

Rector's Newsletter

Dear Saints family

Saints Journey

Inhabiting the 'bridge' – the spaces between the seven schools of St Stithians – I am privileged to view and participate in the multiple journeys of Saints students and staff. At this time of year, these journeys consist of arrival and celebration of milestones on the journey; times to look back on where we have come from, how we have grown and changed through phases of schooling. Another image that comes to mind, mirrored in the waterways of our magnificent campus, is that of streams and tributaries feeding into one another to create the river that flows through a Saints education.

Starting in early October, we bade farewell to our Matrics with impressive ceremonies of thanksgiving, final rites of passage in a school which appreciates a great sense of occasion. For the Matrics the journey of school has ended, the road of adulthood beckons. Together with our parents, we take pride in educating young men and women prepared for life's challenges and ready to make a difference in our world. The journey as Saints alumnus lies ahead, and we look forward to St Stithians being a port of call, a place of active belonging, and the school to educate succeeding generations of Stithians alumni.

Soon after the Matrics rang the bell of departure and put their heads down for the final examinations, we welcomed 160 little ones to the orientation day for Grade R 2015. As these bundles of energy collected their Saints school bag and teddy bear, each beautifully decorated with love and care, they took their first steps on our journey of opportunity. Thirteen years stretch ahead – some have siblings ahead of them who have prepared the way; others are pioneers into the brave new world of school.

As the term enters its final ten days, the Grade 2s and 7s reach significant stepping off points on the Saints journey. The end of year ceremonies – dinners and chapel services – culminate in the evocative ringing of the bell at the west door of the chapel by each boy and girl. The life streams of our schools flow forward.

As staff members of this College, we lead and share the passage through Saints of every child, a rewarding cyclical investment and shaping of young lives as succeeding generations pass through our doors. As we give greater emphasis to each staff member having a personal growth plan, informed by performance management and destinations of development, the cycles of the school year become steps on a journey for the adults in our school community.



"Joy"; one of the Chapel windows

Our task is to meet each student where they are and to give them a sense of purpose and belonging in our schools of welcome, wonder and gratitude. If we can imagine each young person carrying a Saints passport on their journey, each page is stamped with a myriad of vistas, destinations and memories – a collage of experiences which speak of learning and opportunity, fractals of excellence, shafts of light.

The journey of each Saints student is like the stained glass windows in our chapel: a portal of rich colours with the sun shining through. We give thanks to God for being among us in this our Methodist school, a loving presence on our pilgrimage.



News from the
Rector's office



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Letter from the Rector (continued)

Team Thandulwazi

Forty four cyclists made up the inaugural Team Thandulwazi, the charity group which rode the Momentum 94.7 Cycle Challenge alongside 33 000 others on 16 November. Among the cyclists was the current Chair of Council and his predecessor, as well as the Rector. It was a lovely day on the road, traversing Johannesburg's landmarks. The Cycle Challenge created another circle of community and purpose – the riders and their sponsors raised R100k for the Thandulwazi Academy – and we look forward to a growing number of Saints parents, students and alumni joining Team Thandulwazi in 2015.



Alexia Thomson, Clive Thomson, and Tim Nuttall at the start of the Momentum 94.7 Cycle Challenge

Strategy 2025

Creative conversation is progressing in the College executive, in the Council committees and with the PTA chairs, as we define the building blocks and focal themes of Strategy 2025, our strategic plan which will be launched in 2015. In outline, we are reviewing the Purpose and Strategic Intent of St Stithians, and our energies are cohering around six main themes:

- School character
- Synergy projects
- People and talent
- Community engagement and school partnerships
- Institutional advancement
- Facilities 2030

Staff, students, parents and alumni will have opportunities early in 2015 to participate in the gathering strategic conversation. Amidst a number of ways of engaging with our community, I will be addressing a **Rector Connect gathering on 9 February 2015** – please save the date. In the meantime, if any individual is interested to participate actively in our unfolding strategy, please email me directly on rector@stithian.com.

Admissions review

We have concluded a review of our admissions process and have designed a new scorecard which allocates points for the following categories: date of application in relation to date of birth, siblings, alumni and transformation. Applications are ranked on the accumulation of points across these categories. The scorecard has been applied to the first offers recently made to applicants for Grade R in 2016.



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Letter from the Rector (continued)

Penryn College and Penreach

Our Chair of Council, Carel Nolte, and I attended the Penryn College Council meeting and the annual Penreach Awards Ceremony over the weekend of 21-22 November. For each of us it was an opportunity to re-connect St Stithians with the school community of Penryn, and to consider how to strengthen ties in the future. Penryn was founded in the 1990s through a twinning project with St Stithians, and so we are connected through birth. The growth of our Thandulwazi Academy has been inspired by the institutional commitment of Penryn to Penreach and its impact on the broader educational landscape in Mpumalanga. It is time to consider creative and meaningful ways of re-connecting with Penryn, building on links which exist in some of our schools.



James Aling (Chair of Penryn Council), Tim Nuttall, Alistair Stewart, Carel Nolte (Chair of St Stithians Council) and Chris Erasmus (Head of Penryn College) at the Penreach Awards, 22 November 2014

2014 Building Projects

Our three major building projects are making good progress, with projected completion of the Girls' College Art Classrooms and the Amphitheatre due in December and the Junior Prep Hall at the end of February. Budget controls are tight and remain within specification. As may be noticed as one passes them by, the Art Classrooms and the Hall are pioneering a new design aesthetic which points to future thinking about the look and feel of the St Stithians campus. The larger windows and doors, the use of painted plaster as well as face brick, the introduction of a colour spectrum, and potential for variable spatial use are all features of the new concepts.

Girls' College amphitheatre

Girls' College art classroom



Letter from the Rector (continued)



Junior Prep Hall



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Senior Staff moves

My College Exco colleagues have been busy in recent weeks concluding appointments for 2015. I am pleased by the high calibre of applicants for positions at St Stithians – we are widely regarded as a leading educational employer. Within the schools, senior appointments include Chantal Jarvis as Deputy Head of the Junior Prep, and Calla Niemand, Deputy Head (Student Affairs) of the Boy's College. Chantal comes to us from Little Saints at St Mary's School, and Calla was previously Head of Torah Academy and of Parktown Boy's High School.

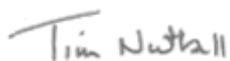
I am pleased to announce that Stephen and Kerry Baytopp have been appointed as the Director and the Deputy Director of Kamoka Bush School. They come to us with over twenty years of experience in outdoor education and facilities management in a 'bush' environment (ranging from game reserves to hospitality to environmental centres). The Baytopps are well placed to take Kamoka forward into the next phase of existence as a facility which sets St Stithians in a class of its own.

Jill Wheater has resigned as Manager: Projects and Strategy (Rector's Office) and is setting up her own training consultancy. Megan van der Poll, Marketing Director, is moving with her family to Cape Town. I take this opportunity to thank both Jill and Megan for their many and significant contributions to St Stithians, and to wish them well for the future.

Christ's birth and God's love for humanity

Christmas is a time of marvel and gratitude as we celebrate and appreciate God's love for humanity. Through the birth of Jesus Christ, God took on human form and lived among us. The incarnation of God's love is central to Christian belief and spirituality, calling Christ's followers to live out lives of service and commitment to fellow human beings. A South African School Making a World of Difference expresses this injunction, as does our Honour Code – Honour God, Honour Others, Honour Self. May this coming Christmas season, and opportunities for family togetherness, be a time of joy and celebration, as well as prayerful reflection and renewal of purpose in our lives.

Good wishes



Dr Tim Nuttall

Save the date: Rector Connect Meeting on Strategy 2025, 9 February 2015, 18:00, One & All

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Saints Family News

We would like to congratulate the following members of the Saints Family on their new family additions:

- Claudio Marangoni and Jane McMurray on the birth of their son, Luca



We wish to express our sincere condolences to the following members of the Saints Family on the loss of their loved ones. Please keep them in your thoughts and prayers:

- Keiran McInnes (Grade 10) on the death of his father
- Matthew Durek (Grade 8) and Erin Durek (Grade 1) on the death of their father
- Valerie Morobane on the death of her cousin
- Christina Chanbane on the death of her granddaughter



We also think of those in the community who are struggling with illness and sadness and pray for a time of renewal and healing.

Christmas message from the Superintendent Chaplain

Rev Dan Nkomo – Superintendent Chaplain

“When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceedingly great joy, and fell down and worshipped Him.” (Matthew 2:10-11 NKJV)

Friends, in this highly sophisticated fast moving world in which we live there is danger of overlooking the real significance of Christmas as we meet dead-lines and as we become caught up in our social rounds. One has to be very careful to ensure that this highly commercialised season, with its emphasis on spending, does not overshadow or obscure the true meaning of Advent.

While the giving and receiving of gifts at Christmas is a lovely tradition, one should never lose sight of the fact that this season celebrates God’s priceless gift of His Son, Jesus, to the world and that He alone should be the central figure; without Christ there can be no Christmas.

Christmas is a holy day. When the wise men found the Christ-Child they first “fell down and worshipped Him.” Then only did they present their gifts and not the other way round. This is the priority we should follow at this wonderful time, to allow worship to our Lord for our salvation to take precedence over everything. He took our human form and dwelt among us to bring the gift of love to a harsh world.

There are so many distractions in our life today and for many people Christmas has become a season of sentiment, just an ordinary holiday in a demanding commercial wilderness.

However, if you are seeking peace and contentment in your life, please make time to draw away from the artificial frenzy of merry-making and boldly give priority to the worship of the central figure of Christmas, I mean to Jesus Himself. May the peace of Christ enfold and possess you and your family.

God bless.



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SERITI

Look into your world:
You cannot stop the shadow
That spills from your heart.
It will slide into the cracks
Of broken dreams and empty eyes
Making soft the hurt you see.

Feel your world:
Your shadow will slip
Open handed with outstretched fingers,
Lifting fearbeaten spirits,
Joining hands with the lost child,
Building a place where hope can grow.

Your shadow will walk with you always,
Who you are marks every moment.
So place your feet gently amongst other feet.
May your footprint be deep and your shadow life-long.

Ruth Everson
Ruth teaches in the Girls' College.

*Seriti is a Sesotho word referring to the shadow/legacy that we cast.



St Stithians campus;
green and lush after the rains



If there is anything you would like more information about,
please send your questions to rector@stithian.com



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