



Working Collaboratively across boundaries

From 6pm on Thursday 8th December until 3.30pm on Friday 9th

This Conversation is for those of us who find ourselves managing complex cross-boundary relationships and projects – which is probably most of us nowadays!! So many of our organisational challenges and inefficiencies come from misunderstandings, misinterpretations or lack of clarity around boundary issues – often leading to various forms of entrenchment, poor collaboration and conflict. We will explore different types of boundaries – structural, hierarchical, cultural, technological, demographic, psychological - and will draw on research and experience to unlock practical wisdom about what it really takes from us as leaders to optimise the massive potential of working creatively and generatively across our different 'worlds' - rather than sinking back into them, which of course, especially under pressure, we are all inclined to do.

"The true voyage of discovery is not to visit new lands but to possess new eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another, of a hundred others, to behold the hundred universes that each of them beholds, that each of them is..." Marcel Proust

There is also potentially a deeper enquiry that we can touch into here. Much leadership teaching on collaboration presents practical tools to help us understand and overcome differences. But this is to start from an immediate place of 'othering', that somehow we all belong to separate worlds/systems. The challenge may be more fundamental – about how we see each other in the first place.

Many aspects of our culture and education system encourage us to inhabit a self-orientated and acquisitive world. We are taught to see and organise ourselves in ways which promote competition over collaboration, give rise to avoidable rivalry and conflict, and which limit our collaborative potential and the wellbeing of organisations and those within them. Besides negatively impacting our relationships and ability to work together, many believe this strong individualism is a key driver of social, financial and environmental crises.

What happens if we start leading with a different assumption, classically expressed in the African concept of *ubuntu* – "I am because we are and we are because I am..." That everything of significance in this world is co-generated? What happens when we start seeing with different eyes? What may be possible, what opens up if we do? Or is it even possible given how entrenched our patterns of 'othering' can be?



Agenda

The Conversation will follow our usual flow in 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 our recent experiences of collaborative cross boundary leadership – where it is frustrating, but also where it is liberating.

This will take us into a conversation exploring some of the patterning within this – both within ourselves and our own responses, and in our contexts and the systemic drivers at play. We will begin from the very start sharing practical learning – what has helped us get this right, simple tools and practices, and what we have learned from where we have got it wrong.

We will then identify key questions arising from our own real experience; what does it really mean to connect across even the most challenging and 'foreign' of boundaries? What is the enduring human wisdom that is available to us here?

“Tell Us More”

This takes us into the second phase of the Conversation where we will explore these insights in more depth and try to get more radical and creative in surfacing and challenging our own limiting assumptions.

Using the unique opportunity that St George's House offers we will seek to learn from the very different perspectives that we each can bring, when we are truly ourselves.

How do we help each other challenge our own inner boundaries and assumptions as well as our outer ones?

How do we notice when our subtle patterns of retrenchment and 'othering' creep in?

How can we help each other get beyond these and see things with different eyes?

We will also take a 'systemic' lens to our different contexts – what are the underlying drivers that are creating boundary issues and driving us into 'lower common denominator' patterns rather than higher?

How do we find ways to free ourselves from our own reactivity and get creative in responding to these drivers that opens up possibility rather than closing it down.

If this all seems a little abstract in the description, our hope is that in the reality it will be very concrete and practical. We will be inviting everyone to take specific boundary issues that need unlocking and, using the insights from our earlier enquiry, helping each other find creative, practical, even radical approaches to handling these in a different way going forwards.



“Yes I can!”

The final phase of the Conversation will have us, after a period of reflection, crystalising these insights into specific intentions and commitment, and ongoing personal practices, that will support us in our aim of leading collaboratively within pressurised high performance 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 grounded in what we seek to step into. We will also look not just at our own leadership practice but also how we generate a more collaborative ethos and mindset in those around us.

This will then form the basis of something of a 'collaborative experiment' between the close of the Conversation and our subsequent video link-up.

What have we tried in this shifting of collaborative practices and mindsets? 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.



Timings: Thursday 8th December

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 your experiences of the joys and frustrations of collaborative cross-boundary leadership
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 9th December

0745	Breakfast is served in St George's House. Please clear your personal belongings from your room and bring them down to the Vicars' Hall, so that the domestic staff can prepare the rooms for the next group
0845	We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall. At 10.00am or earlier we move on to Stage 2: <i>Tell us more</i> . We move in and out of small groups as we identify specific aspects and challenges in our different situations that require more focused attention and quality thinking time.



Friday 9th December cont...

- 1245 A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups, reflecting on how our insights from the morning are speaking to us and our intentions as leaders. At 1.40 we have a team photo on the West steps of the Chapel (weather permitting!)
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- 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 help each other sharpen up your personal resolves and intentions to step into some new and different ways of embodying collaborative leadership in your different contexts. We close the Conversation promptly at 3.30pm.
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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 in March 2023 (date tbc) to share progress and learning from our journey.