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# The School for Social Innovation at Hugenote Kollege and congregational vitality through faithful innovation

## ABSTRACT

*This article presents a case study and the story of the School for Social Innovation (SSI) at Hugenote Kollege in Wellington, South Africa. It explores the influence of Andrew Murray Jr, the history of the college, the relationship between the college and the Dutch Reformed Church in South Africa, and the establishment of the School for Social Innovation (SSI). It explores the concept of “social innovation”. The research provides a brief overview of SSI programmes, the short courses presented for church and community leadership on the theme of social innovation, and the social awareness programme known as #Integritas. The article also explores the interface and mutual insights between social innovation and faithful innovation and proposes ways in which the narrative of the SSI might enrich discourses on congregational vitality. These explorations might unearth theories, practices, and approaches to leadership that engage with Schoeman’s work and broaden the understanding of congregational vitality through faithful innovation.*



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Andrew Murray Jr was a towering church leader and world-renowned missionary statesman. His innovative leadership inspired the Dutch Reformed congregation in Wellington to become

an example of congregational vitality. This led to the establishment of a multitude of educational and missional institutions, of which Hugenote Kollege in Wellington, South Africa, is still an active and thriving institution.

One of the three schools (faculties) at Hugenote Kollege is the School for Social Innovation (SSI). The SSI pays particular attention to the concept of social innovation. The fact that Hugenote Kollege is deeply embedded in the church life of the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) has led to mutual fertilisation and the flow of ideas between social innovation and faithful innovation.

The work of the SSI on social innovation might serve as reflection on congregational vitality and appropriate leadership capacities. Social innovation focuses on the development and implementation of new ideas, institutions, and practices, and is sensitive towards social needs and organisational culture. These insights might prove to be very valuable in reflecting on leadership for congregational vitality.

This article values the rich history of the work of Andrew Murray Jr, considers the innovations at the SSI, and identifies leadership capacities that may serve faithful innovation and congregational vitality.

## **2. A BRIEF HISTORY OF HUGENOTE KOLLEGE IN WELLINGTON AND THE INNOVATIVE WORK OF REV. ANDREW MURRAY IN THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH**

Although the current Hugenote Kollege was only opened in 1951, its roots go back to the Huguenot Seminary (1874), the Mission Institute (1877), and Friedenheim (1904). These institutions and others such as Grey College (1859), the Ministers Mission Association (1886), The Bible and Prayer Union (1880), YMCA in South Africa (1865), Cape General Mission (1889), and the Layman's Mission League came about thanks to the zeal, vision, and innovative ideas of Dr Andrew Murray Jr (1828-1905), pastor of the DRC Wellington. Murray's father, a Scottish minister, was recruited as part of a drive by the British governor of the Cape Colony, Lord Charles Somerset, to recruit Scottish ministers to serve in the vacant parishes in the rural Eastern frontier of the Cape Colony (Müller 2022:3). The elder Murray played a crucial role in the Cape Colony, but his son Murray Jr (hereafter referred to as Murray) became a world-renowned figure, church leader, Christian author, educational organiser, and missionary statesman. In 1838, Murray and his brother John were sent to Aberdeen, Scotland,

to be educated at the grammar school and Marischal College. They then went on to Utrecht, The Netherlands, in 1845, to study theology. Murray played a leading role in the revivalist movement that infused church life in South Africa in the 1860s and 1870s, himself being inspired by student societies such as the *Reveille* in continental Europe and *Secor Dabar* (Müller 2022:9). His ministry in the DRC Wellington can be described as an excellent example of congregational vitality.

One of the core institutions established by Murray was the Huguenot Seminary, in the Boland town Wellington, from which the following grew:

- A school for boys and a school for girls, which later merged to become the Huguenot High School.
- A training college for teachers, which later became part of the Faculty of Education of the Cape Peninsula University of Technology.
- Huguenot College, which later became the Huguenot University College. Huguenot College was the fruit of a partnership with representatives of Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, and the goal was

to raise the educational level of Afrikaner girls, [and to] plant evangelical piety and support for home and foreign missions among women of the Dutch Reformed Church (Saayman 2007:49).

The Huguenot University College was closed in 1948 and reopened in 1951 as the Huguenote Kollege – a training institution for social welfare workers and mission workers.

Murray vocalised his vision for educational institutions in these words: Training of the head, the heart, and the hand directed to vocation, prayer, and service. He authored over 240 Christian books, some of which are still in print! (Pauw 2022:88).

Murray had an important and lasting influence on the DRC and on ideas about congregational vitality. Müller (2022:19-21) explains as follows:

... the Murrays subscribed primarily to a missionary identity that was by its nature pragmatic when it came to matters of ethnicity and orthodoxy. Being a missionary identity, this was an outward-looking identity. Partnership was important here, which meant that principles occasionally had to be compromised ... (Müller 2022:19).

... this family's primary identity was a missionary identity, which pragmatically sought partnerships and accommodated itself to local contexts in various ways (Müller 2022:21).

His energy, his ability to read the context, and his innovative response can most certainly be described as mastery of adaptive change, an approach that affects the whole system and results in a deep change in the complete system of the organisation. Niemandt (2019a:76) describes the leadership associated with adaptive change and vitality as leadership that “requires courage and usually involves a change in the values and attitudes of the organisation”. It is remarkable that Murray succeeded in establishing institutions that show a high degree of resilience. Adaptability and resilience seem to be embedded in the values, nurtured leadership styles, and ethos in such a way that many of these organisations are still thriving in the 22<sup>nd</sup> century. The current website of Hugenote Kollege, for example, leads with the following description of the kind of social leaders the college endeavours to equip:

Social leaders serve and bless others. They create beauty in the world, lift the vision of mankind, broaden our possibilities, and deepen our life experiences (Hugenote Kollege (a) [s.a.]).

Montagu Murray (2022) described Murray as an entrepreneur. Using Max Weber’s description of capitalism, the author explains current facets of entrepreneurship: the ability to take risks, a strong sense of vocation and clear vision, and mobilising people and resources to achieve a goal. He concludes that Murray modernised mission, approached congregations, the church and related institutions as a business enterprise and pursued excellence (Murray M. 2022:157). He identified a strong sense of vocation in Murray, a risk appetite, and a deep commitment to making things work – a real entrepreneur (Murray M. 2022:159). These traits are informative in the reflection on leadership that serves congregational vitality.

Later in this article, the definition of social innovation most certainly allows one to describe Murray as an excellent example of a social innovator and leader in congregational vitality.

### **3. THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE KOLLEGE AND THE DUTCH REFORMED CHURCH IN SOUTH AFRICA**

Du Toit and Potgieter (2022:3-4) summarise the later history of Hugenote Kollege as follows:

Since its foundation in 1951, the College has been under the wings of the DR Church in South Africa. The College is currently registered as a non-profit making company (NPC) with the General Synod of

the DR Church, the General Synod of the Uniting Reformed Church of South Africa, the Synod of the DR Church Western Cape, with the DR Congregation Wellington and the URCSA Congregation Wellington being the members of the company.

With the establishment of the College in 1951, cooperation of the Huguenot University College (predecessor of the Hugenote Kollege) with the University of South Africa was continued for the sake of Admission Students from the Missionary Institute who were, following its closure, enrolled via the College at Unisa. Although this association ended in 1959, a new agreement was entered into with Unisa in March 1975 under which students from the Hugenote Kollege obtained degrees and diplomas in Social Work, Missionary Work, Youth Work and Community Development from Unisa. In 2012, the latter agreement was finally phased out as a result of a decision by the central government that cooperation between public and private training institutions would no longer be allowed. Consequently, the Board of Hugenote Kollege began in 2013 with the repositioning of the College as a private, Christian training institution with SAQA-accredited degree courses in Missional Theology and Social Work as well as skills courses in Early Child Development, Community Development, Child and Youth Care Work and Social Auxiliary Work. The concept of “lifelong learning” was a fundamental building block of the repositioning strategy and the continuous integration of faith, knowledge, and skills of the students and staff remains a core matter for the College.

#### **4. AN OVERVIEW OF THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE SCHOOL FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION (SSI) AT HUGENOTE KOLLEGE UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF PROF. ERWIN SCHWELLA**

One of the interesting aspects of the building blocks of Hugenote Kollege is the SSI, the only higher education institution in South Africa to have such a faculty. The SSI was established in 2019 by Prof. Erwin Schwella, previously from the University of Stellenbosch, where he was a professor of Public Leadership in the School of Public Management and Planning and the Stellenbosch Business School. Schwella is also the founder and facilitator of CiviNovus. His academic and professional career of close to 40 years spanned Stellenbosch, Tilburg, and Leiden Universities and many other visiting academic positions at renowned universities in the world including Harvard, Leuven, The Free University of Amsterdam, and Rutgers. Schwella was a senior organisation development consultant and

policy advisor to numerous South African government structures and a consultant to the British Civil Service College and Senior Visiting Fellow to that College. He served as Dean of the SSI until February 2024.

The structure of the SSI and its place in the larger organisation can best be explained by the following diagram:

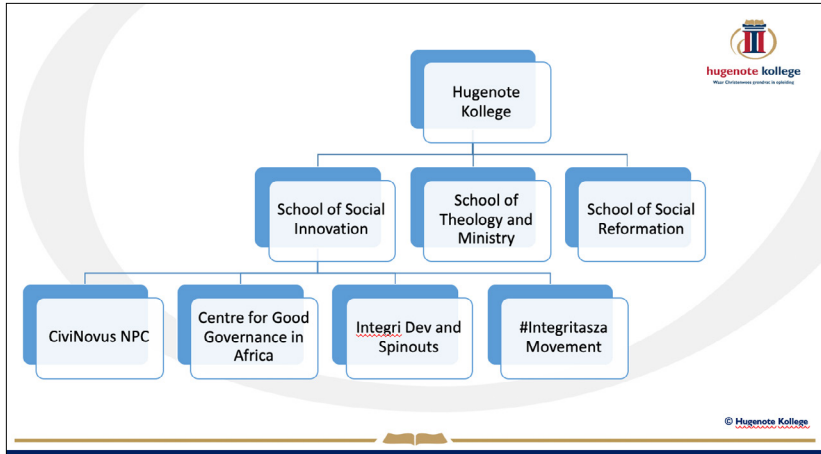


Figure 1: Schwella 2022

### The SSI programmes focus

on the training of professionals within the social welfare sector, enabling them to guide individuals, groups and communities to understand their context and to engage individuals, groups and communities in finding relevant and appropriate solutions to specific problems (Hugenate Kollege (b) [s.a.]).

One of the core outputs is found in CiviNovus. Hugenate Kollege requested the group of CiviNovus volunteers to populate social innovation leadership programmes with knowledge and wisdom through the academic functions of education, training, research, service, and consultancy. This initiative was also required to be socially innovative and based on the ethos of social entrepreneurship as volunteers without budget-based direct compensation. This resulted in a social business model where the inspired volunteers in CiviNovus generate income to share with beneficiaries before they share in this income:

The CivinNovus social business model and processes aspire and succeed to co-generate and share public value and monetary income with impeccable integrity, energising empathy, compassionate change, and returns with reciprocity where sustainability is the core and energy and not a compliance driven extra (Schwella 2023: n.p.).

## 5. A DESCRIPTION OF SOCIAL INNOVATION

Social innovation is a core concept in the work and imagination of the SSI, and this article proposes that the concept can inform ideas on congregational vitality.

The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines social innovation in terms of the improvement of the welfare and well-being of individuals and communities. Social innovation, according to OECD, refers to a holistic approach that includes the design and implementation of new solutions that imply conceptual, process, product, or organisational change (OECD [s.a.]).

According to Sammut *et al.* (2020:1), five core elements need to be present when categorising activities as being socially innovative, namely novelty; span from ideas to implementation; the meeting of a social need; effectiveness; the enhancement of society's capacity to act, and, often, entail changes in social and power relations.

The focus is clearly on societal challenges and creative interventions. The SSI describes its work as follows:

Social Innovation is a set of new ways of dealing with social challenges for the benefit of society. Social innovation is grounded in societal problem-solving, which is effective, efficient, and ethical. Social Innovation results in the co-creative human-centred design and delivery of potentially sustainable prototype solutions to societal problems which are replicable and scalable.

Social innovation builds personal and purposeful learning leadership competencies and impactful institutional capacity while implementing solutions for societal problems (Hugenate Kollege (b) [s.a.]).

Social innovation differentiates between creativity and innovation. Creativity is the novel step of being the first to identify that something might be possible in the first place. Innovation is the action of putting things into practical reality, despite challenges and resistance, rather than simply contemplating. There is a process from novelty to ideas to implementation.

The SSI applies social innovation as a combination of “design thinking” and “human-centred design together”. The focus of design thinking was originally to create commercial products and to deliver market-based products and/or services. Human-centred design focus on a product and/or service that improve the lives of the end-users or beneficiaries. Combining design thinking and human-centred design results in a mindset and a process that create self-sustaining solutions. The SSI, therefore, defines its vision in the following terms:

The school embraces, co-creates, and shares a vision of continuously, systematically, and dynamically emerging as a cutting-edge social innovation knowledge institution, with a significant impact on good society and good in society.

The purpose of the SSI at Hugonote Kollege:

In the continuous emergence of our vision, our purpose is to co-create public value with significant social innovation impact. We aim to co-create and share this impact through knowledge discovery, knowledge validation, knowledge beneficitation, and knowledge dissemination.

Our intentional knowledge value chain work also intentionally aims to co-create and share public value that impacts positively on inclusion and social cohesion in global and local societies.

The SSI describes its dream for the future – what could be explained as God’s present and preferred future. The SSI states:

We dream of communities of dedicated and well-equipped people participating in caring for and healing the ills of this world. To build such communities, innovative social leaders are needed to build and develop the human and social capital of our nation (Hugonote Kollege (c) [s.a.]

The approach also resonates with Bregman when he re-interprets the idea of utopia as a situation where imagination and hope are alive and active: “It’s an attempt to unlock the future” (Bregman 2018:11). Utopia “... offers not solutions but guideposts. Instead of forcing us into a straitjacket, it inspires us to change” (Bregman 2018:13).



The SSI wants to form servant leaders. It invests in innovative leaders

who are committed and prepared to devote their lives and competencies to inclusively improve society regardless of social standing, wealth, culture, ethnicity or privilege (Hugonote Kollege (c) [s.a.]).

This echoes Niemandt's (2019a:178) description of missional leaders who show a kenotic posture, serving with a clear understanding that to be sent to serve means sent to sacrifice.

Another interesting intersection is found in the dictum of human-centred design: we need to adopt a mindset that is optimistic that a solution is discoverable, and that the solution lies in the population we are trying to serve. Ungerer (2021:40) calls this approach "abundance thinking" that focuses on possibilities and opportunities and is not crippled by obstacles and threats. "Abundance thinking helps us to consider options that were previously simply discarded as non-possibilities." (Ungerer 2021:40). This resonates with the missional mindset that believes God is already busy and active in the community and that the mindset of discerning where the Spirit is working to be able to join in with the Spirit is the first step in mission. Niemandt (2019a:216) explains:

Leaders serve mission in its quest to transform people, the church, institutions and all of life to become part and parcel of God's intended purpose to flourish.

Both OECD and SSI appreciate the importance of networks and cooperation, and explicitly endeavour to mobilise public, non-profit, and private actors in the pursuit of socially innovative solutions. Sparks *et al.* (2014:174) refer to this as the ability to curate strategic connections. In his research on successful African management practices, Ungerer (2021:202) frequently mentions the importance of networks as one of the key drivers of innovative management organising approaches.

In the case of the SSI, the school explicitly states the following: "We pursue and reach our objectives in and co-creatively with our networked institutions." The networks of the SSI include the Centre for Good Governance in Africa, the Institute for Technology and Society, CiviNovus, and the #integritasza movement. There is a drive to intentionally co-create and share public value that impacts positively on inclusion and social cohesion in global and local societies. This resonates with Niemandt's (2019a:219) description of missional leadership: "Network leadership empowers, connects people in the system to each other, facilitates communication and leads in mission."

To summarise, Schwella uses the following illustration of his understanding of social innovation:

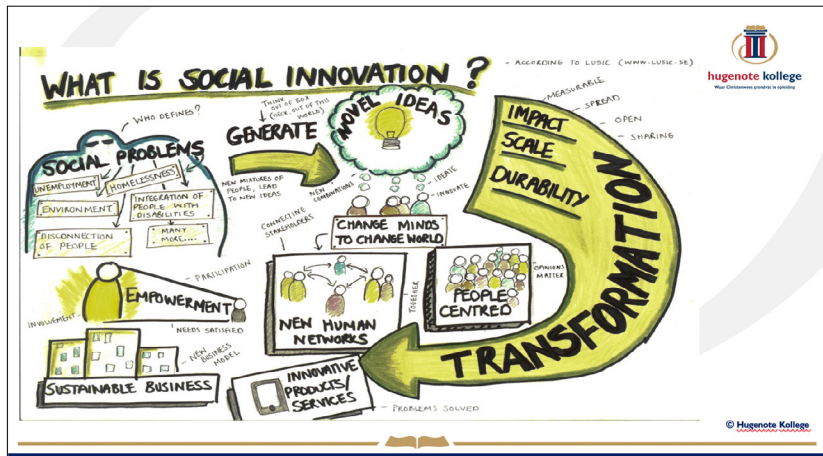


Figure 2: Schwella 2022:n.p.

## 6. SHORT COURSES FOR LEADERS

The SSI is actively involved in research, education, teaching, service, and consultancy. The SSI short courses for leaders, which prove to be effective, include:

- Leadership for social innovation and entrepreneurship. This course develops the leadership and entrepreneurship competencies of leaders and entrepreneurs. Business plans are developed and tested for sustainable social businesses.
- Mentoring and coaching, personal mastery and emotional intelligence for social business. This course develops emotional intelligence (EQ) and links EQ to mentoring and coaching. EQ and mentoring and coaching result in improved personal mastery and organisational performance.
- Human-centred design thinking for social innovation and entrepreneurship. This course spans all stages of the design thinking process for creative problem-solving. Insights into the unmet needs of stakeholders are explored and turned into human-centred solutions.

- Corporate governance and ethics for social business. This course establishes a clear skillset for directors and managers, allowing them to reconcile external and internal controls, risk management, competitive behaviour, and adherence to corporate law and ethics. There is also a serious focus on the King Code for good corporate governance in South Africa.
- Impact assessment for social business. This course deals with finding, presenting and using evidence of impact, as the difference made by an organisation or activity. This focus on impact contrasts with a focus on how many services are run or how many people and activities are engaged with. The course teaches tools and techniques to assess the possible and real impact before and after social business activities. Following this assessment, impact can be improved based on fit for purpose, leadership, and management.

This brief description gives an overview of a comprehensive offer to churches, non-profit organisations, government, businesses, and others interested in social innovation and in “caring for and healing of the ills of this world” (Hugenote Kollege (c) [s.a.]). It is interesting to note the “Murray-DNA” (training of the head, the heart, and the hand directed to vocation, prayer, and service) in the following presentation used during the short courses:

**School of Social Innovation: Executive Short Courses**

- Leadership for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Human-centred Design Thinking for Social Innovation and Entrepreneurship
- Mentoring and Coaching, Personal Mastery and Emotional Intelligence for Social Business
- Several tailor-made short courses including Network Leadership, South African Scenario Analysis, and Integrity Activism

Figure 3: Schwella 2022: n.p.

The SSI also presented a short course on “pilgrim theology”, where outcomes and content were designed on the history and meaning of pilgrimages within the Christian tradition, as well as the use of other disciplines to unlock the value of a pilgrimage.

Schwella (2023) describes the executive short courses as covering a wide spectrum of leadership knowledge and wisdom for social innovation. He is convinced that the insights can serve congregational vitality and leadership, as the application of this knowledge and wisdom impacts on the well-being of society, with integrity, empathy, compassion, and reciprocity.

## 7. SOCIAL INNOVATION AND PUBLIC WITNESS

Successful organisations embrace “the corporate citizenship agenda as one of the leverages to transform the way organisations operate in the 21st century” (Ungerer 2021:224). Corporate citizenship and public witness include topics such as economic responsibility, corporate social responsibility, environmental protection and preservation, as well as legal responsibilities and human rights.

Public witness can also be described as faithful presence, which refers to the reality that God is present in the world and that God uses people faithful to his presence to make Godself concrete and real in the world (Niemandt 2019b:4). Newbigin (1989:222-233) describes the church as a hermeneutic of the gospel – it brings not only the gospel story but also, in its life and witness, the gospel. Faithful presence implies that Christians are present in a way that affirms the integrity of Christian faith. Niemandt (2019b:4) explains faithful presence as follows:

Faithful presence has a double ring: it is the kind of presence that establishes the good faith of people of faith. It is a presence that serves places, and people and looks after the interests of others (Phlp 2:4). It is also the kind of presence that shows Christian faith can be trusted and valued.

Faithful presence serves congregational vitality and includes public witness, affirming the integrity of Christian faith, and the implications of the gospel for everyday life and public well-being. Schoeman (2020:94) underscores the important observation that the Christian faith is constituted in community, with both the Triune God and fellow believers within a particular social environment. He argues that “[f]aith communities

are part of society and important generators of cohesion, networks, and social capital in the society” (Schoeman 2020:94). This idea of generators of cohesion, networks, and social capital is an expression of faithful presence. The content and nature of faithful presence can be observed in SSI’s statement that it intentionally aims to co-create and share public value that impacts positively on inclusion and social cohesion in global and local societies. Public witness is a crucial kind of faithful presence, and the SSI supports this in terms of workshops, practical acts of public witness, and advocacy employing publications under the umbrella of the initiative.

The core values of #Integritasza are defined as “integrity, empathy, compassion, and reciprocity”. The work of #Integritasza includes the following: publication of a monthly newsletter #Integritasza; publication of a quarterly journal *Compassionate Confronter*; hosting workshops, and public advocacy. SSI hosts an annual conference focusing on issues of integrity in government, innovation in local government, and exposure to corruption.

The concept of “compassionate confrontation” illustrates the understanding of the SSI of public witnesses. The editor of one of the publications, *Compassionate Confronter*, explains:

Rather, it aims to confront lovingly, with empathy, sympathy, kindness and caring ... All South Africans should take a keen interest in doing something, in not keeping quiet, when bad things happen ... It stands for integrity, good governance, and ethical and effective leadership. But it stands so within the spirit of Caritas (Botha 2022:38).

CiviNovus, as one of the core public functions and partners of the SSI, also attends to public witnesses and structured interaction with the public arena. According to CiviNovus,

[o]ur knowledge-informed social innovation mission is embedded into and impacts society, ecology politics, economy, and technology. Some of our specific focus and action areas in which we co-create and share public value with significant societal impact for all are:

- Ideas inspired, inclusively organised, and impactfully implemented social innovation.
- Good public and corporate governance.

- Professional knowledge-informed wise learning leadership founded on integrity, empathy, and compassion.
- Effective, efficient, and ethical service delivery for society (Schwella 2023).

Through its collaboration with CiviNovus, SSI has already established three social labs for social innovation in the municipalities of Hessequa, Saldanha Bay, and Prince Albert, with innovative thinking, interaction, action, and services provided to these municipalities via their respective municipal managers. Schwella (2023: n.p.) reports that

numerous inspirational social innovative projects were initiated and sustained within these social labs. These initiatives added public value, prosperity and development for the citizens and inhabitants of these communities.

The impact of the #Integritasza conferences must also be mentioned. The 2022 conference theme was *Co-created community-based partnership local governance and service delivery in South Africa: Analysis, action, and activism*. It was hosted at the Andrew Murray Centre for Spirituality and was attended by over 200 participants over three days. It sought to discover prototype community-based solutions for co-creating socially innovative good governance with citizen communities (Schwella 2023). The 2023 conference addressed the important role of coalition-building in South African politics with the theme *Coalition governance in South Africa: Dedicated desired state or destructive disasters* (Integritasza 2023).

## 8. SOCIAL INNOVATION AND RESILIENCE – INTRODUCING RESEARCH ON RESILIENCE AND SOCIAL INNOVATION

Staff members of Hugenote Kollege participated in a conference on *Resilience in a VUCA world* and published a book *Resilience in a VUCA world: Reflections on teaching, learning, and health in turbulent times* (2022), edited by staff member Dr Annette Potgieter. The idea to investigate the concept of “resilience” was always attractive in light of the stories of resilience in the over 150-year history and various iterations of the institution, and especially the challenges brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. There are several definitions of resilience, but resilience refers to a process that leads to a better-than-expected outcome (Potgieter 2022:4). Steyn (2022:18) argues that resilience entails facing the realities of both the known and the unknown, in order to be able to bounce back from

disaster. According to Gregersen (2017:367), resilience is the capability to adapt in confrontation with disasters, the capacity to absorb and adjust to changing conditions, “and at the same time restore and preserve the essential functions and structures”. Schwella (2023) defines resilience as an attitude and actions to never give up, to keep on learning, and to innovate continuously, guided by values (in this case integrity, empathy, compassion, and reciprocity).

Social innovation attends to wicked societal problems – the kind of problems that defy easy solutions and require socially innovative solutions. Resilience is one of the important results of the whole system coming together to solve a wicked problem. Resilience is where people, institutions or even countries bounce back and achieve a better-than-expected outcome. Schoeman (2023:128-129) pays particular attention to congregations and the way in which they develop and enhance resilience in response to adversity in both the community and society. He underscores the importance of congregations as communities of discernment and practice and the role of congregations in local communities.

At its annual conferences and in publications, the SSI attends to the concept of “resilience”, the relationship between resilience and innovation, and the impact of resilient innovation on social cohesion. One of the staff members published a paper entitled “In search of the art of living with emotional intelligence and resiliency” (Schwella 2022:2-8). The *Compassionate Confronter* also carried an article *Resilient life rhythm – Helping to heal our communities* (Van Der Walt 2023:17-18).

## 9. FROM SOCIAL INNOVATION TO FAITHFUL INNOVATION

We live in a complex “volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous” (VUCA) world, rife with wicked problems that defy easy solutions provided through leadership with easy answers. Wicked problems require socially innovative solutions and learning leadership.

Schwella (2021) argues that socially innovative solutions are co-creative searches for socially innovative solutions to complex societal problems by those who are facing them, using reflective practice-based prototype solutions, designed through human-centred design, co-created by leadership as facilitated learning leadership. He emphasises that social innovation requires the development and implementation of new ideas, institutions, and implementation, including products, services, and models, to meet social needs. The focus is on social needs and on finding

new ways of dealing with social challenges for the benefit of society. The production is driven by social values and service, and not by private financial appropriation and profit (Schwella 2021). This type of social problem-solving is effective, efficient, ethical, and equitable.

In terms of the “how” or the process of social innovation, Schwella (2021) suggests the following:

- Generating ideas by understanding problem-based needs and pressures to change.
- Co-creating potential solutions for the problems with those affected by these problems.
- Co-designing, delivering, and implementing prototypes as potential solutions to these problems.
- Learning from these prototypes as they are implemented.
- Showcasing successful prototypes.
- Scaling and further dissemination of successful prototypes and lessons learnt.

Marais and Niemandt (2023) suggest anticipatory leadership as a way forward in developing faithful innovation. Anticipatory leadership supports social innovation and congregational vitality, and the development of ideas for congregational vitality can benefit from some of the insights:

Anticipatory leadership values innovation, but then a specific type of innovation focused on adaptability, flexibility and a deep understanding that complexity demands novelty. To mention a few practical ideas — innovation demands as few rules as possible, flat open structures, emotional connections and swarm behaviour (see Niemandt 2019:156). Leaders need to create a culture of innovation and biblical imagination with few or no hierarchal limitations and where input is not evaluated in terms of position or power. Swarm behaviour values diversity and focuses on getting the team or system to work and play in concert. It appreciates the collective wisdom of participants and the organic formation of consensus (Marais & Niemandt 2023:153).

Perhaps faithful innovation is at the least the wisdom about what it means to live well and to participate in the flourishing life brought about by the Spirit (see Bregman 2018:19). The idea of “life in fullness” has become one of the most important concepts in the ecumenical and theological discourse over the past three decades, and discerning visions and paths to flourishing life demand faithful innovation and network-building (Niemandt 2020:14, 21).



This is accomplished as a journey, both as a metaphor for the journey of participation in God’s mission and as an actual journey in the company and in the footsteps of Christ (Van Wynen & Niemandt 2020:9).

In conclusion and considering the rich history of the work of Andrew Murray Jr, and the recent innovations at the SSI and related networks, the following ideas in terms of faithful innovation that serve congregational vitality are suggested. Faithful innovation and congregational vitality flourish when the following leadership capacities are evident:

- A pragmatic missionary identity that is contextually sensitive and thus able to discern the Spirit’s activity and invitation to flourishing life in a particular context. Barentsen (2021:170) highlights the importance of identity formation in missional leadership:

I conclude that missional leaders, as part of the missional movement, are engaged in various strategies of identity formation because of the emphasis on embodied participation in and with particular communities and their needs.

This necessitates insight as well as conceptual and compassionate perspectives into real-world contexts, challenges, and actions.

- An outward-looking identity that is open to encounters with strangers and resilient enough to adapt to challenging circumstances. According to Schwella (2023), inclusive leadership intentionally includes all stakeholders in the co-creation of a shared vision and problem-solving implementation. Barentsen (2021:170) calls this an embodied engagement with the social and religious context.
- The courage to lead, take risks, and embrace adaptive change. This includes a deep understanding that complexity demands novelty. This entails adaptability and flexibility. One is reminded of Rohr’s dictum: “Human strength is defined in asserting boundaries. God, it seems, is in the business of dissolving boundaries.” (Rohr & Morrell 2016:60).
- A strong sense of vocation. In management studies, the concept of “vocation” is described with the term “purpose” (see Ungerer 2021:55, 117). Vocation or purpose gives direction and energy to faithful innovation. It lays the groundwork for imagination of what flourishing life might be. Vocation is aligned with missional intent, which describes the fruit of an ongoing discernment process. Van Wynen and Niemandt (2020:8) explain: “Missional intent is about listening, learning and living the journey under God’s direction.” This also relates to the importance of sense-making.

Sense-making is a mapping of the situation because of the future that wants to emerge, but at the same time understanding that this process of mapping is contingent, and unintelligible (Venter & Hermans 2020:162).

- A strategy of leadership as a journey in which we are following Christ, seeking to know him better, and trusting his leadership can help us view the world from a whole different vantage point: “God is in control, and God is in the lead. As leaders, our certainty is in the one we follow.” (Van Wynen & Niemandt 2020:6).
- Imaginative leadership – The ability to create visionary images supporting desired futures from currently non-existing ideas, actions, processes, and products. Initiative leadership towards impactful innovation requires mindfulness, confidence, and courageous commitment. Initiative leadership analysis and action require leadership insight as foresight and appropriate intuitive analysis (Schwella 2023). Faithful innovation is the work of the Spirit. The Spirit’s work is

to create and then to fully allow otherness; creating many forms and endless diversity ... Creating differences, and then preserving them in being (Rohr & Morrell 2016:113).

- The ability to build partnerships and networks, and to involve others to co-create solutions for problems. It is all about mobilising people and resources, in order to achieve a goal. The ability to build emotional connections seems to be important in this regard. Innovation demands rich and meaningful interactions (Niemandt 2019a:156).
- The capacity to value diversity and forge a team to work together, appreciating the collective wisdom of participants and the organic formation of consensus. Ungerer (2021:350) underscores the importance of diversity in leadership and management: “A distributed leadership capacity supports leadership diversity and depth.”
- Innovative thinking and processing that includes co-designing, delivering, and implementing prototypes. Faithful innovation must attend to purposeful learning leadership competencies to benefit from learning from these prototypes. Ungerer makes a strong case for the importance of management innovation in organisations and describes innovation as the invention or adoption of a management practice, process, structure or technique that is new or different from the current management approaches in an organisation. These practices are state of the art and implemented to support the organisational purpose (Ungerer 2021:71).

- The ability to create a culture of innovation with few or no hierarchal limitations. Innovation demands the establishment of a few simple rules and non-linear relationships (Niemandt 2019a:155).
- Developing skills that support social entrepreneurship.
- Integrity leadership is the basis of trust for, in, and by leadership. Leadership with integrity co-creates harmony and consensus based on foundations of dignity and consistency and is nurtured by the fountains of honesty and credibility (Schwella 2023). Integrity creates dependable leadership relationships and camaraderie and feeds growth and transformation (Niemandt 2019a:203).

## 10. CONCLUSION

There is an evident relationship between social innovation, faithful innovation, and congregational vitality. It serves and enhances faithful presence and builds on strong ethical value systems. It recognises the importance of building partnerships and prototypes. Social/faithful innovation serves as an example for leadership for congregational vitality in terms of the expectation that it is possible to grow through resilience to flourishing, notwithstanding complexity and contextual challenges.

It is clear that the development of a fully-fledged theology of faithful innovation and the relationship between faithful innovation and social innovation are still in the early stages of development. Insights such as those developed by Zscheile *et al.* (2023) might assist the SSI in developing a contextual relevant approach to church innovation that might enhance congregational vitality within the South African context. Schoeman's (2023) research will add to the source material and knowledge base, especially with this focus on congregational vitality and understanding of congregations as communities of discernment and practice.

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