



**Ella Smith Simmons Inaugural Annual Public Lecture**  
**Judith Thomas Library Auditorium**  
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Introduction: Societal Conditions

There is a universal need for positive social change worldwide. All societies and practically every section of society face ever-worsening overwhelming challenges in nearly every aspect of life. All are crying for transformation and for those who can lead them to positive social change.<sup>1</sup>

I contend that social inequalities underlie most of the world's challenges. One troubling dynamic that is endemic to African countries, as well as others, was pointed out, for example, by Margaret Thatcher in her discourse on the challenges of the 21st century. She declared that "countries are not rich in proportion to their natural resources. Countries are rich whose governments have policies which encourage essential central creativity, initiative, and enterprise of man, and recognize his desire to do better for his family."<sup>2</sup>

Background: Challenges for Africa

In this light, we look at Africa. The United Nations has observed, "Africa is diverse, and challenges can vary widely across different countries and regions. Efforts by African governments, regional organizations, and international partners are ongoing to address these challenges and promote sustainable development."<sup>3</sup> Specifically, African nations must attend to the following:

- Climate change that disrupts ecosystems and threaten the sustainability of natural resources
- Hunger and malnutrition that are at alarmingly high rates from a food crisis of unprecedented proportions
- Healthcare that is simply not accessible in many regions
- Peacekeeping and conflict resolution challenges due to the complex nature of conflicts, historical grievances, and the presence of non-state actors and
- Lingering issues of the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda of 1994 to "prosecute persons responsible for genocide and other serious violations of international humanitarian law."<sup>4</sup>

In January 2015, after acknowledging Africa's significant achievements, the Heads of State and Governments of the African Union adopted Agenda 2063, a long-term strategic framework for the socio-economic transformation of the African continent. The plan aims to guide Africa toward a future of inclusive and sustainable development. It emphasizes the importance of unity, self-reliance,

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<sup>1</sup> Ute Stephan, Michael Patterson, Cristina B. Gibson, and Johanna Mair, "Organizations Driving Positive Social Change: A Review and an Integrative Framework of Change Processes," *Journal of Management* 42, no. 5 (2016): 1250-1281, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206316633268>

<sup>2</sup> Margaret Thatcher, "Speech to Evergreen". Margaret Thatcher Foundation, January 17, 1996, <https://www.margaretthatcher.org/document/108354>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations. Africa. "Peace, dignity, and equality on a healthy planet" United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/africa>

<sup>4</sup> United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/africa>

and the active participation of African citizens in shaping their continent's future.<sup>5</sup> Specifically, Agenda 2063 sets seven points of aspiration that represent this collective vision for Africa's development:

1. a prosperous Africa
2. an integrated continent
3. an Africa of good governance
4. peace and security
5. a renaissance of the African culture(s)
6. a full gender equality in all spheres of life
7. a globally influential Africa<sup>6</sup>

This call for peace, united collaboration, and tangible development demands a Joseph of Biblical fame in terms of leadership, wisdom, and ability.

### The Urgent Need for Unique Leadership in Africa

One writer observed, “If the decline in world peace and the global rise of unhappiness demonstrate anything, it’s that leaders who don’t pay attention to all aspects of people’s wellbeing do so at their own peril.”<sup>7</sup> Today’s challenges and the lofty aspirations of Agenda 2063 demand dedicated, visionary, competent, strategic leaders who are capable of shepherding nations, communities, cultural groups, families, and individuals through fundamental transformations for the positive social changes of its goals. Any change at any level of society is difficult at best. These kinds of changes by nature and enormity are nearly impossible. They require leaders who are rarely available at any time in any place on earth. “Questions continue to focus on how to define, recognize, practice, and understand leadership.”<sup>8</sup> The research provides some responses to these questions. Therefore, the remainder of this lecture will provide a rudimentary overview of findings or lessons learned, in summary due to time constraints, from research that focuses on the characteristics, competencies, and compassion of leadership for positive changes in society. These will be integrated and not presented sequentially since they overlap in life and the practice of leadership.

### Leadership for Positive Change in Society

A multitude of crises have negatively affected individuals, families, communities, and nations in increasingly interrelated ways worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic taught the world many lessons about change and opened up many queries. The pandemic exposed a “new normal” of change, marked by three dimensions: (1) It’s *perpetual* — occurring all the time. (2) It’s *pervasive*, unfolding in multiple areas of life at once. (3) It’s *exponential* — accelerating at an increasingly rapid rate.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/africa>

<sup>6</sup> United Nations. <https://www.un.org/en/global-issues/africa>

<sup>7</sup> Jon Clifton, “In Our Chaotic World, Can People Find Peace Within?” Gallop (blog), September 20, 2023. <https://news.gallup.com/opinion/gallup/510797/chaotic-world-people-find-peace-within.aspx>

<sup>8</sup> David Burlingame. (2016). Social Change Through Leadership. [https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305700486\\_Social\\_Change\\_Through\\_Leadership](https://www.researchgate.net/publication/305700486_Social_Change_Through_Leadership)

<sup>9</sup> Aneel Chima and Ron Gutman, “What It Takes to Lead Through an Era of Exponential Change,” Harvard Business Review, October 29, 2020. <https://hbr.org/2020/10/what-it-takes-to-lead-through-an-era-of-exponential-change>

Historically, leadership models have been for linear and localized thinking and action but not for interlocked exponential and systemic thinking and action. Linear thinking cannot catch up and adapt to these changes.<sup>10</sup> We need new forms of leadership and new ways of thinking about leadership. Rapid change from current issues of puzzling political globalization and unsettling social complexities requires leaders who are first committed to positive social change. They must also be well-educated, competent, and ethical individuals who strive to achieve positive changes that benefit everyone.<sup>11</sup>

Ford and associates cited an array of studies from a variety of approaches from the past two centuries that suggest that leadership is the act of fulfilling generic operational functions, four specifically.<sup>12</sup> These are: (1) creating a clear direction for the change (visioning), (2) organizing and coordinating the work involved (structuring), (3) engaging and developing people for its accomplishment (social integration), and (4) attending to events and occurrences in and around the change for appropriate actions and modifications (monitoring).<sup>13</sup>

Along with these, those who favor social change models see leadership as more relational than functional in nature. Burlingame reaches back decades to Selznick (1957), who saw change as a social process to meet the needs of a social situation.<sup>14</sup> The research of Astin and associates crystallized this model's essentials into eight critical related elements.

1. Consciousness of self is understanding one's beliefs, values, attitudes, and emotions that motivate their behaviors and determine their consciousness of others.
2. *Congruence* is essential, requiring thinking, feeling, and behaving with consistency, authenticity, and honesty toward others.
3. *Commitment* is the motivation to serve and implies passion, intensity, and duration, leading to and guiding productive human interactions.
4. *Collaboration* is to work with others in a common effort from an empowerment of self and others through trust.
5. *Common purpose*, that is working from a shared vision with shared aims and values, that facilitates the group's ability to engage in collective analyses of the issues at hand and the task to be undertaken.
6. *Controversy with Civility* recognizes that differences in viewpoint are inevitable and must be aired openly but with civility, respect, and trust—that is, engaging in controversy with grace and courtesy.
7. *Citizenship* is the link to a process whereby the individual and the collaborative group become responsibly connected to the community working for positive change on behalf of others.

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<sup>10</sup> Chima and Gutman, What It Takes to Lead Through an Era of Exponential Change.

<sup>11</sup> Burlingame, Social Change Through Leadership.

<sup>12</sup> Jeffrey Ford, Laurie Ford and Beth Polin, "Leadership in the Implementation of Change: Functions, Sources, and Requisite Variety," *Journal of Change Management*, 21, no 1 (2021): 87-119, <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2021.1861697>.

<sup>13</sup> Ford, Ford, and Polin, "Leadership in the Implementation of Change".

<sup>14</sup> Burlingame, "Social Change Through Leadership".

8. *Change* is the ability to adapt to constantly evolving environments and situations while maintaining the core functions of the group. It is the value ‘hub’ giving meaning to all eight and is itself the goal of leadership—to make a better world for self and others.<sup>15 16</sup>

This model aligns most closely with research findings for effective sustainable change for positive community development and fundamental societal improvements. Kwon posits that from this approach the leader will be more influential in church and also as a citizen of society.<sup>17</sup> He summarized social change models based on five assumptions, with leadership being

- Socially responsible
- Collaborative
- A process, not a position
- Inclusive and accessible to all people
- Values-based<sup>18</sup>

Researchers at Stanford University developed an approach to leadership called sapient leadership. They described a sapient leader as one who is wise, sagacious (learned/intelligent), and discerning in navigating change while remaining compassionate. They say sapient leaders “exhibit authenticity, humility, and vulnerability, inspiring the necessary trust and psychological safety that drives shared learning and intelligence, resulting in enhanced collective performance and leading to a better future for all.”<sup>19</sup>

Personal relational approaches to leadership for societal improvement are experiencing greater acceptance and support in light of the world’s need to address great challenges. There is a demand for both intrapersonal and interpersonal capacities. Pereira and associates assert that we can meet today’s challenges “by nurturing the extraordinary within each of us and using those qualities to strengthen, deepen, and inspire the practice of creating change.”<sup>20</sup>

Some see social consciousness as innately linked with a deep understanding of human interdependence and the various values that underlie these insights as imperative. Nobel noted, citing Battilana, that every successful social movement features three distinct leadership roles: the agitator, the innovator, and the orchestrator. She contends that successful social change requires all three at different times.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Helen S. Astin et al., *A Social Change Model of Leadership Development: Guidebook*, ver. 3 (Higher Education Research Institute, University of California, Los Angeles, 1996), <http://www.heri.ucla.edu/PDFs/pubs/ASocialChangeModelofLeadershipDevelopment.pdf>

<sup>16</sup> Sung Kwon, “Social Change Model of Leadership Development,” *Ministry Magazine*, 95, no. 7. (July 2023): 22-25.

<sup>17</sup> Kwon, “Social Change Model of Leadership Development,” 22-25.

<sup>18</sup> Kwon, “Social Change Model of Leadership Development,” 22-25.

<sup>19</sup> Chima and Gutman, *What It Takes to Lead Through an Era of Exponential Change*.

<sup>20</sup> Aaron Pereira, Linda Bell Grdina, and Nora Johnson. “Connecting Individual and Societal Change,” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, 2020. <https://doi.org/10.48558/A67W-CT94>.

<sup>21</sup> Carmen Nobel, “The Three Types of Leaders Who Create Radical Change”. Harvard Business School. Working Knowledge: [Business Research for Business Leaders](https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/the-three-types-of-leaders-who-create-radical-change). (September 20, 2017): <https://hbswk.hbs.edu/item/the-three-types-of-leaders-who-create-radical-change>

Fullan, also acknowledging the social nature of societal change, observes that, leaders of the purported “great” organizations are characterized by “deep personal humility” and “intense professional will.” He extols the consistent capacity to develop leadership in others for sustainable reform.<sup>22</sup>

In leadership development, the social change model demands a purposeful, collaborative, value-based process that is intentionally aimed at positive social change. Astin’s social change model emerges from the following six key assumptions: Remember the five that Kwon reviewed in his analysis—plus the actual goal.

- Leadership is socially responsible; it impacts change on behalf of others
- Leadership is collaborative
- Leadership is a process, not a position
- Leadership is inclusive and accessible to all people
- Leadership should be values-based
- Community involvement/service is a powerful vehicle for leadership<sup>23</sup>

These interactions require leaders who are emotionally healthy, spiritually mature, and professionally competent. According to Wigglesworth, spiritual intelligence is "the ability to act with wisdom and compassion while maintaining inner and outer peace, regardless of the circumstances."<sup>24</sup> Emmons states that spiritual intelligence is the adaptive use of spiritual information to facilitate everyday problem-solving and goal attainment.<sup>25</sup> That is, spiritual intelligence is what we use to develop our capacity for meaning, vision, and values. It allows us to dream and to strive. Spiritual intelligence underlies the things we believe in and the role our beliefs and values play in the actions we take.<sup>26</sup>

Zohar’s analyses yielded 12 elements of human behavior that comprise spiritual intelligence which can apply to community development:

1. Self-awareness: Knowing what I believe in and value and what deeply motivates me.
2. Spontaneity: Living in and being responsive to the moment.
3. Vision and value-led life: Acting from principles and deep beliefs and living accordingly.
4. [W]Holism: Seeing larger patterns, relationships, and connections; having a sense of belonging.
5. Compassion: Having the quality of "feeling-with" and deep empathy for others.

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<sup>22</sup> Michael Fullan, Claudia Cuttress, and Ann Kilcher, “Eight forces for leaders of change,” National Staff Development Council, 26, no. 4 (2005): 54-58, 64.

<sup>23</sup> Susan R. Komives and Wendy Wagner (Eds), NCLP (National Clearinghouse for Leadership Programs), Leadership for a better world: Understanding the social change model of leadership development, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (NJ: Jossey-Bass, 2017).

<sup>24</sup> Wigglesworth in O'Doherty, The Spirit of Laws in the Information Age: Synergizing spiritual intelligence with the legal philosophy, 2015, p. 18

<sup>25</sup> Emmons in Mark O'Doherty, The Spirit of Laws in the Information Age: Synergizing spiritual intelligence with the legal philosophy (Lulu.com, 2015), p. 18

<sup>26</sup> O'Doherty, The Spirit of Laws in the Information Age, p. 18

6. Celebration of diversity: Valuing other people for their differences, not despite their differences.
7. Field independence: Standing against the crowd and having one's own convictions.
8. Humility: Having the sense of being a player in a larger drama, of one's true place in the world.
9. Tendency to ask fundamental "Why?" questions: Needing to understand things and get to the bottom of them.
10. Ability to reframe: Standing back from a situation or problem and seeing the bigger picture or wider context.
11. Positive use of adversity: Learning and growing from mistakes, setbacks, and suffering.
12. Sense of vocation: Feeling called to serve, to give something back.

### Challenge to The Adventist University of Africa

AUA has been called and has committed to delivering outstanding education from a Biblical foundation to prepare competent leaders to serve the Church and society in a Christ-like manner through postgraduate and professional education and research as a premier university. AUA exists to bring positive sustainable change to the societies under its influence through leadership development. To this end, AUA pursues relevance and excellence in the traditional areas of research, teaching, and service, with an emphasis on the life-changing ability of each.

Adams and associates make an essential observation. Teaching/learning, research, and social action related to crises and community problems “need to be informed by a realistic view of the challenges ahead as well as examples of recent scientific and social breakthroughs that may help us balance the need for continued social change with something akin to cautious optimism about the future of our work with the people and communities of the world.”<sup>27</sup>

Research. Reupert observed that ‘good’ research requires rigor, adherence to ethical principles, and an objective, systematic approach to knowledge generation. She stresses, however, the need for research that is good because of its social impact and its beneficial impact on others.<sup>28</sup>

Some tangible benefits of positive impactful social research include the following, for example.

- The effective translation and dissemination of research can help bridge the gap between research findings and their application to policy and practice and, hence, have a positive social impact.
- Journals play a key role in this process, especially when the peer review process helps to maintain high standards and credibility. Journal articles also help to create networks of references and citations, linking related research.
- Journals help communicate research findings to the wider public and allow researchers from different geographic regions to engage in academic dialogue.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Deborah Adams, Mary Ohmer, Amy Mendenhall, and Michelle Mohr Carney. “Global Crises and Hopefulness in Community Practice?” *Journal of Community Practice* 31, no. 1 (2023): 1–10. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10705422.2023.2196967>

<sup>28</sup> Andrea Reupert, A. (2023). “Research that results in positive social change.” *Advances in Mental Health*, 21 no. (3 (2023)), 183–185. <https://doi.org/10.1080/18387357.2023.2232615>

<sup>29</sup> Reupert, 183

Teaching. At this point it is basically agreed that leadership can be taught (e.g. see Bennis, 1989; Greenfield, 1996; Kellerman, 2008; O'Connell, McCarthy, and Hall, 2004, from Burlingame 2016). However, the question remains: *How* do we teach leadership? That is still a matter of significant debate. Blanchard and Donahue (2007) suggested that teaching leadership must center on providing students “broad experiential learning environments that include several pedagogical styles.”<sup>30</sup> A purely cognitive approach is insufficient to prepare students for leadership to meet today’s challenges.

Traditional leadership curricula and instructional practices of reading and discussing theories are no match for the needs of the cultural diversity and increasing globalization of today’s world. This is especially significant in social organizations and contexts where leaders focus on “social justice, empowerment, welfare, and change.”<sup>31</sup> True education is a powerful catalyst for social change and the transformative impact that social change can have on individuals and communities creating a more just and equitable society.<sup>32</sup>

Yet, in many instances, there remain disconnects in leadership education between understanding leadership theories and models and applying these theories and models in programs, courses, and other instructional endeavors, as well as real-life situations. Theory should describe and explain leadership characteristics and behaviors, while application or practice should respond to and mitigate identified problems, challenges, or opportunities. There remains a need for greater emphasis on evidence-based practices for teaching and learning in leadership education. (See Guthrie & Jenkins, 2018).<sup>33</sup>

Riggs asks, “Do you remember that class that made you want to change the world? Do you remember the lecture or conversation that inspired you and left you thinking about a topic in a way that you never had before? Do you remember that project or assignment that challenged you to innovate the future?”<sup>34</sup> With him, I remember these kinds of transformative moments in my education experiences. It is imperative that educators provide these moments of inspiration where leadership is born and innovation occurs.

For this kind of leadership development educators must: (1) Provide relevant information to help students have an impact on the community. (2) Inspire students to innovate. (3) Use real world

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<sup>30</sup> Lloyd Blanchard & Amy Donahue. (2007). Teaching Leadership in Public Administration. Journal of Public Affairs Education. 13. 461-485. 10.1080/15236803.2007.12001492. p. 462.

<sup>31</sup> Burlingame, “Social Change Through Leadership”.

<sup>32</sup> Emily Hannigan-Page. “Social Change and Why It Matters,” May 30, 2023, <https://www.wgu.edu/blog/social-change-why-it-matters2305.html>

<sup>33</sup>Melissa L. Rocco, Darren E. Pierre. “Applying theories and models in leadership program and curriculum design,” New Directions for Student Leadership, 2023, no. 180 (December 2023): 5-9. <https://doi.org/10.1002/yl.20576>

<sup>34</sup> William Riggs. “Lighting the Fire of Positive Change in Our Communities,” LinkedIn, March 7, 2023. <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/lighting-fire-positive-change-our-communities-william-riggs>

projects and experiences to help students dream big. (4) Take time to share stories. (5) Take time to build and maintain relationships with students.<sup>35</sup>

Service. Service should be the point at which research, teaching, and learning come together for authentic community-based action. Therefore, relevant higher education must address public needs. Surely higher education institutions with the purpose of developing leaders will be held to higher standards for direct service and for providing leadership for service. Indeed, faith-based higher education institutions will be held to the highest standards for positive contributions to the societal context in which they are located.

While in many places in the world there is an expectation for separation between church and state, there are some changes in perspective for addressing social problems. Many are finding that omitting the voices of faith from the public square creates a situation of inadequate ethical direction for addressing pressing problems. A growing number of scholars consider excluding religious reasoning from public spaces to be incompatible with the principles of freedom of religion. They suggest that impartiality, rather than separation, will be sufficient to meet neutrality requirements for social and political engagement.<sup>36</sup>

Some feel that in certain contexts, religion uniquely strengthens the democratic process. Habermas portrays how religion communicates meaning in ways that philosophy and science cannot do. To repress it, or attempt to replace it, would do more than unfairly exclude religion; it would deprive “secular society from important resources of meaning” (See Habermas 2003, p. 109; Habermas, 2006, pp. 9-10).<sup>37 38</sup>

### Summary

Although this annual event requires lectures of scholarly persuasion and professional wisdom and should demonstrate academic rigor to varying degrees suitable to lecture themes and topics, there must also be alignment with the Church’s faith perspectives. Thus, the reminder of spiritual maturity earlier and this summary for viewing leadership is grounded in our faith base.

“Ellen White, called for leadership for community-based engagement and service.”<sup>39</sup>  
Tutsch’s explanation of Ellen White’s perspective on the most important qualifications for leaders begins with the calling and empowerment of the Holy Spirit. She says that the Spirit-led

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<sup>35</sup> William Riggs. “Lighting the Fire of Positive Change in Our Communities

<sup>36</sup> Sherrie Steiner. “Faith-Based Accountability Mechanism Typology: The 2011 Interfaith Summit As Soft Power in Global Governance,” Sage Open 2, no. 2 (2021): 1-15. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2158244012450705>

<sup>37</sup> Jeffrey Ford, Laurie Ford, and Beth Polin. “Leadership in the Implementation of Change: Functions, Sources, and Requisite Variety.” Journal of Change Management 21, no. 1 (2021): 87–119. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2021.1861697>

<sup>38</sup> Sherrie Steiner. “Faith-Based Accountability Mechanism Typology: The 2011 Interfaith Summit as Soft Power in Global Governance

<sup>39</sup> Cynthia Ann Tutsch. "Ellen White's Counsel To Leaders: Identification and Synthesis of Principles, Experiential Application, and Comparison with Current Leadership Literature" (DMin. Dissertations, Andrews University, Michigan, 2006), 372, <https://dx.doi.org/10.32597/dmin/372>



leader will then build an inclusive team based on shared purpose, values, and vision that encourages dialogue and dissent as authentic steps toward sustainable change. She shows that leaders who are equipped for today's challenges will have the cultivated ability to connect with others, care for the poor, and provide service to the needy. They will be committed to sacrificial benevolence to the marginalized and will be persons of vision and action with a keen sense of moral integrity. She says, "Leaders who possess Christ-like love promote justice, correct sin, and combat error while maintaining care and compassion." Ellen White promoted creativity, authentic conflict, humanizing interaction with workers, and distributed leadership.<sup>40</sup>

### Parting Admonition

Do not be tempted to forget the purpose for which AUA was established and, thus, the purpose of this annual convocation. There may be those who will take you on an ethereal journey to the farthest points in the academic universe. We all love a great scholarly discourse with academic acrobatics. But never let a lecture end there. Always insists that the speaker plants you back on earth, this hill, and the many varied places to which you have been called to serve. Always insist that the speaker draw out applications.

Let the array of information become working knowledge, but do not stop there. The exercise is not complete until the knowledge translates into wisdom—that is, applying the information and concomitant knowledge to the ministry and service to which this institution and each of you have been called. That will bring recognition to AUA and glory to God.

Note: Agenda 2063 is divided into five 10-year implementation plan. At the 37th African Union (AU) summit, the second 10-year (2024-2033) implementation plan of Agenda 2063 was adopted, also known as the "decade of acceleration." February 26, 2024.

[https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/43517-wd-Agenda\\_2063\\_STYIP\\_Feb\\_2024\\_Launch\\_Version.pdf](https://au.int/sites/default/files/newsevents/workingdocuments/43517-wd-Agenda_2063_STYIP_Feb_2024_Launch_Version.pdf)

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<sup>40</sup> Tutsch, "Ellen White's Counsel To Leaders"