

# Preface to the special issue ‘Sustainable leadership in times of uncertainty’



## Authors:

Volker Kessler<sup>1,2</sup> 

Jennifer Slater<sup>3</sup> 

## Affiliations:

<sup>1</sup>Gesellschaft für Bildung und Forschung in Europa (GBFE), Gummersbach, Germany

<sup>2</sup>Research Institute of Theology and Religion, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

<sup>3</sup>Department of Philosophy, Practical and Systematic Theology, College of Human Sciences, University of South Africa, Pretoria, South Africa

## Corresponding author:

Volker Kessler,  
volker.kessler@gbfe.eu

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This special issue titled ‘Sustainable leadership – in times of uncertainty’ is the outcome of a conference that was held in Oslo, Norway, 18–20 May 2022. This was the sixth conference in the series of Christian Leadership Conferences (CLC), which began in 2013 at the University of South Africa, Pretoria. Subsequent conferences were held in Germany (2014), Belgium (2016), Germany (2018) and Pretoria (2019). (See the themes below – Table 1). The primary goal of the CLC is to foster research, academic discourse, together with insightful and topical musings on Christian Leadership. It is *per se* interdisciplinary, addressing scholars and reflective practitioners, with a sensitivity for cultural diversity.

The Sixth CLC was marked by the ramifications of COVID-19. Preparation for this conference commenced in 2021 but was postponed to 2022 because of the lockdown and restrictions on travel and group gatherings. The conference was eventually held and hosted by the Norwegian School of Leadership and Theology (<https://hlt.no>) and GBFE (<https://gbfe.eu>). Most of the participants came from various Norwegian and German academic institutions and others from South Africa, (University of South Africa). A number of presentations were carried out online as travel restrictions prevented in-person attendance.

The contributions emanated from different academic disciplines, however, mostly from theology and management sciences, where they reflected on the kind of leadership that would prove to be sustainable in the long term – even if risk and uncertainty will remain essential – in our volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) world. The conference aimed at identifying, describing, analysing and developing intellectual input from a variety of perspectives so as to develop strategies that can respond to ever new challenges.

The output of the Norwegian conference is accommodated in two different journals: the special issue with the South African journal *Verbum et ecclesia* as presented here and the other special issue with the *Scandinavian Journal of Leadership & Theology*, Volume 10 (<https://sjlt-journal.com/index.php/sjlt>). Both journals reflect the theme ‘Christian Leadership Conference: Sustainable leadership’ but for different readers in mind.

As editors, we are happy to present eight publications out of 11 publications originally submitted for this special issue with *Verbum et Ecclesia*. Two articles: one written by Louise Kretzschmar and the other written by Jennifer Slater, address important ethical issues for sustainable leadership. Three contributions refer to Biblical leaders: to the Old Testament prophet Elijah by Thinandavha Derrick Mashau, to the project leader Nehemiah by Hans-Georg Wüch and then to the New Testament apostle Paul by Christoph Stenschke. Bernhard Ott’s paper refers to the education factor in the sustainability discourse. The special needs of female leaders are addressed in the article of Martina Kessler. In a survey, Thomas Kröck investigates the sensitivity for environmental sustainability among German Protestant churches.

**TABLE 1:** History of the Christian Leadership Conferences.

| Conference series | Conference theme   |
|-------------------|--|
| CLC I:            | <i>Christian Leadership in the workplace</i> , Pretoria (ZA), 21–22. 2. 2013; published as special edition ‘Christian Leadership in the workplace’ with the journal <i>Koers – Bulletin for Christian Scholarship</i> 79(2).   |
| CLC II:           | <i>New Christian Leadership in changing times: Perspectives from Africa and Europe</i> , Bergneustadt (D), 30.9.-1.10.2014; published in J. Barentsen, V. Kessler & E. Meier (eds.), <i>Changing Leadership in a changing world: Perspectives from Africa and Europe</i> (Leuven: Peeters, 2016) |
| CLC III:          | <i>Increasing Diversity</i> , Leuven (B), 29.-30.4.2016; published in J. Barentsen, S. van den Heuvel & V. Kessler (eds.), <i>Increasing Diversity: Loss of control or adaptive identity construction</i> (Leuven: Peeters, 2017)  |
| CLC IV:           | <i>Metaphors for Leading – Leading by Metaphors</i> , Burbach (D), 25.-27.4.2018; published in S. Jung, V. Kessler, L. Kretzschmar & E. Meier (eds.) <i>Metaphors for Leadership: Leading with metaphors</i> (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2019)   |
| CLC V:            | <i>‘The last shall be the first’ – Theological and ethical reflection on (Christian) leadership</i> , Pretoria (ZA), 19.-21.6.2019; published as special edition ‘Christian Leadership’, edited by W. Bentley, with the journal <i>HTS Theological Studies</i> 76(2).                            |
| CLC VI:           | <i>Sustainable Leadership – in times of uncertainty</i> , Oslo (N), 18.-20.5.2022; published in special issues with two journals <i>Scandinavian Journal of Leadership and Theology</i> and <i>Verbum et ecclesia</i>  |

We thank the anonymous reviewers for their selfless and important contribution to the quality of this special issue. Most of all we thank the authors for their contributions

and their willingness to revise their articles to address the concerns of the reviewers. We are looking forward to the next CLC to be held in Budapest, Hungary, September 2024.

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