

# Wisdom in Leadership



Wisdom in leadership is about cultivating a collected state of presence and awareness that has us able to see more broadly and deeply into what is really happening and therefore able to be able to access a quality of response that is not available to those caught up in the immediacy of their concerns. This 'collected state' engenders depth of insight and strength of character. It is from this state that transformational conversations start to flow. So it is not just an individual phenomenon: as people of wisdom come into connection in a team, community or nation powerful, substantial progress becomes possible through shared purpose, clarity and courage.

Wisdom in leadership is also about an attitude towards ourselves that has us in a state of humble enquiry – a knowing that we will never know all we need to know and that truth is to be found in the constant unfolding of experience, not in past certainties, however hard-won. It is about the capacity to 'live in the question', as the German poet Rainer Rilke famously coined it: *"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer...."*

We may inhabit a key leadership question for several months, even years – 'how do I balance control and empowerment' – until one day we realise the question is no longer relevant, not answered but mastered. Then the next one comes along... 'how do I blend power and love...?' We call them 'threshold questions'. Our understanding is that it is by fully embracing these threshold questions that we keep growing into our fullness as human beings – and the most important thing in embracing these questions is the right quality of space. That is what our wisdom conversations at St George's are all about.

# Leading in these times



This theme will focus on conversations that have a specific relevance to 'the times we find ourselves in'. They give us a chance as leaders to sense into how the wider forces at work in 'these times' are making themselves felt in our own leadership and organisations.

This often happens at quite unconscious levels and it is often only when we step back together as leaders and share perspectives that we see these powerful forces at play – and how they may be undermining our own clarity or effectiveness. In these conversations we will explore *externally* – what is happening out there and what is speaking to us directly as leaders? – and also *internally* – how am I feeling, what is happening to my own energy and what is this telling me as a leader?

It can be a powerful release when we realise that something troubling us is actually troubling equally competent leaders in different positions and sectors. The Covid pandemic of course is the richest source of wisdom and learning in this theme at present and we will focus on this in several of our conversations. We have already seen how the different phases of the pandemic – from rapid adaptation to stabilising to 'crisis as normal' – created very different and distinct phases of emotional, cognitive and energetic patterning in all of us.

# Food for Growth



This theme will be a more practical theme, looking at how we expand our resourcefulness, competence and confidence by enquiring into core leadership challenges and dilemmas that we all face - learning from our shared experience and best practice as we do so.

Our aim will be to 'stretch' beyond some of the familiar teaching on leadership in themes such as teamwork, well-being, communication and collaboration and to push into the frontier of our experience working with these things in challenging and dynamic organisational environments.

For example, it is all very well talking about best practice in collaboration but what do we do when we find, as happened in the Covid outbreak, that key people and institutions simply stop listening to anything that is not an immediate priority. Or, at a more behavioural level, we all know what positive motivational communication looks like, but why can't we build the engrained habit of doing it on a day to day basis?