



Fostering Wisdom

From 6pm on Thursday 7th April until 3.30pm on Friday 8th

This Conversation will focus on our unique role as leaders in fostering in our own organisations the kind of quality of learning, insight, attention and reflection that we are able to access in this community here at St George's House. How do we create 'safe space' within our own systems for people to be able to pause and look more deeply at who they are and what is needed of them – not just in a developmental setting, but in the day to day running of a demanding organisational setting.

This is about cultivating these wisdom qualities in the people and climate around us:

- **Space:** an inner calm and presence that enables us to make clear judgements with...
- **Pace:** the capacity to act decisively or patiently bide our time as needed, and to act with....
- **Grace:** respectful of the wisdom, insights, needs and perspectives of others

In this Conversation we will take some time to explore the wisdom capability that is actually present in our organisations and hopefully delight ourselves to recognise how much is really there when we pause to look. It is a truth that the richest wisdom is often in the less obvious places. The question then becomes how to protect, nurture and 'spread' this more widely in our systems. This will take us into familiar aspects of culture change that have already been covered in our series on this topic. But it will also have us thinking creatively about the subtlety of releasing people into their wisdom and creating the connection between them that will lead to purposeful and powerful conversations for change inside our own organisational settings and beyond.

This Conversation will be particularly relevant for Fellows who have a sense for stewarding the 'character' of their teams and organisations. Our aim is to share our learning and explore some of the challenges we have encountered as we seek to nurture a positive climate around us. What have we been noticing and learning as we look at our organisations in this way? What are the benefits of nurturing these qualities and the cost of not doing so? What of are some of the dilemmas, frustrations and disappointments we encounter what are the things that are most antithetical to wisdom leadership that we need to be weeding out of our systems as best we can?



Agenda

The conversation will flow through three key stages:

- **This is Me** – taking stock of where we find ourselves currently in relation to this theme and the questions that are arising from our experience
- **Tell Us More** – enquiring more deeply into our learning and insights as we probe into this experience
- **Yes I can, Yes I will** – turning wisdom and insight into intention and practice

“This is me”

We will open the conversation with a sharing of stories of when we have seen 'wisdom in action' in various places, however surprising in our organisations. This will take us into a conversation of the nature and characteristics of wisdom and its relative merits in organisational life. Of course there are many threads to wisdom and virtue which can cover qualities such as humility, courage, patience, compassion, hope, resilience, determination, boldness, gentleness, generosity, inspiration – each one a conversation in its own right. We will not therefore attempt to approach wisdom this way – rather we will approach it from its fruits – the effect that acting with wisdom seems to have on situations and people and the opposite effects when wisdom is noticeable by its absence! In this way we hope to sharpen our antennae to notice when wisdom and how is at work, often quietly in our different contexts. We will then deepen the conversation by sharing something of our own journey with wisdom – the nature of our own learning, the conditions in which it has been triggered and the effect on us. This will start us noticing the conditions we can seek to create as leaders in order to nurture wisdom...



“Tell Us More”

This takes us into the second phase of the conversation where we will explore these insights in more depth – what is this saying to us about our role in nurturing wisdom, what are we learning about how we encourage it or inadvertently choke it off? What is the state we need to be embodying as leaders to allow wisdom to flourish and foolishness to wither? What is our honest experience of this and what stops us from being this alert/aware more of the time? This will be an honest and sensitive enquiry, allowing for the fact that these things grow and are expressed in very different ways in different people. There are no right answers in this space, it is more a matter of being present and making wise choices at the right time. We will therefore be exploring what it takes to nurture the right level of self-insight and self-awareness to make the often less obvious choices that characterise wisdom at work. As we progress in this our expectation is that insights will start to crystallise for each of us around how we may be starting to make different choices about how we show up as leaders and what we make our own priorities.

“Yes I can!”

The final phase of the conversation will have us, after a period of reflection, crystallising these insights into specific intentions and commitment, and ongoing personal practices, that will support us in our aim of engendering and reinforcing a climate of 'wise action' in our working environments. This is where the experience of the leadership Fellows will really come into its own as we challenge each other to be both bold and realistic in what we seek to step into.

This will then form the basis of something of a 'social experiment' between the close of the conversation and our subsequent video link-up. What have we tried and what have been the learnings and insights as we have done this? Our hope would be that as a group you will be motivated to continue in this enquiry for a couple of further follow up sessions. In a way this little conversation lies at the heart of everything we are about at St Georges and we would like to see it develop further as we uncover more practical insights and learning as we go.



Timings: Thursday 7th April

1430	You are welcome to check in to your room in St George's House
1630	Tea in the House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
1705	Evensong (<i>optional</i>)
1750	Vicars' Hall. 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 personal story that helps other Fellows gain a sense of what the challenge of 'fostering wisdom' means to you in your context
1930	Free time/drinks in the Sitting Room No. 25 The Cloisters
1945	Working dinner in the House Dining Room
2115	We go back to the Sitting Room for tea/coffee, and after dinner drinks
2145	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing the Sitting Room (<i>optional</i>).

Friday 8th April

0745	Breakfast is served in St George's House. Please clear your luggage from your bedroom because the domestic staff need to service the rooms. You are welcome to leave bags in the Sitting Room or bring them down to the Vicars' Hall where we will be for the remainder of the Conversation
0845	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall. At 10.00am or earlier we move on to Stage 2: Tell us more. We move in and out of small groups as we identify specific aspects and challenges in our different contexts that require more focused attention and quality thinking time. We capture key insights and take-aways as we go and at around 12.15 prepare for Stage 3: Yes I can!



Friday 8th April cont...

1245 A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups. At 1.40 we have a team photo on the West steps of the Chapel (weather permitting!)

1345 Back together as one group, we draw out the key outcomes of our lunchtime discussions and reflections. We prepare for our final round of small groups, after which we invite each of you to sharpen up your personal resolves to enable you to become more effective as leaders who foster wisdom in those around them. We close the Conversation promptly at 3.30pm.

Video link-up:

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will arrange a time for a follow-up video link-up in July 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 in this 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 one you found the most challenging. We then take it from there!