



Moving through the stages of leadership maturity

From 6pm on Monday 14th November until 11.15am on Wednesday 16th

It has been an interesting feature of our conversations with leaders that people have been noticing how their leadership has been changing – particularly in response to what we have all been encountering in recent years – a sense of 'growing up' and learning to lead with different priorities in mind... and heart. It seems timely to enquire more fully into this.... what is going on? What is shifting in the way leadership is being enacted? To what extent is there a timeless wisdom in this, or is something new being called for from us in the early 21st century?

This two-night conversation provides a unique space to enquire into the fascinating topic of what 'maturity' means in leadership and how it manifests itself. It will be in part a personal reflection and self-enquiry – how have we each grown and matured as leaders, what has shaped us personally, what are we being invited into in this stage of our growth? It will be in part an exploration of our role in how we develop and engender leadership maturity in those around us – people who work for us, people we work with. It will be in part be a systemic enquiry – are our organisational cultures and practices really valuing and encouraging maturity in our leaders? - or do they even sometimes do the opposite?

As well as drawing on established frameworks of leadership development, there will be a strong element of learning and harvesting wisdom from our real, shared and unique, experiences. We hope that, by the kind of reflection and exploration that is only possible in the confidential, high trust culture of St George's House, we can gain powerful, practical and liberating insights into how we develop true leadership – in ourselves and others – leadership that makes a powerful and positive difference in these times we now find ourselves in.



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There are many models and 'stage development theories' of effective leadership and how leaders develop over time and in response to increasing responsibility and complexity. We all know and recognise many of them as we have lived through them – for example learning not to do it all ourselves, to let go of control, to delegate and trust, to create and engender accountability, to question assumptions and to coach, to think bigger/broader/more strategically, to embrace increasing complexity and ambiguity, to deal with power, to stop worrying about our own performance, to listen more than we speak.... We shall of course look at some of these during the conversation. But we shall also seek to look beneath them and explore maybe some of the assumptions on which they are founded. Business schools, Universities and Military Academies have been teaching leadership for well over 100 years now, and there is a pretty universal consensus about what good leadership looks like. But the problem is that we are still not living it, at least not all the time. We know what is needed but we just don't do it....

A recurring theme in our experience of working with leaders in challenging times is that they have grown in ways they do not realise. ***They have to catch up with themselves and the world has to catch up with them.*** This is one of the major inhibitors of personal and organisational growth and agility. As people transition, there can be a conforming to old, familiar patterns and practices that no longer serve either them or their organisation – even though the organisation may be the source of these limiting expectations. If we are not careful we continue to lead on the other side of change in patterns and assumptions which took us into it.

A simple example may be a leader who takes on a senior role, maybe onto the executive team for the first time. After about 12 months there is a growing sense of having 'arrived' - coming through the initial 'crunch' of 'proving oneself', adjusting aspirations to 'reality' and settling into the new terrain. This is the crucial time.



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Only now do we have the lie of the land, the new relationships and the beginnings of the inner understanding about what it takes to really make things happen at this level. We have adapted to the new role, but this is just the launch-pad. As we pause and ground our leadership in the new strength and maturity that is now available to us, we start to take permission to do what is really necessary. Now is the time to really make a difference.

What is clear is that maturity in leadership is so much more than a cognitive process – it is about how we live, not what we think. So it involves our whole being - heart, mind, body, spirit - and our whole way of being - in relationships with others and our world...

...and is it possible, as we learn to know and trust ourselves and others, that in the end it is all much simpler than we think?!

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



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"This is me"

During the opening phase of this Conversation we will share some of our own stories from the different journeys we have been on? Things that have shaped us, grown us, given us life and fulfilment. As we do this we will help each other see maybe things that we haven't quite appreciated about ourselves, qualities that maybe we take for granted, formed within us from our diverse unique experiences. We will start to pose ourselves questions – what might it be like to trust this hard-won wisdom more, to lead from a place of clarity and confidence about what has already formed within us. We will also be asking what is beckoning to us, where maybe is something new being demanded or invited from us?

This gives us the opportunity to:

- Notice how you have yourself developed, both as a leader and a human being, in your journey to date
- Consider how this has served you and maybe has now stopped serving you in your leadership. What is the 'knowing' you have within you but are not trusting enough? What is the 'knowing' you are leaning on too much, that is limiting you?
- See yourself through the lens of other leaders with different experiences
- Sense into the context around you and what this is inviting of you... if not you then whom, if not now then when...?
- Sense into the people and talent around you and maybe see them with different eyes - and what you can really be offering or demanding of them
- Expand your horizons, look beyond – what becomes possible when you acknowledge where you truly are as a leader and what is available to you?



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“Tell Us More”

As we get beneath and beyond this, and as we settle into the special space at Windsor, we will become more creative and generative – exploring and challenging each other around our own leadership and our role in creating true leadership cultures around us. We will also help each other look differently at the situations and relationships we find ourselves in. What is the nature of the times we are in? What might be possible if we let go of old perspectives and embrace what we do not know but in some way feel called into, with a spirit of adventure? Where have we become 'stuck', caught in habitual patterns? Once we learn to trust that we are still and always growing in strength and maturity, what becomes possible when we embrace the unknown? What happens when we challenge others to do the same, including our bosses and clients? What happens when we invite our teams into this with us?

We will also explore the broader question of how, based on the insights from our own journeys of growth, we support, challenge and enable others to develop and trust their growing maturity. In particular, we will explore questions around what our organisational processes and routines really value and encourage from our leaders – do these really recognise the value and subtlety of mature leadership, or do they reward much more basic patterns of performativity? What can we be doing to create a context that is more nurturing and recognising of the value of mature leadership at different levels in the system? How do we need sometimes to work against the grain to recognise true leadership? How do we make sure some of our processes such as goal setting, appraisal, delegation and coaching take account of different stages and facets of leadership maturity?

It is in this stage of the Conversation that our ability to share practical learning with each other - sometimes even the small insights, tips, provocations, things that maybe seem obvious to us, can be hugely liberating to others. We will also play an important part in expanding the sense of what is possible in others by simply embodying our own authenticity and helping each other see into theirs.



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“Yes I can!”

In the final phase of the Conversation we will start moving from enquiry, challenge and possibility into commitment and intention. These might be commitments to further exploration or experimentation, or to engaging differently in some of our key leadership relationships. Or there may be some clear bold steps that suddenly become very clear to us as we see ourselves and our context in a different light. The most radical may indeed be letting things go, rather than adding new things in. It is often the case, as we mature and develop a fuller sense of our true selves, that, like a master craftsman, less is more – and that we have may more time than we think, to do what really matters....



Timings: Monday 14th November

- 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 share our personal stories as leaders in small groups, then any themes emerging – with the wider group. In light of the themes, we agree on our question to consider during discussions over dinner.
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- 1945 Working dinner in the House Dining Room
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- 2115 Tea/coffee and after dinner drinks in No. 25 The Cloisters
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- 2145 Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing the Sitting Room (*optional*).
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Tuesday 15th November

- 0745 Breakfast is served in the House Dining Room.
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- 0845 We start again promptly in the Vicars' Hall, exploring in more depth some of the themes that emerged yesterday evening and identifying the most fruitful lines of enquiry in this for each of us. We start to challenge our assumptions and deepen our understanding of what it really means to grow as leaders (and engender growth in others)
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- 1000 We move on to Stage 2: ***Tell us more*** where we work more intentionally on the aspects and stages of growth that are most relevant to us, supporting and challenging each other in the process. This may be 'inner work' on our own leadership or 'outer work' on how we seek to shape and transform our team and organisations – or both.
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Tuesday 15th November cont...

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| 1100 | Personal reflection time |
| 1130 | We draw out key messages from our reflection time and take a challenge into another round of small groups. |
| 1300 | A hot buffet lunch is served in the Vicars' Hall and we work together in our groups |
| 1355 | Team photo on the West Steps of the Chapel ...Then back together as one group in the Vicars' Hall |
| 1515 | We pause to take stock and notice what is really moving for us and take some personal reflection time until 4pm. |
| 1600 | Tea and refreshments, then we move onto Stage 3: Yes I can! As we go through this stretch stage, where we start to ground our learning and self-awareness in our own context, we encourage more feedback. We also make a point to focusing energy on anyone who feels stuck in some way and would appreciate additional group support to enable them to unlock their thinking and move forward. |
| 1705 | (Optional) Evensong in the Chapel |
| 1745 | Refreshments, then resume the Conversation at 6pm |
| 1945 | Dinner is served in the Dining Room |
| 2130 | Tea/coffee and after dinner drinks in No. 25 The Cloisters |
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Wednesday 16th November

0730 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 before agreeing our challenge for the final round of small groups. When we return from groups, we help each other focus and firm up on our intentions and key takeaways. These will shape the learning and growth we seek to engage with between now and the group follow up session next year.

1115 Close of the Conversation

Video link-up:

At the end of the Conversation we will confirm the arrangements for our follow-up zoom call to check in on the progress we have each made in progressing our resolves.

The key to us making the best possible use of our time in this is for Fellows to post a brief WhatsApp beforehand updating the rest of us on how you have been getting on, and especially which ones you found the most challenging. We then take it from there!

Suggested time for Video Link-up:

Friday 13th January, 3.30pm – 4.30pm