



# How to Harness the Creative Force of Conflict

From 6pm on Monday 30<sup>th</sup> October until 4.00pm on Tuesday 31<sup>st</sup>

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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 and setting in the Vicars Hall, we will share something of our personal stories in relation to conflict - telling experiences, and ‘moments of truth ’that shaped us and our contexts. This will continue over dinner and drinks in Number 25. As we do so we will be listening and discerning the underlying truths that are beginning to speak to us.

The following morning we will share insights about what is starting to become clear to us – both the wider patterning of conflict in our organisations and the story of our own evolving personal relationship to conflict and what has shaped this. We will notice as we do so where we may be sensing an invitation to take a different leadership stance in this arena.



## “Tell Us More”

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On the basis of this, and working in a series of small group conversations, we will then enquire more deeply into productive responses to conflict. We will draw on external wisdom, such as that shared in this year’s Elson Lecture, which highlighted that even in outright warfare there are ethical rules and principles to follow.

We will look at typologies of ‘conflict’, from misunderstanding, to interpersonal, to systemic. We will look at the responses that get triggered and then embedded. We will explore mediation and resolution strategies. We will ‘mine’ our shared wisdom on how as leaders we intervene to break these patterns. In particular, we will explore the wisdom of how to:

- embrace discomfort, stepping into conflict, ‘not being afraid of the dark’
- access and unlock the creative energy in ‘conflict’, (which is often only ‘difference’) before it turns destructive
- halt or channel the downward spiral into an upward one, and mediate conflict with others
- remain open and vulnerable to what needs to emerge and to change ourselves, whilst not being naïve and falling victim to other stratagems or forces. ‘Wise as serpents innocent as doves’ as St Paul memorably phrased it.

Such wisdom often lies buried in our own experience and life learning and requires us to feel into it as much as think into it. So often in this area it is the ‘knowing we didn’t know we know’ that has the real power and utility for us, and only emerges when we talk in the real, open way together that is so uniquely characteristic of the Vicar’s Hall

After lunch, we will begin to harness this wisdom and explore the real purpose and benefits of conflict in our own contexts. Where we can begin to see the potential for fruitful possibilities by embracing conflict to unlock a ‘new order’ and/or creative breakthrough?



## “Yes I can!”

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In the final phase of the Conversation, we will work in small groups to help each other crystalise our takeaways from the conversation and cement our intentions for:

- what we are going to step into differently in our own systems as a result of this
- where we are going to take a different stance in conflict or the mediation of it
- key conversations we will initiate with others – support and challenge
- how we will stay vigilant around our own and our organisations own patterns and habits in relation to conflict
- practices to support us in retaining a 'wisdom' stance and presence in the midst of this.

The Conversation will close by 1600 with a parting thought and word from each of us.



## Timings: Monday 30th October

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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 work in small groups sharing our stories and experience.
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 31st October

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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 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 start preparing for Stage 3: <b><i>Yes I can!</i></b>

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## Tuesday 31st October 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 our lunchtime reflections and engage in our final round of small group work as we clarify and solidify our intentions. At around 2.30pm we invite each of you to work in pairs over tea or coffee 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:

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:

**Friday 16<sup>th</sup> February, 4pm – 5pm.**