



# Becoming *more* courageous as leaders



**6.00pm Monday, February 24 until  
3.30pm Tuesday, February 25 2020**

**Background Note and Agenda for our 46th Leadership Conversation**

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Society of Leadership Fellows, St George's House, Windsor Castle

## **This Leadership Conversation builds on our Courage in Leadership theme**

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*A link to the report is on the final page of this Background Paper. In Chapter One we write about different aspects of courage, such as the way in which it helps many of us keep the "imposter syndrome" at bay:*

*Courage helps us to accept others' belief in us.*

*We engage with our fears that they might have over-estimated our natural abilities.*

*We then apply ourselves to leading according to the highest standards that we set ourselves, clear that if we do fall short at some point we will convert that into a key learning moment in our ongoing leadership development.*

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A wide range of other examples of courage are captured across the three Chapters of Courage in Leadership.

# Our mission from 6.00pm on February 24th:



***To support each other in stepping forward more confidently as courageous leaders.*** This will involve us exploring new ways of building our inner courage in those moments when we feel ourselves beginning to wobble

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## **We will ask:**

- In which particular aspects of our leadership would we most like to become more courageous?
- What is holding us back from showing greater courage in these areas of leadership and what insights and techniques can we learn from other Fellows to build our confidence and resolve?
- How might we also draw strength from those aspects of our leadership where we are already courageous to enable us to build a general expectation - on our own part as well as in the minds of others - that our instinctive response to any serious challenge will be to demonstrate courage?
- What are the two or three specific actions that we will commit to over the next few weeks as a clear statement to ourselves that we ARE stepping forward now as more courageous leaders?

***"This is me!"***

***"Tell us more"***

***"Yes I can!"***



# The three stages to our Conversation

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We will structure our discussions around three stages:

## 1 "This is me!"

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We put stage one under this heading because early on we want to encourage you to **share a story** that helps us understand better where you are coming from as a leader.

To help us achieve strong connections across our group, please be up for sharing something about yourself in a way that helps others gain some sense of the sort of leader that you are.

## 2 "Tell us more"

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Stage two is under this heading because we hope that by now we will all want to mobilise the power of questioning to draw each other out.

We want to **get behind each other's stories** as we think through how we can become more courageous in ways that really are tailored to our distinctive needs as individual leaders.

## 3 "Yes I can!"

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Our third and final stage is about each of us **stepping into a really empowered place** where we have a greater sense of all that we can make possible as leaders.

**For every breakthrough in thinking that we achieve during this third stage, we will be able to identify its origins in the stories that we have each shared and the curiosity that others have shown in response.**

# "This is me!"

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*From 6.00pm on Monday through to 10.00am on Tuesday*

After agreeing our Guiding Principles for this Conversation, we will explore our first question in small groups.

A few days before the Conversation, Pete will discuss this on the phone with as many of you as possible. Our thinking at the moment is that in small groups we should ask you to share with each other:

- one moment in the past few months when you feel that **your courage failed you**
- and one moment where you rather **surprised yourself by the courage that you showed.**

We will encourage you to share your answers in the form of **stories.**

Listening to others' stories can trigger all sorts of ideas about our own leadership style that we might never even have thought about before this moment.

*"I was all ready to say something  
- and then I opened my mouth  
and nothing came out"*

*"This was a difficult conversation that I had put off  
for ages. When it came to it, she said she agreed  
entirely and wished I had spoken up before!"*



# "Tell us more"

*From no later than 10.00am on Tuesday through to 12.30pm*

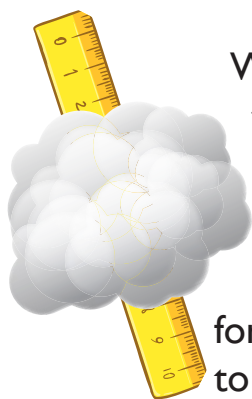
There should come a stage soon after 10.00am on Tuesday when we have all shared a story about ourselves and identified some of the challenges that we face in following through on our intentions at times when we wish to be **more courageous** and yet feel that we are holding ourselves back.

We know that we are challenged to demonstrate courage in all sorts of different situations. This is why we want to be careful to avoid over-generalising and focus on the different stories that you tell, and explore how you might draw more readily on your inner courage in the real life situations that you describe.

## **Saying what needs to be said**

When Leadership Fellows have shared their stories around courage in previous Conversations, many of them have shared one common characteristic:

- in one way or another, they have been about us finding a way of **saying something** in a context where no-one else in the room has yet found a way of saying what needs to be said.



We know that the challenge for us is not just to **speak our truth** (which can be a daunting enough prospect in its own right!) but also to say what needs to be said in such a way that it comes across as **calm** and **measured**.

This is so important if we are to make it as easy as we can for others to hear some words that they probably didn't expect to hear without feeling threatened or "bounced" by us as we say them.

We hope that some of you will share your stories about times when you achieved this - and take a few questions about **how you managed to pull this off!**

# "Yes I can!"

*From 12.30 on Tuesday through to 3.30pm*

Our discussion in the morning should help to pave the way for us to ask ourselves a challenging question over lunch, as we move into the third stage of this Conversation when we want to stretch ourselves as much as we can in thinking through new ways of becoming more courageous as leaders.

## Think of a moment over the next few weeks ...

We want to ask you to think of a moment over the next few weeks when you expect to be challenged to be more courageous as a leader than you might otherwise be.

Almost certainly, it will be a moment that makes you feel that unless you gear up to it properly beforehand there is a pretty high chance that you will duck the opportunity that will (briefly) be presented to you.

In your groups over lunch we would like to ask you to bring this moment to mind and then share with others in your group:

- **what you fear about this situation** and why you link it to your challenge to become more courageous
- and what at this stage you would regard as the **ideal courageous behaviour on your part**, when the moment presents itself.

This question should provide the basis for some fascinating discussions over lunch.

We hope that each table will nominate **one of your number** to share with the rest of us after lunch the story that offers the richest insights for the rest of us.

As we discuss your stories, we want to ask ourselves how much timely displays of personal courage could have a really positive impact on the levels of courage **among your whole team**.



## A small amount can go a long way

As we go through the afternoon we hope to risk up our thinking that bit more, and really stretch ourselves until we hit the buffers at 3.30 on the dot.

This is the stage in the day when our Guiding Principles are especially important, not least our principle about **taking risks with ideas**.

So often we find that there is a very powerful link between the courage that Leadership Fellows show in taking risks with ideas, and being open to feeling uncomfortable, and the breakthroughs in thinking that we are able to achieve.

A good number of these breakthroughs usually come in the final minutes of a Conversation.

Whenever we reflect on this afterwards, on the WhatsApp group that we usually set up, someone often points out that it was the courage of a small number of Fellows in challenging their own assumptions and trying out an idea that they hadn't previously favoured that resulted in some really powerful breakthroughs for all of us.



**At the right time, a small amount of courage can go a long way!**

*Yes we can!*





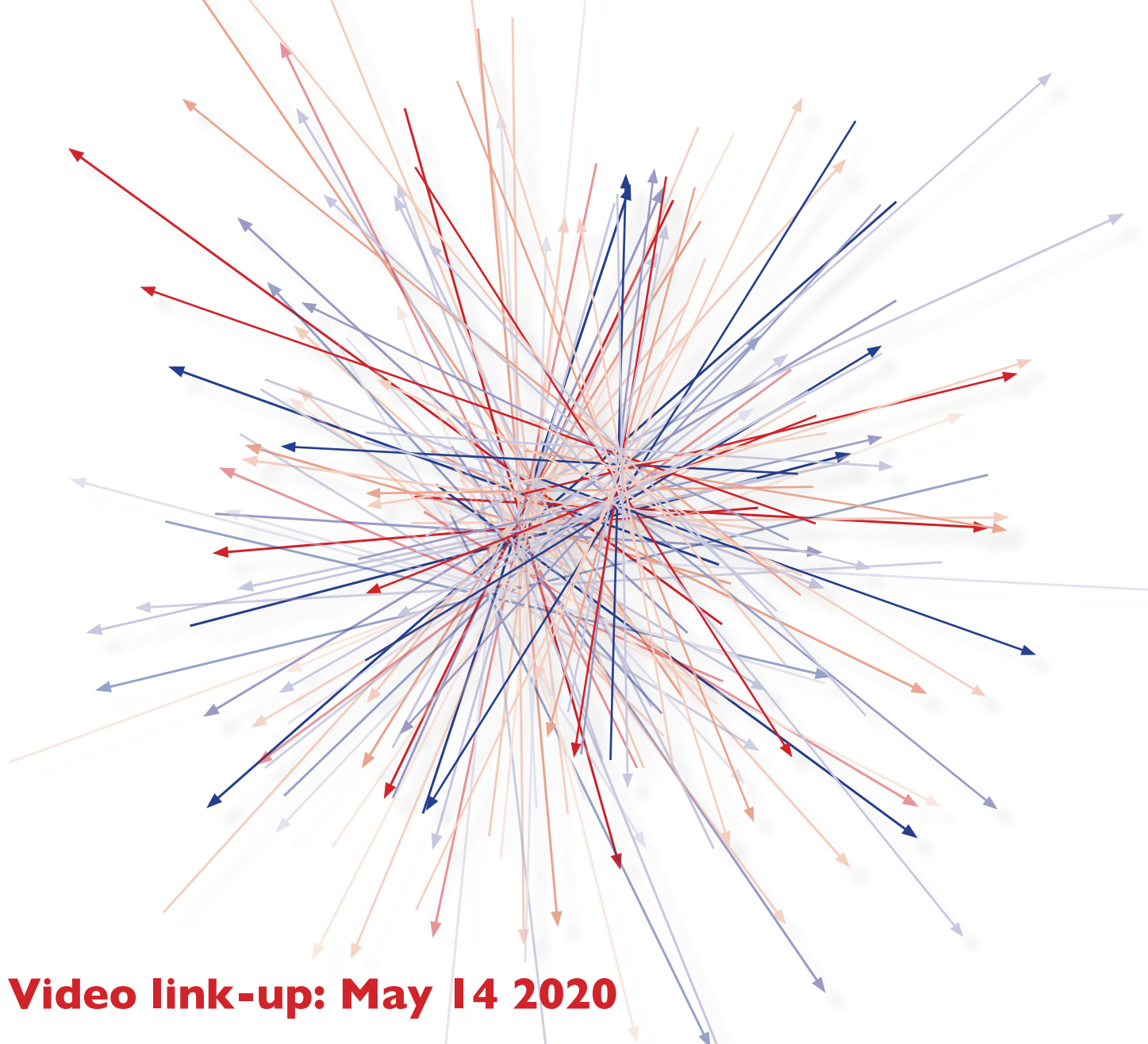
# Agenda

## Monday, February 24th 2020

<b>2.30pm+</b>	You are welcome to check into your room in St George's House
<b>4.30pm</b>	Tea in the House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
<b>5.05pm</b>	Evensong ( <i>optional</i> )
<b>5.50pm</b>	<b>Vicars' Hall.</b> Refreshments, then start of the Conversation at 6.00pm. Introduction to the Guiding Principles and then on to Stage One: <i>This is me!</i> We break for small groups and when we return we encourage you to share some aspect of your <b>personal story</b> that helps other Fellows understand in what sorts of ways you most want to become more courageous as a leader
<b>7.40pm</b>	Free time/ drinks in the Sitting Room of St George's House
<b>8.15pm</b>	Working dinner in the House Dining Room
<b>9.30pm</b>	We go through to the Sitting room for tea/coffee with port or brandy
<b>9.45pm</b>	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing from the Sitting Room ( <i>optional</i> ). After the tour, please join us for a nightcap

## Tuesday, February 25th

<b>7.45am</b>	Breakfast is served. Please clear your personal belongings from your room and bring them down to the Vicars' Hall, so that the domestic staff can prepare our rooms for the next group
<b>8.45am</b>	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall. At <b>10.00am</b> or earlier we move on to Stage 2: <i>Tell us more</i> (page 6). We move in and out of small groups as we identify specific challenges that require quality thinking time. We capture key "take aways" as we go and at around 12.20 prepare for Stage 3: <i>Yes I can!</i> (page 7)
<b>12.30pm</b>	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups. There is time for some <b>personal reflection</b> after lunch before a team photo on the West steps of the Chapel ( <i>weather permitting!</i> )
<b>1.45pm</b>	Back together as one group, we draw out the key outcomes of our lunchtime discussions. We prepare for our final round of small groups, after which we invite you to sharpen up your personal resolves to enable you to become more courageous as leaders. We close the Conversation promptly at 3.30pm.



## **Video link-up: May 14 2020**

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will also arrange a time for a follow-up video link-up in May to hear how much progress we have each made in taking forward our resolves.

The key to us making the best possible use of our time is for Fellows to share a brief email beforehand updating the rest of us on how you have acted on your resolves, and especially which ones you found the most challenging. We then take it from there!

**Suggested time for Video Link-up:**  
**3.00 to 4.00pm on Thursday, May 14th 2020**

**Please click the  
cover to open  
the report**



## **Courage in leadership**

*Insights from 3  
Leadership Conversations*

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St George's House, Windsor Castle

