



Achieving More Purposeful Connection as Leaders

From 6.00pm on Sunday 15th until 11.15am on Wednesday 18th May

Our Purpose...

This three-night Leadership Conversation provides a unique space for us to take a step back and find real depth and breakthrough as we examine what it means for us to achieve more purposeful connection in key aspects of our leadership. This will involve sensing into our deeper wisdom and knowing about what is truly important to us as leaders right now - in a context that may for some of us have changed beyond all recognition in the past couple of years.

Building on the 'connect, not convince' theme that Pete Ashby set as a foundation for the 'Leading Culture Change' theme, the Conversation will create a space in which we can explore the quality and power of connection we are finding with:

- **Ourselves** – who we really are as leaders. Is the life we are living true to the life that is living in us? How are we finding ourselves changing and growing - what new qualities, perspectives and positions are emerging for us at this time?
- **Others** – our key leadership relationships: who are we up to something significant in the world with? Are our relationships of the quality to carry the scale and weight of our purpose?
- **Our organisational systems** – are these enabling or inhibiting our capacity to achieve success? Where/how is the system running us and where/how are we running the system?
- **Our context** – how is the world changing around us and how do we stay connected, attuned and relevant to the changing needs of our stakeholders and key issues of our time?

The unique atmosphere of St George's and the foundations of trust and openness that have been established here provide a unique space in which to step into these larger questions, issues and invitations. Which is why this will be a 3 day Conversation, allowing us space to explore deeply and powerfully this theme of purposeful connection – in many ways the life force of our leadership.

During this Conversation we will take advantage of the extra time that we have together to build in space for personal reflection. We will be careful to pace ourselves so that you can absorb the subtlety and richness of this learning on the one hand and engage with energy, purpose, and fun, on the other.



3 days...

We all know from long experience that purposeful connection is the only way to realising the most significant things in life, not only in terms of achievement and breakthrough but also in terms of joy, energy and fulfilment. When people work together with focus, trust and energy great things become possible in the world - and much learning and insight gained along the way. In a way of course this is true of us too in this Fellowship – as we come together and connect in our shared purpose of nurturing each other's wisdom.

Three days and three nights together seems a luxury in the lives of busy leaders, but all our experience tells us that the third day is the one that makes all the difference. It allows us to get to a depth of connection, self-honesty and insight that is the heart of our work at St Georges – 'nurturing wisdom'.

During this Conversation, Chris and Karen will also introduce some practices for personal '**presencing**'. This is something we hope will help us to sustain and nurture the unique space we find at St Georges and carry it out with us into our daily lives. It is a way of being that enables us to access the intelligence of our full being – head knowing, gut knowing, heart knowing and soul knowing. These different sources of wisdom are particularly important for these big themes of purpose, connection and trust. It is also the knowing we learn to access in the moment as leaders when we find ourselves facing a familiar question at the cutting edge of our leadership, 'what do I do when I don't know what to do?' - when the way forward is unclear, uncertain or unknowable.

Space, Pace and Grace

These are three important words which we will seek both to apply in our process and to cultivate in our leadership during this conversation. **Space** is about grounding and presencing ourselves so that we are clear in our minds and able to make wise choices. This enables us to act with **pace**, vigour, energy and decisiveness when we know it is needed, and to be patient when the time is not right. It also enables us to have the **grace** to see others as they really are and engage from a place of humility, understanding and respect.



The three stages to our Conversation

Hopefully you recognise the familiar words.

They are designed to capture the three general stages around which our discussions at St George's House are structured:

"This is me"

We put stage one under this heading because we want to encourage you to share your story to help us understand where you are coming from as a leader. If we are to achieve strong connections across our group, we each need some sort of stake in the discussions from early on.

"Tell Us More"

Stage two is under this heading because we hope that by now we will all be drawing on the power of questioning to draw others out more.

We want to get behind each other's stories to understand deeply what is drawing each of us forward in our leadership journeys, what may be holding us back and what new wisdom, insights and potentials are stirring within us.

"Yes I can!"

Stage three is under this heading because it is about each of us stepping into a really empowered place where we feel confident **stretching ourselves** as leaders because we have a greater sense of all that we can make possible.

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!"

From 6.00pm on Sunday evening to 5pm Monday evening

Once we have welcomed you to this Conversation, we will ask you to sign up to the Guiding Principles that we have developed with Fellows since St George's House established the Society in 2016.

Creating a circle of trust

If there is any "magic ingredient" in our Leadership Conversations, it is surely the exceptionally high levels of trust that Fellows invest in the process - and each other.

Whenever we achieve significant breakthroughs in thinking, we know that it is our trust in the goodwill and generosity of spirit of everyone in the circle that has made it possible for so many of us to find ourselves **outside our comfort zone** at times, and okay about being there!

Possibly our greatest point of learning since we started these Leadership Conversations is that these moments of letting ourselves feel "uncomfortable" have been **essential** to the breakthroughs that so many Fellows have achieved.



Sharing our Stories

What is your purpose for being here? We will start our Conversation by inviting you to share your own responses to this question, recognising that so often the first challenges that pop up for us are not always the one we will end up engaging with as our exploration evolves. We will also then extend this into a purposeful conversation over dinner inviting us all to reflect on where we find ourselves in or out of connection – with ourselves/others/our organisations/our society. This will start to open up the ground for our richer exploration the following morning.

On our first full day together, we will begin by sharing an in-depth personal reflection. Where do we find ourselves in our leadership journey right now? This is the powerful principle of **'Letting our Life Speak'** which invites us to look with bare open attention, not judgement, about where we find ourselves right now and what it is that has brought us here. As we do so we will be encouraged to notice things that maybe we hadn't noticed before, not just the usual 'story' we tell people about ourselves but the deeper feelings and energy that accompanies and shapes this. What is this really telling us about who we are and how we connect?

Sharing our own story invites us to 'look again' and enables us all to get to know each other more deeply as a learning community. Listening to others' stories can trigger all sorts of insights and connections that we might not have noticed before. As we do this we help each other to see our lives with different eyes, to 'see our seeing' as Otto Scharmer puts it. This can be incredibly liberating.



Connecting to our deeper selves

Most of us tend to describe ourselves in some kind of narrative – a 'story' that we construct about who we are, what is our role and purpose and we can become very skilled not only at weaving it together in a way that makes us the hero of our own story, but also in then living into the story we have created. We 'make it true'. But what do we do with the bits that we don't like so much, or don't quite fit our story, or the deeper energies and drives within us that don't fit so neatly into the leadership myth we are inhabiting? Our assumption is that much of our deeper power and potential is locked away in the things that just don't fit, that make imperfect sense in terms of our existing narrative.

'State precedes story'. There is a part of us that exists prior to our own story, that is wholly alive, that sometimes surprises us by coming up with insights and breakthroughs that we had never thought of before... 'where did that come from?' In the afternoon on Monday, this is what we will creatively explore, with space for walks and purposeful reflection. Connecting with our deeper selves....

Who are we really, the qualities that we embody, some enduring, some emerging maybe. What are we finding ourselves drawn to in this season of our leadership, what are we clinging onto or tolerating that we no longer value? This is a space in which to think the unthinkable and not be constrained... what is really speaking to us as leaders, where are we feeling a call into adventure, or a new, fuller sense of responsibility, or service? The key to this work is developing the capacity to really notice our own energy – what is alive within us and inviting us into a fuller, richer state of being, what is diminishing us, or stemming from a more anxious, compulsive or self-protective energy. This is heart work as well as head work and requires us to be wholly present with ourselves and each other, something that the unique atmosphere at St George's House supports so beautifully.

Doing this work in small groups can be very powerful as, in the well established pattern of these conversations, we are able to see ourselves in the mirror of other people's responses and reflections – which can often, especially as here where we have no agenda beyond our fellowship, be less distorting than the lenses that we tend to view ourselves through.



"Tell Us More"

From 6.00pm on Monday evening to 5pm Tuesday evening

After a break for (optional) Evensong in the Chapel, we will spend some time discerning some of the common themes that have emerged through our own personal exploration. What is the world calling for from us at this time? What are we discerning as a common energy, a bigger force for change in all of this. This will inform our conversations over dinner which will be bold, lively and imaginative in the freedom we will have found through our work together during the day.

We learn so much in our informal, spontaneous together time and then our brains do most of their real learning and deeper processing while we sleep. So first thing on Tuesday morning, we will take a pause to garner the wisdom of the night before! What is becoming clear to us as we reflect upon this theme of purposeful connection, and what insights and intentions are stirring within us that we may want to give voice to – starting to inform a new narrative for this next phase of our leadership journey...

From mid-morning, we will explore turning aspiration into boldness – noticing, remembering and reminding each other of the true power we have as the leaders we are – formal and informal. We will have some fun actually physically embodying our power and noticing what it is like when we 'play small' and when we 'play big'. The key question we will engage with here though is how we use our power and presence to disrupt systems and patterns in our organisations that no longer serve us.



"Tell Us More"

The time we have taken on Monday to 'see with new eyes' will inevitably cause us to notice with remarkable clarity how and where our current patterns are impeding much need change and refreshment. One of the first things we need to do in finding purposeful connection is to address the engrained habits that can take us into disconnection or purposeless connection/collusion. This invites us into our role as disruptive leaders – how bold do we need to be to shake things up and allow new coalitions of purpose to emerge? This will involve us really challenging each other on how we are challenging others.

After a break for reflection over lunch we will move on to explore the implications of our new perspective for how we connect with significant others within our organisational systems and with the world beyond. What new conversations do we need to be stepping into and with whom? Working in small groups and using creative dialogue techniques that help us view the world through others' eyes as well as our own, we will start to imagine what becomes possible when we consciously choose to engage with people differently and/or with different people.

Probably the most important aspect of purposeful connection is the quality of our listening – to ourselves/others/the world. Can we really see and hear people for how they are, not what we want them to be? This is where peer challenging and practical coaching can be so helpful – helping each other attune to others and respect their truth, whilst still expressing ourselves clearly and practically - purposeful connection that really makes change happen... Our small group work becomes so powerful here, co-sensing, co-creating and co-evolving new ways of embodying our leadership in practice.



"Yes I can, yes I will!"

Tuesday evening through to 11.15am on Wednesday

For the Tuesday to achieve all that it can, it is important to accept that we all tend to move forward at different paces. Some will find that fairly quickly on the Tuesday morning you hone in on something that clearly needs your leadership attention, whilst others will want more time for reflection and thinking through options before you are ready to come to some sort of decision.

We each need to be free to set our own speed, knowing that other Fellows are there for us, on our terms. Sometimes a Fellow who achieves a quick breakthrough in their thinking is more than happy to concentrate their energy on supporting others, only to find later that a breakthrough someone else has made triggers **a much bigger breakthrough for them** than what they have already had!

Focusing on our movement in thinking

This is the stage when we will ask you how **ambitious** you are for what you want to take away from this Conversation. **Expect more**, because if you expect more now you are certain to take more away on Wednesday.

We will be focusing on some of our boldest leadership challenges and conversations, so we will need to give ourselves time to develop conscious strategies. The key is that as we move forward through Tuesday we are each aware of how we are **shifting** in our thinking. It's so important that we don't let ourselves get trapped into fixed positions. We always learn the most from those who move on in their thinking, and sometimes change their perspective.

Through the evening, we will be encouraging you to start framing and solidifying your new intentions for how you want to show up as a leader in the light of your insights and understandings from your work on connection. Before supper we will do an exercise that will start to lock down our new thinking and intentions into practical steps of change.



Sustaining our purpose and staying in connection

On our final morning we will again pause and take a reflective walk to ensure we have truly captured the wisdom of the night before. Then our work to consolidate and ground our intentions and resolves begins. Our expectation is that by Tuesday evening you will be pretty clear about your aspirations and the conversations you intend to have to pursue these. The hard part, however, is **staying true** to these when we get pulled back into our day to day contexts. As we noted earlier, 'state precedes story'. If we allow our inner state to change, we can become reactive and unconsciously fall out of both purpose and connection. So how do we retain the state of 'space, pace and grace' that we have found so richly and powerfully in our time together as Leadership Fellows in this Conversation?

Our closing session will therefore focus on ruthless prioritising – what is the movement that I am seeking to cause and what is the state I know I need to embody to make this happen. This is so much more than an action plan. Instead of focusing on another 'to-do list' that, with the best will in the world, we will forget when we return to the deluge of the everyday, we will focus on how we manage our state to enable ourselves to be more grounded in our purpose and more constant in our connection. Drawing on the experience of our work together and some of the practices we have used to access and strengthen our personal presence we will help each other create a personal programme for embodying, monitoring and re-accessing our more powerful leadership states. This is about developing the capacity to be our own coach:

- to **notice** when we are in a state of purposeful connection and when we have lost it, or been caught into reactivity and leaking our energy.
- to **remember** who we really are when we are at our best and to return to this way of being.

In this way, our actions follow naturally from our state – we are not driving ourselves and getting frustrated when we don't do what we intend. We learn to notice who we are being and to choose to be who we are – then achievement follows. This will set the basis for our reflections and conversations in the Whatsapp community we will set up to stay in connection after the conversation.



Timings: Sunday 15th May

- 1430 You are welcome to check in to your room in St George's House
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- 1630 Tea in the House for those joining Evensong in the Chapel
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- 1705 Evensong (*optional*)
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- 1750 **Vicars' Hall.** Refreshments, then start of the Conversation at 6.00pm. Introduction to the Guiding Principles and then on to Stage One: ***This is me!*** We take an agreed question into small groups and then share our personal answers with the wider group
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- 1945 Working dinner in the Dining Room of No. 25
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- 2115 Tea/coffee/after drinks
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- 2145 Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing the Sitting Room (*optional*).
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Monday 16th May

- 0745 Breakfast is served in the House Dining Room
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- 0845 We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall continuing on the '***This is me!***' theme with a deeper sharing of our personal stories: 'where we find ourselves right now as leaders, and what has brought us to this point'
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- 1100 Personal reflection time
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- 1130 Sharing our stories
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- 1300 A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups
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- 1355 Team photo on the West Steps of the Chapel then back together in the Vicars' Hall
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Monday 16th May cont...

1600	Personal reflection time
1705	(Optional) Evensong in the Chapel
1750	Resume the Conversation at 6pm. On to Stage 2: Tell us More!
1915	Free time and pre-dinner drinks
1945	Dinner is served in the Dining Room of No. 25
2130	Tea/coffee/after drinks

Tuesday 17th May

0745	Breakfast is served in the House Dining Room
0845	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall. Some personal space and then we begin work on our aspirations
1100	Personal reflection time
1130	We shift our focus and start looking at how we are connecting with our wider organisational systems and where we should be disrupting forces for disconnection
1300	A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups
1400	Work in small groups on key leadership conversations
1515	Refreshments
1615	Personal reflection time
1705	Evensong (optional)
1750	Vicars' Hall. Resume the Conversation. We move onto Stage Three 'Yes we can!'



Tuesday 17th May cont..

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| 1915 | Free time/pre-dinner drinks |
| 1945 | Dinner is served in the Dining Room of No. 25 |
| 2130 | Coffee, drinks and conversation in the Sitting Room |
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Wednesday 18th May

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| 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 | Vicars' Hall. We start again promptly and invite any personal insights that draw on our discussions the previous evening. Then into small groups to work on our commitments to our leadership practice going forwards. |
| 1115 | Close of the Conversation |
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Video link-up:

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will arrange a time for a follow-up video link-up 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!

Suggested time for Video Link-up:
Thursday 30th June: 12.00 – 1.00pm