South Africa passed away tragically. He will be sadly missed by his family, friends and colleagues. His article is mentioned below and included in this issue.*

The purpose of this special issue is to highlight the importance of Christian leadership and to stress that the context within which leadership is reflected upon and exercised is important. All of the articles discuss aspects of leadership from a Christian theological perspective. We believe that an ongoing debate on leadership is important given the vast potential for good leadership to have a positive impact on the world. The contribution of Christians to this debate is vital, since people in all countries of the world suffer because of malign and destructive forms of leadership.

This special issue is the result of a joint project of several scholars from Africa and Europe. It exemplifies the aims of the project, which are to provide a reflection on leadership from a variety of perspectives. Our personal background, or biography, influences our theology as researchers, especially in terms of the questions we ask. Therefore, it is important to bring together different experiences and perspectives. Many books create the impression that leadership should be the same worldwide. Our hypothesis is that leadership principles need to be debated and contextualised. The articles of this issue support this hypothesis. Four authors are from South Africa, two from Switzerland, two are German, one is Russian-German, and one author is Dutch. Thus, readers can profit from a variety of perspectives on leadership.

Except for one, all the authors in this issue are connected in some way to the University of South Africa (Unisa). This special issue is a fruit of the co-operation that started in 2000 between Unisa and the GBFE (Gesellschaft für Bildung und Forschung in Europa – Society for Education and Research in Europe). In 1999, one of the GBFE institutes, Akademie für christliche Führungskräfte (Academy of Christian leadership), started its leadership programme. Since 2006,

the discipline of Theological Ethics at Unisa has offered a B.Th. Honours degree and an M.Th. degree that specialise in “Christian leadership in context”. Several Unisa staff members from different theological disciplines formed themselves into a collaborative cluster to offer these degrees. Some of these staff members have contributed articles to this issue. Other contributors include three international scholars associated with different departments at Unisa and successful postgraduate students in the field of Christian leadership. The articles of this issue are divided into the following categories: biblical examples, ethical and practical perspectives and leadership in different countries and contexts.

### **Biblical examples**

The first article by Wilhelm J. Wessels, Professor in the discipline of Old Testament and Ancient Near Eastern Studies at Unisa is based on a passage from the Old Testament prophet Jeremiah. Inspired by Traversi’s concept of “connected communication”, Wessels investigates Jeremiah 8:18-9:3 as a case study for connected leadership. He shows through a deep exegesis of this prophetic lamentation, the importance of connectedness in leading the people of Israel. Yahweh’s connectedness to the people is rooted in the covenantal relationship between Yahweh and them. Jeremiah, a prophet called by Yahweh, shares this connectedness to the people of Israel. However, the prophet’s most important connection is to Yahweh. Wessels unfolds the relevance of this ancient text for modern times. He sees connected communication as a crucial factor for leadership.

The following article, by Professor Christoph W. Stenschke, is entitled “When the second man takes the lead: reflections on Joseph Barnabas and Paul of Tarsus and their relationship in the New Testament”. Stenschke teaches New Testament studies at the Biblisch-Theologische Akademie Wiedenest, Germany, and is a Professor Extraordinarius in the Department of New Testament and Early Christian Studies at Unisa. He argues that Joseph Barnabas, who is often encountered in the Book of Acts, is one of the great leaders and mentors of early Christianity. The article provides a detailed discussion of Barnabas’s life and ministry, and especially his relationship with the apostle Paul. Stenschke points out that even though Barnabas initially acted as Paul’s mentor, subsequently he willingly allowed Paul to assume the main leadership role, meanwhile continuing to support Paul and his ministry. He goes on to suggest that in Paul’s own ministry of identifying and training co-workers, he was putting into effect what he had learnt from Barnabas. Contemporary Christian leaders can learn much from Barnabas and Paul about

leadership development and changing relationships. They need to ask themselves whether they are willing to put the ministry of Christ in others before their perception of their own position, role or status.

## **Ethical and practical perspectives**

This section starts with an article about leadership ethics by Dr Volker Kessler who directs the Akademie für christliche Führungskräfte in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. He is also a Research Fellow in the discipline of Theological Ethics (and Christian Leadership) at Unisa. His article on leadership and power investigates the phenomenon of power from different perspectives. After a philosophical and theological reflection on the essence of power, the article describes seven forms of the exercise of power. These are illustrated by examples from society and the church. Cross-cultural management theory shows how the cultural dimension of power distance influences the development of appropriate leadership styles. In other words, you cannot lead in South East Asia as you would lead in Northern Europe, and vice versa. The final section deals with the ethics of power and especially with the danger of the abuse of power on the one hand, and of a power vacuum on the other hand. The article concludes with some ethical guidelines for Christian leaders on how to use power in a responsible manner.

Dr Wessel Bentley, a Methodist minister and part-time lecturer in the discipline of Theological Ethics in the department of Philosophy and Systematic Theology at Unisa, has written on the subject, “The formation of Christian leaders: a Wesleyan approach”. He points out that the eighteenth-century Wesleyan model of leadership predates some of the more recent writers on leadership theory who critique the pronounced distinction between leaders and followers. He discusses the many contributions Wesleyans made to the society of their day because of their understanding that “every person has the ability to become an instrument of God’s presence within their particular context”. Wesley looked for those who were willing to serve among, and not over, other people. Many were lay leaders who were willing to be directed by God’s love and desired to dedicate themselves to righteous living. Because Wesley’s emphasis was on the responsibility, and not the authority of the leader, there was no chasm between the leader and the follower. Rather, their different areas of influence, witness and responsibility were stressed. Within the local Methodist classes, a pattern of commitment, prayer, support, holiness of life, service to others and mutual accountability resulted in sacrificial and liberating forms of leadership.

Louise Kretzschmar, Professor in Theological Ethics and the Chairperson of the Christian leadership cluster at Unisa has written on “Cultural pathways and pitfalls in South Africa: a reflection on moral agency and leadership from a Christian perspective”. This article begins with an analysis of what moral agency is, especially when viewed from a Christian perspective. She notes the importance of moral agency within the African context, where so many are calling for the transformation of individual people, leaders and society as a whole. However, her insights are not restricted to this context. She uses a model of cultural values developed by Hampden-Turner and Trompenaars (2000) to investigate both where culture acts as a pathway to encourage moral agency, responsibility and change and where culture constitutes a pitfall because it blocks necessary moral transformation. Particular attention is given to Western and African cultural values in this analysis, including how these values can be distorted and combined. Kretzschmar goes on to show how Christian leaders need to expose and resist cultural value distortions in order to act as moral agents and promote genuine social transformation.

The following article is written by a husband and wife team. Franziska A.S. Hornstra-Fuchs is Swiss, and her husband, Dr Wilrens L. Hornstra is Dutch. The article deals with the subject of “Female leaders in an international evangelical mission organisation: an empirical study of Youth With A Mission [YWAM] in Germany” and is based on Franziska A.S. Hornstra-Fuchs’s completed M.Th. dissertation. It begins with a discussion of how female leadership is perceived within evangelical circles and particularly within the YWAM organisation. The discussion shows how the leadership of women is both accepted in practice and defended in formal statements within this evangelical organisation, reflecting an “egalitarian” position, sometimes also referred to as “evangelical feminism”. The authors proceed to outline the empirical research methods that were employed to identify why women are significantly under-represented within YWAM in Germany. They show that, contrary to expectations, the explicit interpretation of biblical texts did not play a significant role. Factors that did play a role in retarding female leadership were church background, a lack of female role models, the lower self-confidence of women, family responsibilities, stereotypes and leadership images, and the incumbent leadership within the organisation. The authors conclude that the latter factor appears to be the most crucial, since incumbent leaders, mostly men, select and appoint new leaders. A deliberate effort on the part of male leaders to actively encourage and promote women with leadership potential

can bring YWAM Germany in line with the biblical interpretations and policies within YWAM international with respect to female leadership.

The late Professor Callie J. Hugo contributed to this issue on leadership by writing an article about the issue of conflict resolution from the perspective of Practical Theology, with a focus on Pastoral Counselling. His article is entitled “Dialogical inquiry as an instrument of the reconciliation of conflict in the hands of Christian leaders”. It focuses on how South Africans can find justice and healing for the hurts of the past. He argues that Christian leaders have an important role to play in the area of conflict resolution. But, in order to make a constructive contribution, they need to move beyond narrow or deficient understandings of reconciliation and take into account the existential aspects of conflict. He outlines and evaluates a number of approaches to conflict resolution, including those of Dreyer (reconciliation as a dilemma for forgiveness), Kistner (how narratives reduced the severity of trauma in the Truth and Reconciliation Commission), Hess (the journey between victims and perpetrators in Mamelodi), and the views of Desmond Tutu on *ubuntu*. Hugo argues that a clear integration of a biblical approach to reconciliation with that of dialogical inquiry is an approach that can be employed by Christian leaders to good effect.

### **Leadership examples from different countries**

This third grouping of articles begins with a contribution from Professor Johannes Reimer, who lectures at the Theologisches Seminar Ewersbach, Germany, and is a Professor Extraordinarius with the discipline of Missiology at Unisa. Born in Russia, Johannes Reimer is well acquainted with Russian culture and history. In his article, entitled, “When western leadership models become a mixed blessing”, he unfolds a Russian critique of the writings on leadership of the well-known American author Steven Covey. Covey’s “eight habits” are greatly appreciated by many western leadership experts. But Vladimir Tarassenko does not regard them as ethical at all. Having experienced the ideology of the communist regime, Tarassenko is very sensitive to traces of totalitarianism. He demonstrates how Covey’s principles could lead to the ideologisation of work, and finally, to totalitarianism itself. Tarassenko’s criticism shows that Russia is now looking for a third way of leadership, beyond both communism and the American leadership approach as represented in Covey’s work. Johannes Reimer argues that leadership theories always have to be adapted within different contexts and his article is

an encouragement to leaders to actively develop appropriate forms of leadership in their own contexts.

The next article by the Swiss pastor Michael Russenberger is on the Swiss leadership style. It is based on his Master's dissertation completed in 2004 with the Department of Practical Theology at Unisa. Switzerland is a very special country – it is one of the oldest democracies in the world. Switzerland has never had a monarch, and it practices a direct and participative form of democracy, which is probably unique in the world. This specific history and attitude has enormous consequences for the leadership style adopted in Switzerland. Russenberger begins by outlining the historical background of Swiss culture in general. He then explains the four core values of the Swiss leadership culture. The first of these core values, “no power for the individual”, makes the Swiss people very sceptical about leaders who want to become “No. 1” within an organisation. Being a pastor himself, Russenberger then draws out the practical-theological consequences for leadership in Swiss churches. This article provides additional evidence for the need to contextualise leadership concepts, contrary to the many universal leadership constructs prevalent in some approaches to leadership theory.

In conclusion, we believe that these perspectives on leadership contributed by authors from five different countries can make a critical and constructive contribution to the global debate within theological and church circles and society at large. And we hope that this discourse will continue.

**L. Kretzschmar & V. Kessler**

**Guest editors: *Koers***