



# How can I become an even better leader?

From 2.30pm on Wednesday 13<sup>th</sup> September until 4.00pm on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup>

This is a core offering that will be a constant in our annual programme. It emerged from conversations with Fellows, which highlighted that, almost whatever the formal topic of a conversation, we all want to use the space at St George's House to address our own burning questions as a leader. *"I just need a bit of space to look at this"*, as one Fellow put it.

Recognising that each leadership journey is entirely unique, this Conversation provides a format in which you can bring your own leadership questions, of whatever nature, and explore these in a safe, productive space with fellow leaders - in a climate of generosity, openness and uncompromising respect. This involves bringing core strengths and insights from the past with the stirring awareness and energy of the present into new situations and challenges in the future - going from strength to strength. The focus is simple - to become, and to help each other become, better leaders.

## 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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After arriving in the Vicars' Hall and sharing some introductory thoughts and questions, we will begin the conversation with an exploring of what we call 'threshold questions'. These are questions that in some way are challenging us and will not go away, however much we may want to brush them aside or apply a quick fix. We call them threshold questions because, when we step into them fully they invariably lead us into a phase of new insight, growth and connection.

The poet Rainer Rilke captures this perfectly in one of his letters:

*"Be patient toward all that is unsolved in your heart and to try to love the questions themselves like locked rooms and like books that are written in a very foreign tongue. Do not now seek the answers, which cannot be given you because you would not be able to live them. And the point is, to live everything. Live the questions now. Perhaps you will then gradually, without noticing it, live along some distant day into the answer...."*

On the first afternoon, working in small groups, we will begin by sharing our stories of 'where we are at' as leaders in relation to these questions.

These will typically be where we are sensing some kind of disconnect between where we are actually at and where we want to be – whether in terms of performance, purpose, growth, wellbeing, culture, connection etc.

It may be about hopes and ambitions that you are not getting to. It may be that you are getting feedback from others that is not who you really are, or that you and your organisation are getting caught into patterns and dynamics that are not serving you.

As we share our stories we will help each other discern and notice what is really going on below the surface – what is stirring and moving within us, what is *really* going on around us?

The honest sharing of our stories always stirs and illuminates truths for others. That is because we are rarely alone, (even though it often feels that way!), in some of the big leadership questions we are facing – they are the questions of our time.

The sharing of our personal leadership stories, as ever at St George's House, will continue informally over the evening and into supper as we share and get different perspectives on our questions.



# “Tell Us More”

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We open the next day with a sharing of our overnight reflections.

'As I have explored my situation what is starting to become clear to me, what new perspectives am I forming? How am I feeling about what is now possible for me here?' Quite often this will start to reveal to us strengths and qualities we did not even realise we had – particularly when we have been coming through challenging times. It usually takes a while for our self-concept to catch up with the truth of who we really are!

This will take us into the next phase of the Conversation where we will start to look at fresh approaches and start to unlock the resources in ourselves and in our contexts. What is really driving us and why? What old patterns are no longer serving us, where is there a will and desire for inner change, to be a fuller version of myself?

We will also help each other look at our contexts with different eyes. As we start to ground in our own truth and look more clearly and confidently at what is going on around us, what do we see? Where is the real call and invitation for change? What is it like as we step into this and what now becomes possible if we do? If so, what do we need to be letting go of and what do we need to be engaging with more fully?

This will usually involve listening to ourselves and each other in a deeper way – helping each other see talents and possibilities that we may not have thought we had, or tended to underplay. With the increasing trust that has built up as we engage in these transformational questions, we will also start to challenge each other – “what kind of leader do you really want to be? If you are to be true to yourself, what would you really be doing?”

During this phase of the Conversation we will also offer simple techniques for positive self-awareness and 'presencing' to help us sense into what is really flowing within us – listening to the wisdom of the heart, and the body, as well as the mind.

By the end of the morning, we will be getting clearer about where there is an invitation to step into something new in our leadership, and possibly to let go of something old. This takes us into the next phase of our Conversation.



## “Yes I can!”

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Over lunch, we will consolidate our insights and start to frame these in terms of clear intentions.

The challenge then becomes helping each other anchor these in sustainable energy and commitment. It will also be important to check that we are putting the things in place that will be necessary – what support and resources may we need and how will we access these?

We will also take stock of the learning that has arisen during the process of the Conversation – what is this telling us about who we really are as leaders, and how do we stay true to this, not get sucked into other, lesser modes of being. We call this 'self-remembering' and part of our work as we close will be to help each other with practices that help us self remember as we step back into busy, pressurised environments, full of distractions and distortions.

We will close the Conversation with a pause to look back and 'hoover up' all the wisdom that has been gleaned and shared – particularly the very practical wisdom, the little tips, practices and insights that emerge spontaneously, often in offline chats, as we talk and share experiences together.

Finally we will pair up to help each other to firm up on our specific commitments and intentions - and maybe even offer to stay in touch from time to time to help each other with this.



## Timings: Wednesday 13th September

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1330	You are welcome to check in to your room in St George's House
1400	Tea and coffee available in the Sitting Room
1430	Start of the Conversation in the Vicars' Hall
1500	<b><i>This is me!</i></b> We work in small groups sharing our stories and experience
1700	Break for Tea/Coffee – Evening Prayer (optional) in St George's Chapel
1800	Conversation resumes in the Vicars' Hall
1930	Free Time/Drinks in the Sitting Room
1945	Working Dinner in the House Dining Room
2130	Tea /Coffee & after dinner drinks in the Sitting Room
2145	Private floodlit tour of St George's Chapel, departing the Sitting Room (optional).

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## Thursday 14th September

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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 with a reflection on what is emerging for us. At roughly 10.00am we move on to Stage 2: <b><i>Tell us more</i></b> . 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. We capture key insights and take-aways as we go and at around 12.30 start preparing for Stage 3: <b><i>Yes I can!</i></b>

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## Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September cont...

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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 reflections and engage in our final round of small group work as we clarify and solidify our intentions. At around 3pm we invite each of you to work in pairs over a cup of tea to sharpen up your personal resolves and commitments, after which we come back together as a whole group to close the Conversation, finishing promptly at 4.00pm

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1600 Conversation close

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### Video link-up:

In the final minutes of the Conversation we will confirm the arrangements for our follow-up zoom call 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 post a brief Whatsapp 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 date and time: tbc