



17 June 2016

Dear Saints Family

The month of June has brought into focus the profound role that education plays in life and society.

Soweto 1976 – 40 years later

The 40th anniversary of the Soweto Uprising confronts us with the tragedies and triumphs of South Africa's past, with young people the central players of those events that began the ending of apartheid. The school students who marched on that fateful day, 16 June 1976, were angry – but there was also laughter and hope, a positive energy that only young people can create.

The children of 1976 were protesting classroom overcrowding, lack of resources and a schooling system that oppressed them as black South Africans. The fact that – 40 years on – so much of our country's schooling remains sub-optimal and malfunctioning is an indictment on today's generation of adults, the children of the 1970s.

Yes, let us also emphasise that there are amazing success stories in our rural and township schools and I salute each individual who contributes to these beacons of hope – the principals, teachers, parents and children who strive and thrive despite the odds.

The 40th anniversary of Soweto 1976 holds up a mirror to our society, highlighting our collective responsibility to re-affirm our commitment to providing a better future for all of South Africa's children. Formal apartheid may have ended, but the legacy of our past casts a long shadow across our society. The adults in our society have a particular responsibility to work towards eradicating this shadow. Each of us in our St Stithians community can ask: how can I make a difference – individually, organisationally, and collectively?

The Courage to Begin: St Stithians Founders' Day 2016

The theme of Founders' Day was an arresting one, and we gave particular focus to those in the St Stithians community who had the courage to begin two major educational initiatives in the 1990s: the founding of Penryn College in 1991 and the girls' schools of Stithians in 1995. Thank you to our guest speakers, David Wylde, Veliswa Mehana and Bianca Biehler for helping us to remember and to renew our 'courage to begin'.

The Rector's Address at Founders' Day can be found on the St Stithians website at this link.

http://www.stithian.com/uploads/files/Rector/Rector_FD_Address_2016.pdf

At a time of sea change in our country – the birth pangs of democracy – men and women at St Stithians embraced two remarkable dreams and put them into action. We gave thanks to God, celebrated and honoured these individuals on Founders' Day, alongside those who brought St Stithians College into being in 1953.

Penryn College in Nelspruit is 25 years old this year: a school of excellence born from St Stithians. From inception, Penryn co-partnered with Penreach, the pioneering educational initiative that has made such

INSPIRING EXCELLENCE. MAKING A WORLD OF DIFFERENCE

an impact in schools across Mpumalanga. Penreach inspired the founding of the Thandulwazi Maths and Science Academy at St Stithians in 2005.

The creation of the girls' schools of St Stithians was a remarkable step, establishing a schooling model unique in South Africa and internationally. The 'coming of age' of the Girls' Preparatory and the Girls' College this year reminds us of the gift we have in our College of boys' and girls' schools. It is a colourful tapestry of zest and excellence for which we can be truly proud. The 'Pop Up Museum' created by our students and staff in the History departments of the two schools re-told our story of the girls' schools in a refreshing and multi-media manner. In this, and other ways, the 21st birthday of the girls' schools is a time of renewal, reflection and re-focus.

The organising committee has met to review Founders' Day 2016. One outcome is our commitment to making the ceremony shorter than it was this year.

Success, Significance and Synergy

These three words and concepts are at the heart of our Statement of Intent – *Inspiring Excellence. Making a World of Difference* – and of our College Motto – *One and All*. We give special attention to them in Strategy 2025 with our emphasis on school character and synergy projects.

In the College Executive Committee and in the St Stithians Council we have been progressing and extending our understanding of these concepts and what they mean for us. Our excellence is not an end in itself: it's an ambition to be significant that is more profound, and success flows from this intent. The word 'synergy' is a quantum concept, a multiplier mind-set that is based on intent, relationships and energy.

Through these strategic conversations, which need to continue in a critical and active manner, we are deepening our understanding of our educational mission and purpose. As outlined at Founders' Day, we look forward as a College of seven schools to growing through the 'Power of 5': students, staff, parent, alumni and the Methodist Church.

No to Racism and Sexism @Saints

As announced by me on Founders' Day, in the context of the social and identity tensions that are playing themselves out in wider South African society, there is fresh imperative for St Stithians to become a 'no tolerance' zone for racism and sexism. The focus on addressing these two destructive world views, and the behaviour associated with them, is critical in the living out of our value systems of One and All; Honour God – Honour Others – Honour Self; and the promotion of Saints Character as the ability to 'know oneself, be oneself and make one's contribution'.

Racism and sexism are demeaning and divisive, and contrary to a College of Welcome which promotes a community of belonging. A number of initiatives in support of No to Racism and Sexism @Saints are underway amongst our students and staff. We need to galvanise and strengthen these, and to develop a campus framework for advancing consciousness, awareness and action.

Yours sincerely



Dr T A Nuttall
Rector