



ST STITHIANS  
COLLEGE



### **Rector's Speech at Founders' Day 2016**

**Dr Tim Nuttall  
4 June 2016**

Dumelang, Molweni, Sanibonani, Goeie More, Good Morning

To the welcomes expressed by Bishop Gary Rivas, I add my own as Rector of our College of seven Schools – the Junior Preparatory, the Girls' Preparatory, the Boys' Preparatory, the Girls' College, the Boys' College, Kamoka Bush School and the Thandulwazi Maths and Science Academy.

We gather on this day – the most significant whole-College event in our annual calendar – in the splendour of these surroundings, and let us never take them for granted.

We gather in the full tapestry of our community, and as we look around, we marvel at this most unique school in Africa – a place where boys and girls from age 6 to 18 learn and grow on a campus of separate schools, shared facilities and great opportunities for synergy and complementarity.

To the Matric students and Matric parents seated on the field, we pay special tribute to you for the Saints Journey you have shared with us. Thank you. The year is flying by and soon you will be stretching your wings to new horizons. Your ship, once anchored, will sail on new seas.

St Stithians is a place of hope, welcome and wonder, and we celebrate that today.

### *Thanks be to God*

In today's service of thanksgiving, we give thanks to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who nurtures and sustains us.

Our founders in the 1940s and 1950s were committed Methodists, and to this day the Methodist Church is a foundation of our identity and woven into the DNA of St Stithians. We have a profound sense, expressed in our Honour Code, of being agents of God's love in this place and time.

We seek to walk humbly with our God. We link to a very long Christian tradition which sees schools as an expression of God's love for children, the hands and heart of God.

### *The Courage to Begin*

This is the theme of today, with a special focus on the 21<sup>st</sup> birthday of the girls' schools, and the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Penryn College.

Both of these initiatives took a particular chemistry of courage to begin, as will be outlined by our guest speaker David Wylde – who was intimately involved in the leadership of both start-ups. It is a pleasure to have David in our midst today, a visionary leader of St Stithians in the 1990s, together with Ingrid and members of your family.

The founding head of the Girls' College, Anne Van Zyl, is also a remarkable visionary and powerful personality who has been such a shaping force in our country's educational space. We pay tribute to Anne in our midst today.

Veliswa Mehana (Matric 2012) and Bianca Biehler (Matric 2013), our second and third guest speakers, will address the theme of Courage to Begin from a more recent vantage point. We are mixing young with the old, well not so old. We look forward to the insights and wisdom you will bring today as young matriculants of the Girls' College.

At the start of this ceremony, we rung the bell 21 times for the girls' schools and then rang through to a total of 63, the age of St Stithians College marked by the founding of the boys' schools in 1953. The bell ringing has spiritual significance, and announced the beginning of our service of thanksgiving for founders.

Prior to this ceremony, members of the College's Trust, Council and School leaders conducted a naming ceremony.

We named the Girls' College Administration Building the Schroenn Building, in honour of Dave Schroenn, who was our Chair of Council from 1996-2003. Along with other significant individuals, Dave had the courage to begin the girls' schools and he presided over the Council during the founding phase.

We named the Girls' Prep Administration Building the Dennis Building, in honour of Nick Dennis, who was our Chair of Council from 2004-2012. The founders of the girls' schools had a financial plan, and it was under the watch of Nick Dennis on Council that this plan was brought to conclusion in the mid-2000s.

Both Dave Schroenn and Nick Dennis are quick to point out that they worked alongside a team of people. Although not named here, we salute you all for the courage to begin. You took the bold step to multiply St Stithians, creating a College of boys and girls schools that is unique in this country and beyond. You created the platform for quantum outcomes, and today we are the beneficiaries of that vision and its implementation.

### *Penryn College*

The founding of Penryn College in 1991 is a remarkable story of vision, courage and agency at a time of rapid change and uncertainty in South Africa. How St Stithians came to be intimately involved in the founding of a school outside Nelspruit is to be addressed by David Wylde later.

The school motto of Penryn is the same as that of St Stithians, One & All, our school badges are very similar, and there are other sibling-like features. We salute all those present here today, and those not present, who founded Penryn and who have been involved in the Penryn journey to the present.

### *The origins of 1953*

Although the focus of today is on the two founding initiatives of the 1990s, we need also to cast back to 1953: the year St Stithians College opened its doors.

We salute the two major benefactors who made this beginning possible, Albert Collins and William Mountstephens. Their donation towards a trust to create St Stithians amounted to around R500m in today's value.

We salute a third founder, Gilbert Tucker, who played a key role in persuading Collins and Mountstephens to make their donation: without his persuasion the beginning of Saints might not have happened.

As our Advancement Office is learning, donations to St Stithians rely on a generosity of spirit, a worthy vision and cause, and the agency of the persuader.

## *St Stithians as the Power of 5*

We are a College of Seven Schools with a Power of 5. The 5 is made up of our students, staff, parents, alumni and Church. Our commitment to synergy in the relations of our 7 schools is multiplied through the positive energy and relationships of the Power of 5.

Our future lies in strengthening the character of the parts that make up the synergy, so that when we connect the parts with purpose we create a quantum outcome that is more profound than the sum of the parts. There is no place for silos in the Power of 5; we share a common destiny as different parts of a greater whole.

Our goal is to advance the happy fulfilment of all who learn and teach here, and of all in our community of belonging – parents, past parents and alumni. The words ‘happy fulfilment’ are etched in the two foundation stones of this College, and they lead us to live lives of significance within Saints and in our broader society.

As a Church School, we are God’s hands and heart.

### *Inspiring Excellence. Making a World of Difference*

Our statement of intent should never be lightly said or meant. We have set ourselves a profound challenge, a brave and demanding stretch.

To inspire is to go way beyond the ordinary.

Excellence is multi-layered. It’s about what we can see on the surface, what’s on the front stage of school life. Excellence is also about what happens below the surface, in the back stage of school life. The most profound excellence dwells in the realm of significance.

We boldly embrace the mission to be excellent, not to accept mediocrity or the half-measure. Hashtag Saints Excellence weaves a tapestry through the Power of 5 – excellent students, excellent staff, excellent parents, excellent alumni, excellent Church

Excellence multiplied is the Saints Way, our collective responsibility. Excellence is not monochrome, it’s the full spectrum of colour.

If this is not enough, our statement of intent challenges us to more. We want to make a World of Difference. Coupled with Excellence, World of Difference always begs the question of us about our purpose, our impact, our significance.

Excellence for its own sake is not the Saints Way. World of Difference is the desired outcome, the benchmark. World of Difference is a critical and demanding space, not a place of satisfaction. That is our calling.

## *Embracing the Future*

2053 is in our sights. That is when St Stithians turns 100. Today's Matrics will be 55 years old. Our country's National Development Plan targets 2030, we go beyond that.

We do not know what life will be like in 2053. We do know that it will be very different from today. The mindset of 2053 is a change mindset, a growth mindset – resilience, innovation, adaptation.

The 21<sup>st</sup> century demands of us that we are able to learn, to unlearn and to relearn. The boundaries of the human and digital worlds will blur and overlap. Human intelligence and artificial intelligence will co-exist. Schools will no longer be simply physical places of community; they will be nodes of learning in a web that connects new communities.

We will make huge technological advances, with capacity to create and to destroy. The human condition, in all its beauty and frailty, its physical frame, its soulfulness, will continue to need schools that take care of, and nurture, young people.

Schools that will be the hands and heart of God.

## *2025*

With Strategy 2025 we are on the first leg of the journey to 2053. We are making good progress with our six priority areas.

School Character, our first focus, keeps us on our toes and reflective. Who are we? What do we stand for? These are our daily probing questions, the yardstick of our reason for existence.

Honour God, Honour Others, Honour Self  
Know myself, Be myself, Make my Contribution  
Inspire Excellence. Make a World of Difference

These words are the mantra of our school character.

At St Stithians there is no place for negative and destructive stereotyping; of grouping people in categories that break down and hurt, that limit and restrain, rather than affirm and build up.

There is no place for racism. There is no place for sexism.

Saying no to racism, no to sexism are the two great identity challenges of South African society today – our wounded society with its divided past that needs healing and restoration.

Let us be a College where we think before we speak.  
Where we listen before we pronounce.

Where brotherhood and sisterhood include one and all.  
Where we drive out derision of the other.  
Where we talk openly and courageously about our hurts, fears and hopes.  
Where we define racism and sexism, and act against it.  
Where we celebrate diversity of race, culture, class and gender.  
Where dignity is affirmed.  
Where we Honour God, Self and Other.  
Where we enable each individual to know self and be self.

### *Dignity and self-respect*

In this month, the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Soweto Uprising, let us take stock. By us I mean particularly the adults and soon to be adults in midst. The children of 1976 said No to racial discrimination, to a future without hope. They stood up against the edifice of apartheid. The children of 1976 said Yes to a new world, beyond apartheid.

We live in that new world. We owe it to our children to strip away the damaging legacy of our society divided on racial lines. That legacy has a long reach to the present. We see and hear it all around us if we have eyes to see and ears to hear.

We, the adults, owe it to our children to affirm dignity and self-respect as the dominant values of today, of tomorrow.

Under God's watch and with God's mercy.

One & All.

