



# Ethics in Leadership

From 6pm on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> June until 4.00pm on Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup>

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This Conversation was first held in 2021. It is an offering at the heart of leadership and one that Fellows have asked to be repeated.

At the core of this conversation is the question, "How do I find and retain my ethical focus in my life and my work and so live at peace with myself?" Leading in any system has us face ethical dilemmas, choices that cause a level of inner conflict. Choices that cause us to question, what I should do, what is called for, when to speak up, when to stay silent, what kind of person I am becoming, what I really want to embody as a leader

A conversation on ethical leadership is not abstract, it is grounded in our own truth, our own reality, our own dilemmas. During this conversation we will consider who we are as leaders: how we like to make decisions, the thoughtful operation of conscious principles and the deeper intuitive voice of conscience, as well as an honest look at the tension between what we aspire to be and what we actually do. We will consider the system we are leading in, the ethical dilemmas it presents, what it takes to build and maintain the ethical character of any organisation and how to sustain the courage and wisdom to stay with this in all the complexity of our lives today.

The Oxford dictionary defines 'ethics' as moral principles that govern a person's behaviour.

- Do we take action based on our understanding of rules?
- Do we take action based on a consideration of the consequences?
- What is the virtue of the one making the decision to act?



## Ethics in Leadership

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Ethical lapses stay with a business for a very long time, reputation is damaged and trust eroded. According to a study by the Institute of Leadership & Management:

- 63% of managers say they have been asked to do something contrary to their own ethical code.
- 43% say they have been told to behave in direct violation of their organisation's own values statements.
- 9% have been asked to break the law.

The pressure on leaders is intense; often decisions are based on survival instincts, in exposed environments with tight time scales.

This Conversation recognises the significant moral and ethical responsibility of leaders and seeks to penetrate real insight into the nature of ethical leadership. Especially in today's context where we are more aware than we have been perhaps for a long time that we live in a deeply interconnected world, where our decisions and choices affect the lives of so many, directly and indirectly.

The complexity of ethical leadership comes about when moral principles are not shared, or when principles contradict or conflict with each other. Ethical considerations are often an inner working, only really understood when tested, and sometimes 'buried', consciously or unconsciously, beneath other concerns and priorities.

So, how do we build the ethical character of an organisation? What leadership qualities inspire and sustain that character, even when survival is threatened? What are those qualities that stand out, that help to shape the identity of our organisations, and potentially serve as a beacon to others? How are we collectively shaping the moral and ethical foundations of our society and institutions that we will be handing on to future generations?

Who am I, inside and outside of relationships, inside and outside of power? How does my personal conscience and the decisions I make serve my team, my organisation, my industry, my society?



# Agenda

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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”

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As we join the Conversation and connect with each other we have the opportunity to take stock of where we find our-selves currently in relation to this theme and the questions that are arising from our experience.

We will open the conversation with a sharing of stories: what caused us to choose this conversation, what ethical dilemmas do we find ourselves in, what maybe is troubling us right now as we look at our own leadership context. This will help us explore the moral and ethical patterns we see playing out in our own experience of leadership, the inter-play of 'personal', 'principle' and 'business' decision-making.

Essentially, who am I and how do I notice myself making decisions in these times I find myself in?



## “Tell Us More”

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In the second phase of our Conversation we have the chance to gain new insights and practical learning by applying some core philosophical models of ethical thinking to our experience of leadership – under the theme of 'Ethical Conundrums'

This will include a stimulating exploration by Dr Hueston Finlay, Warden of St Georges House.

Hueston will introduce us to some rich thinking and different perspectives on the application of ethical principles to life, drawing on the experience of hosting the core social and ethical programme with leaders from all walks of life at St George's House. For decades this has been bringing people together to discuss the 'big issues' facing our society.

We will then move from a philosophical base to our lived experience. What are the habituated patterns we see playing out in our own thinking and our business? What has been highlighted for us through the tumultuous last couple of years? How has it impacted our decision-making? Where are our ethical boundaries being challenged? How are our leadership decisions impacting the reputation of and trust in our organisation? How do we ensure the ethics held at the leadership table are lived throughout the organisation?

This will be an honest and empathic enquiry, held in the safety of the Vicars Hall with other leaders of considerable experience and a deep desire to learn, face the truths of our lived experience and lead well. To know reality we cannot step outside it and define it, we must enter into it, be it and feel it. What are the realities we are living with?

How are we seeing them differently as we step back and take a fuller, more grounded perspective on them.

What is the 'realpolitick' of ethical leadership, how do we temper and exercise it in ways that gain traction rather than trigger rejection? Coming out of this, what different choices, subtle or large, present themselves to us about how we show up in our own leadership?



## “Yes I can!”

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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 'ethical leadership'.

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.

Where and what have we tried to strengthen our effectiveness and impact as ethical leaders? What have been the learnings and insights as we have done this, both joyful and painful?!

Our hope would be that as a group you will be motivated to continue in this enquiry for a few further follow up sessions, to learn together from the leadership journey.



## Timings: Monday 26th June

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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	<b>Vicars' Hall.</b> Refreshments, then start of the Conversation at 6.00pm. Introduction to the Guiding Principles and then on to Stage One: <b><i>This is me!</i></b> 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 how 'ethical leadership' is at play in your leadership context
2000	Working dinner in the House Dining Room
2130	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> ).

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## Tuesday 27th June

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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 we move on to Stage 2: <b><i>Tell us more.</i></b> We will consider the territory of ethical conundrums: how we make choices in situations with no easy answer and explore the conscious application of ethical considerations in amongst the other drivers in our decision-making.

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## Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June cont...

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- 1015      Tea and coffee is served in the Vicars' Hall, as we continue to Stage 2: **Tell us more**. We move in and out of small groups as identify specific aspects and challenges in our different situations that require more focused attention and quality thinking time. We capture key insights and take-aways as we go and at around 1pm prepare for Stage 3: **Yes I can**
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- 1315      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 2.10 we have a team photo on the West steps of the Chapel (weather permitting!)
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- 1415      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 a leader in how you handle the moral and ethical dilemmas you see playing out. We close the Conversation, finishing promptly at 4.00pm.
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- 1600      Conversation close
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### 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 date and time for Zoom Follow up:  
Friday 13<sup>th</sup> October, 2.30pm – 3.30pm**