



1863

ST ANDREW'S SCHOOL
BLOEMFONTEIN

Mr Roland Rudd
Headmaster's Newsletters
January – December 2024
Issue 102 - 139

Issue 102
23 January

On Tuesday morning, a new generation of the men in blue returned to school. I was met by smiling faces, and noisy corridors, whilst parents bravely held back their own tears.

Every so often whispering voices would congregate outside my office. The allure of the sweets bottle strategically positioned at my door, proved most popular. The word spread, like wildfire, and little faces were quickly peering around my office door like a bunch of nervous smurfs surveying the safety of this new strange environment. Those who have visited in the past, perhaps when collecting a sibling at school, added to sharing the news of sweets for breakfast, and were darting in and out of my office offering sweets to all and sundry. One familiar young man decided it was most apt to spear tackle me whilst still seated (not reacting fast enough). I took his name for our Rugby coaches.

I am sure that the energy the young men bring to the school, is enough to solve the energy crisis we face as a country. We should find some way to extract the necessary potential energy (in a safe way of course). One can imagine my sense of distress when the corridors went absolutely silent, and a sense of holiday bliss unexpectedly returned (all too soon). I was summoned to visit the new Grade 1 classes by the teachers, and was promptly reminded by my PA, Mrs Meyer, to do so. Perhaps they needed some form of 'back up'... I found myself ambling my way towards the heaving, bubbling mass of 'classroom-contained-minions', that I was sure to find.

On approach to the respective classrooms, the corridor was surprisingly silent. I wondered where the classes could be. Perhaps they were out on the field or going for a tour around campus (for the fifth time). I proceeded nonetheless and walked in to find a Zen Master poised on top of the cabinet, legs crossed, and poised in what I could equate to a Master Yoda-like posture, and before her, 25 able bodied youngsters in a meditative-like state. The sound of rhythmic calming music soothed my soul right away. Not a peep, and no movement. The younglings were focused, silent and in awe of their master seated before them.

In a calm voice, Mrs Franke, welcomed me, telling me her class had just shared their names. The boys in sync quietly turned to face me and stood to greet me. I don't know how my Early Childhood Development and Foundation Phase Teachers do it... I caught up with a colleague in the corridor and explained that the best I would possibly hope to achieve would be like the scene from Kindergarten Cop, where Arnold Schwarzenegger, is told by his colleague that "Kindergarten is like the ocean. You don't want to turn your back on it". He then proceeds to enter the class. See clip <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IMQADg1Dp9g>

Come end of the week, I saw an exhausted Mrs Franke, smile on her face dragging her weary body to her car, her holiday now a distant memory. The energized youngsters whizzed past her piling into their parents' cars excited for a weekend at home, ready to share their experience and stories of their first week. In twelve short years, this generation of the Bianco Blu (White and Blue), will be starting their Matric year in 2035. Having listened to this group on OFM earlier this week when they were interviewed, they have a bright future with many dreams and aspirations. As I said on OFM, my little bit of advice to parents is that, they are present in the life of their child.

One of my ECD teachers, Mrs Palmer, professed with great enthusiasm to me how excited she was about having a new bunch of boys. I believe her. Her genuine love for her profession and the boys in her care is what makes this school special.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 103
1 February

Fiat Lux, The St Andrew's motto, meaning "Let There Be Light".

I find this a wonderful mantra that one can apply to one's own life. The words, "*Let There Be Light*", is also the first words spoken by God in Genesis. As a St Andrew's family, we often speak the words Fiat Lux. After celebrating 160 years of Brotherhood as our theme for 2023, I have chosen "*Let the Light Guide You*" in all that you do, as my theme for this year. In other words, let your words and deeds be guided by the Light and may your presence shine your inner Light.

At St Andrew's, we pride ourselves in the way we sing together. On Tuesdays we have Congregational Practice, where staff are excused, to go and enjoy a cuppa coffee, whilst the boys are led by the Master of Choristers. Legendary Mr Clive Mott, headed up the Chapel Choir, and when he retired, was followed by Old Boy, Mr Janco Olivier. Janco being an Old Boy, with a long association with the school and Chapel Choir, seamlessly took over the reins from Clive. Last year we received the news that Janco's services were acquired by another prestigious school 'up North'.

This week, a new Master of Choristers, introduced himself to the boys, from atop the stairs to the altar. An air of anticipation filled the Chapel, as Mr Shaun Prins made ready to guide and lead an audience of expectant learners (Headmaster and Chaplain as well). Speaking before an audience is a daunting task by all accounts. It was when Shaun started singing, that the proverbial "aha" moment took place. That was it. That is what the boys needed, and it was clear to me that at that moment Shaun had captured the boys, and I knew all was going to be ok. I could not help myself and looked across the faces in the Chapel, watching the collective affirming expressions of the boys. The smile on the face of Mr Gregg Hobson further affirmed the fact that Shaun had cemented the respect of the boys. Shaun's light shone brightly that day, and long may that continue.

So often it only takes one moment. It is in that one moment, that you can impact another so profoundly, that their respect is earned for life. We are often mistaken into believing it must be something big or extraordinary. This is not the case. It is so often those small simple acts. Taking time out of your day to greet someone, enquiring as to how they are doing, praising them, acknowledging their presence, or simply being present etc. These are the things that (really) matter. I often tell the staff, that it takes upfront investment in relationships with the boys (and parents), and it requires that one moment, then life with even the most difficult character, is easy (or easier). Boys are easy to understand. If they respect you, they will work for you, and they will be as loyal as your beloved dog at home.

There are so many examples that I could talk about, and there are simply too many to mention, so I trust staff will forgive me if I don't mention them by name. The music produced by Ms Elize Swart as she plays her piano, the flowers set up in the Chapel by Ms Kerry Gower, the passion and commitment to squash by Ms Margo Morgan, the little 'lost soul' being embraced by Ms Liza-Anne Meyer in the front office, the extra hours being invested into aspiring cricketers by Mr AJ Van Wyk, the expert advice and attention to injured boys by Mr Erich Wolmarans, the comfort afforded sick boys by Ms Annerika Naude, Mr Schalk Brand, buying a ticket for, and taking a young man to the stadium to watch his first rugby match, Ms Cheryl Zietsman opening her home for a boy or paying for medical bills, Mr Charles Du Preez looking after a young man as his own, Ms Ailsa Uys and Ms Brownyn Graham collecting clothes for an orphan, Mr Mico van Tonder who made welcome packs for the new boarders on his own accord and expense, Ms Susan Blair baking cupcakes for the entire class to celebrate the birthday of a boarder who would not be at home for his birthday for the first time etc. I can share amazing stories about every staff member (academic and support). This is what we do at Saints. I am blessed to be working

with a whole cohort of amazing staff who shine brightly and positively impact the lives of the boys (and each other).

How do I know these stories? I get to observe them first hand, and the boys and parents come and tell me personally daily, about how someone at school has impacted them. Yes, Let Your Light Shine Brightly in 2024, and Let The Light Guide You In All That You Do. As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires, "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 104
7 February
The Samurai.

In Japanese the word Samurai means 'warrior or knight'. The word is derived from the Japanese verb 'Saburau', which means "to serve and look up to someone." The Samurai were legendary warriors, who lived by the tenets of the Bushido code of rectitude, courage, benevolence, respect, honesty, honour, loyalty, wisdom, and care for the elderly. Failure of a Samurai to live up to the tenets meant that they would lose their honour and had to commit a form of ritual suicide called seppuku in order to regain their honour in death.

It is said that these warriors do no longer exist in that the samurai are said to have ended in 1868, when Japan dismantled its feudal order. Whilst armour wearing, katana bearing samurai may be no more, many people still live by their values and tenets today, making them modern day samurai, the greatest of all warriors.

In the front office stands a small and simple aquarium. It has been set up to represent a submerged 'Kare Sansui', a medieval Japanese rock garden. The design aesthetic is a simple, minimalist natural setting designed to inspire reflection and meditation. The choice of fish, none other than the Betta fish, also known as the Siamese or Samurai Fighting Fish. The word Betta itself originates from an ancient warrior clan known as the "Bettah". The fish in the tank serves as a reminder to me of a personal code I try to live by, but it also stands in testimony and honour to the Samurai I get to meet daily.

These little Betta fish have a striking colouration variation with flowing fins and various tail sizes that make them unmistakable. They are beautiful to observe and are a popular pet. Despite their delicate butterfly-like-appearance, these little fish are actually very hardy and resilient in many ways. They are naturally found in small shallow ponds and rice paddies. They can live in waters with low dissolved oxygen because they have a special respiratory organ that allows them to breathe air directly from the surface (similar to the Barbel we find in our water ways). I don't think a barbel in the front office would go down as well...

If you've ever spotted a Betta fish at your local pet store, you'll probably have noticed that each fish is kept separately in its own bowl. That's because these small but mighty little fish are highly territorial, hiding a piranha like, carnivorous aggression towards each other and everything else that moves. One specifically cannot keep two males together, as they square up like ancient Samurai (hence their name), in a battle to the death. In fact, a male should not even be kept in proximity to another, as the sight alone of another male, will cause stress and tension, driving the males to leap from their watery environment, in an attempt to engage in battle.

Bettas are also incredibly intelligent fish and can be trained to do cool tricks like swim through a hoop, eat from your hand or even come up to the water to be petted. Studies have also shown that Bettas can recognize their owners even if they are standing by the tank amongst other people. Mrs Meyer has already started training her Bettas, as a party trick when youngsters visit her office. Yes, I have finally found something that temporarily gets the boys to walk past the sweets jar. Temporarily...

Little do the visitors to my office know that they inspire me daily. The little brave orphan who checks in daily with his house mother for a hug or the single parent who puts on a brave face when they arrive to my office to come and explain difficulties at home. The hungry learner who pops by asking for a meal or the man on the street who arrives looking for a job. The desperate parent looking for a place for their son or the teacher who despite his / her own worries, get up, show up and make a difference daily. The young man placing an arm around a friend who has lost a parent or the wise old teacher taking a youngster (teacher or learner) under their wing. To you I say, Katajikenai, the Samurai version of "thank you / I am grateful." Yes, the Samurai still live. I get to meet them daily. Just perhaps though, they are modern day Saints.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 105

14 February

The Farmer, the Father and the Headmaster.

In the early hours of the morning last Saturday, I set out to visit the Grade 6's at Donkerpoort, our Outdoor Education Facility. Having prepped the evening before, I was all set for the road trip and excursion. Being a little tired, and expecting rain for the day, I against my own best judgement, made the call to not expend any further energy in making my way back into the house to collect my hat I had left behind. If all else failed, I thought to myself, I could always spend the day lazing about under the multitude of Acacia trees, interacting with the respective groups as they moved by.

On arrival to Donkerpoort, I was met by staff topping up their caffeine levels and enjoying farm fresh rusks. What a treat. I decided to immediately indulge in the hospitality on offer. The boys emerging from the overnight accommodation, sauntering along, making all kinds of groaning sounds, whilst collectively yawning and stretching, and wiping the sleep from their eyes, flattening their 'deurmekaar' hair, resembled some kind of apocalyptic zombie horde. Tales from the evening before, about spiders climbing about them, the feeling of something crawling about their sleeping bags, and all kinds of peculiar noises emanating from outside the bungalow, was the topic of discussion.

No sooner, the campsite transformed into a hive of activity, as the respective houses set about tackling the various tasks and challenges set for them after a hearty breakfast. The boys were set for the day, after the diligent staff reminded (and forced) them to rehydrate and sunblock themselves in preparation for the day ahead. It was then that the resident farmer, and Old Andrean, offered Father Ashe and me, a trip along his well-known 4x4 route, to go and view the local fishing hole. An hour and a couple steep gradients later, we approached a river running through the farm. Whilst navigating the treacherous waters, the bridge collapsed, leaving the three of us stranded midwater, with no cellular reception. Forced to abandon our vehicle, we set about trying to find signal after having sent an emergency broadcast via the two-way radio in the hope that help would be sent.

A couple of kilometres later, we found ourselves at the local swimming hole, the three of us, thankful for the respite offered from sweltering heat, by the old railway bridge. It was about at this time that I started contemplating life when faced with a decision of waiting out rescue or following the train track several kilometres back to base camp. Fortunately, time flew by, as Father Ashe and I were given a historical account of the farm, dating back to pre-Anglo Boer war. The little cooldrink we had was now finished, and certain dehydration about to set in, the welcoming sound of the long-awaited rescue vehicle made its way towards us. As the vehicle approached, I was relieved to hear children laughing in and amongst the barking of the farm hounds. The site of the Farmer, the Father and the Headmaster proved too much for the rescue party, who happily hurled insults in jest our way.

Five hours later, we arrived back to base camp. It took some serious explaining to the rest of the company, that we had in fact not disappeared to Gariep Dam for a lazy day. Why would we do that in any case... Just as the good Father and I had, settled into our camping chairs to relax below the Acacia's, the very same farmer arrived, to take us on another excursion this time to Gariep Dam. We agreed that I would be driving this time round. The farmer of course, had one condition to me driving him along his farm, and that was that I reverse the boat and trailer, and put his boat into the water. For those you who know, reversing with a trailer is not the easiest thing to do. There is an art to it. Having hitched his behemoth speedboat, he smiled wryly in my direction, supposedly intimating at my certain failure.

Perhaps this was done in 'revenge' for the 'public' humiliation he had incurred at the hand of his family, for stranding us earlier the day. As any fisherman will tell you, when the fish are running, the harbour is no place to be playing around or making mistakes. Fishermen don't take too kindly to novice drivers holding up their fishing time. Calling on many years of experience, I seamlessly put the boat into the water – even if I say so myself...

The trip back to Bloemfontein later that evening, proved to be increasingly painful. The aircon was gradually turned up to counter the characteristic tingle and the gradual glow, of a sunburn that quickly began to announce itself. As the predicted rain, now way belated, began to fall, stories of how the English soldiers had burnt, exposing their 'rooi nekke', began to hit home. It was at this point, that I realised that had I taken care of the small things, like walking back to fetch my hat or even applying sunblock (rather than being lazy), I would have been prepared for unforeseen eventualities that befell me that day. Lesson learnt. This is something we try and teach the boys at St Andrew's. When we take care of the small things, like focusing on manners, greeting adults, being well groomed, behaving in a respectful manner towards each other, and not littering, then the big things take care of themselves. What a wonderful mantra to apply to life.

I am thankful for the hospitality, history lesson and survival experience bestowed upon me by the legendary Old Andean. As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and walk Humbly with God".

Issue 106

21 February

The temperature really sent the mercury hurtling upwards over the course of this past week. In most unusual fashion, the boys seemed to visit my airconditioned office, more out of the need for a respite from the sweltering heat, than the want for a sweet. February in Bloem can be likened to the feeling of heat escaping a well-stoked furnace on the surface of your skin. It was in this heat that late one afternoon, that I started reminiscing on sporting observations from seasons past, whilst watching the distant mirage-like appearance of my daughter and her teammates at their hockey training session.

I try and get around to as many activities as time allows. How privileged children are that have parents who make the effort to pop by to show their support for their child. Those watching from cars, or from under the trees, those armchair coaches or those avid spectators fully immersed in the activity on offer. The casual conversation makers who enjoy the adult company as much as the sight of their child at play or the parent-manager always on duty assisting with everything from drinks to first aid. I salute you. It is one of those great injustices in life when a child misses out on the presence of a parent (even the limited presence). Thank you to those folks who make the effort to show up. Your child is blessed. I hold firmly that one can tell much about a school and a community, by their interactions and behaviours at sporting events. Sport has this uncanny knack of bringing out the best and the worst in people. To gauge the 'quality' or perhaps better stated, the health of a school / community, I usually apply this 10-point acid test:

1. What is said about the (almost always amateur) official, who gives freely of his or her time? South Africans are increasingly falling into the bad habit of blaming the ref for everything that went wrong...
2. Is good play on the part of the opposition, recognized and applauded?
3. Is the message in the songs that are being chanted from the side in good taste or does it belittle the opposition?
4. What kind of comments are being made from the sideline? The way we speak to each other tells a story of who we are.
5. Do spectators take to interfering with play, like making life difficult for officials and or players or take to that diabolical tactic of inciting violence or even invading the pitch?
6. Are the team and community humble in victory or gracious in defeat?
7. Have the team and community made an effort to clean up after themselves? Just take a look at the stands. Littering smacks of arrogance.
8. Have guests been made to feel welcome, and their presence acknowledged? Are you greeted by young and old alike?
9. Have the hosts been thanked for their effort by the visiting team and community?
10. Is there pride in appearance and dress of the community, and are facilities neat and cared for?

Answers to the above ultimately indicate whether values are aligned to your own, and whether future events are something to look forward to or whether they are something to dread.

Whilst I am the first to admit that I know less about cricket than mankind knows about the deepest part of our oceans, I find the unsportsmanlike behaviour of 'sledging' opposition in cricket, unacceptable. The act of a team of fielders belittling / shaming a batsman, under the guise of acceptable tactics is just wrong. This is neither accepted nor tolerated in other sports like Hockey, Rugby or Soccer, to name but a few. My Pops said to me in my amateur years as u7 Bakers Cricketer, "Bowl him out, don't shout him out". A teenager does not know where the line is. They must not be 'encouraged' to 'rev' the opposition. It's a recipe for disaster. I was shocked to learn that this behaviour is manifesting itself even at u9 level. 'Sledging' should be done away with at school level in totality. Imagine making comments during the backswing of a golfer... In my days, you were removed from the field if you celebrated in a way the coach deemed unacceptable. Some tidying up of school sport is needed - and we will start with St Andrew's. St Andrew's will set the standard. The pursuance of sport should ultimately encourage healthy competition between like-minded communities, imparting invaluable positive life lessons that will stand the children in our care in good stead into the future.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 107

28 February

As I hurried my way to Chapel, I was stopped and greeted with the left hand, the right hand, a high five and a hug. In contemplating what I would write about this week, I decided that I would take the time to write about the friendly faces that greet me daily and the environment and culture that I experience at Saints.

I am blessed to leave my house daily and be met immediately by the eager young busy bodies, bright eyed with smiling faces. It matters not what challenges lie ahead, I cannot help but be reinvigorated by the energy and enthusiasm of these youngsters rushing over to greet me. They are all too keen to share a story with me.

On top of that, on arrival my office is always made to feel welcoming, with my PA going out of her way to have a coffee ready and waiting so that I can be a 'lekker mens'. My office is always decorated with a fresh bunch of flowers and a motivational note for the day ahead, is

placed on my desk.

In-between the sips of coffee and running through my schedule for the day, an assortment of parent's pop past greeting me. On more occasions than I can remember, parents pop in and offer help with one or other project around the campus - some they identify on their own accord. Just last week, a parent popped in and offered to repair the Foundation Phase scooters - an item on my to do list. The scooters were subsequently collected and returned and the boys could once again get on with play that I could only liken to scenes from the Fast & Furious movies. On another occasion a parent popped in and offered her services and expertise with the care of the respective trees on campus. She arrived to dig wells and prune the trees on her own accord. The list simply goes on.

Popping out of my office and making my way through the morning traffic, often coffee still in hand, I go out of my way to wave to and greet the parents and families on their morning school run. Parents are all too happy to spend a couple minutes in conversation. We talk about the most random things. I also enjoy the odd morning phone call from one or two of the 'regular customers' enquiring as to whether I am busy - being code for are you up for another coffee... By about 07h10, I am on my second helping of caffeine. The day just speeds up from there and often just blurs by.

Whether making my way down corridors of the school buildings, or entering the Chapel, or finding myself along the sports fields, or having a coffee at Vida off campus, I am always greeted by a range of both young and old. It really is quite humbling, that people make time for me by stopping and acknowledging my presence. Having had one on one sessions with the new staff over the course of the week, they without fail commented on how the staff and community went out of their way to make them feel welcome and assist them as needed. The new staff commented on how happy they were and how blessed they felt to be part of this community.

Yes, there are days that the seat gets hot, and other days when one feels lonely, or other days when one takes on matters and situations by yourself to protect and shield others from the complexities of what is rated as one of the toughest positions in the world. All evidence points to fewer persons aspiring to take up the role of headship. I am however fortunate to say, that the next crop of leaders who will take up the role of head in schools are ploughing their trade at Saints - and I tell and remind the staff of this often - just as was done for me as a young aspiring leader.

My tenure as head of Saints is made worthwhile by a supportive and loving community. A community who embraces someone who chooses to walk around barefoot, when the occasion allows. A gewone mens... I am thankful. I realise daily how blessed I am to be part of this special community. Thank you for your continued support and love.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 108

5th March

What makes us South African?

"Rugby, Braaivleis, African Sunsets and December Summer Holidays... All Gold Tomato Sauce, Ricoffy, Ouma Beskuit and Rooibos Tea... Old fashion manners and Christian values in our kids. All things we take for granted". According to an Aussie expat. I have been interested to read two articles in Business Tech and IOL reporting on SA expats desperate to return home, this despite our struggling economy and loadshedding. It is lekker to be South African. The Springboks, Bafana Bafana, the Proteas, Pap en Wors, Castle Lager, Koeksisters, Melkert and Potjiekos. We have such a rich and diverse cultural heritage and history. There is nothing better than sidling up around a fire with good food and good company.

On my walk around campus this week, I caught up with some enthusiastic supporters standing around the sports field. What was very evident was that there was a noticeable difference in atmosphere. As I sidled up to one of the parents, I pointed out to him the mass of people clearly engaged with what the boys were busy with. Clumps of mothers huddled together sitting below the shade of the trees. Groups of fathers standing arms folded, each analysing and offering their version of tactics, whilst reminiscing about days long gone, when they could sprint the 100 metre in sub 10.5 seconds...

Rugby is about as South African as you can get. In 1995 the Springboks brought a healing nation together. The same could be said for what Bafana did in 1996 when they won the AFCON. Former President Nelson Mandela said; "Sport has the power to change the world, it has the power to inspire. It has the power to unite people in a way that little else does. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair". In a traditional boys' school, sport plays an important role in determining the mood of a school. It could be argued that in the big boys' schools, Rugby has the biggest influence. In my opinion, Rugby tends to attract interest in a manner that other sporting activities struggle to do. Be it training or a match, you will always find spectators engaged in a greater number, something the other Winter sports codes like Hockey and Soccer don't do. This does not make the other codes less important. In nearly all schools, if left unchecked there exists possibility of an antagonistic relationship between the Winter Sports at school. In some schools, Rugby is thought of as the more athletic and talented 'Golden Child', Hockey the 'Stepchild' and Soccer the 'Prodigal Son'.

I have a very simple view on this. An unchecked balance within any family causes damage. A school, just like a family, needs to be a space and place where everyone is able to find their place in the sunshine. This is something we strive for at Saints. Sport should never ultimately determine the culture and atmosphere of a school, but it undoubtedly plays a big role, and it should play a positive one at that.

Rugby has catapulted school sport within the South African context into the professional era. With this comes its advantages and disadvantages which has spilled over to the other sporting codes. The drive to outperform opposition and secure talent in all sporting codes, has damaged longstanding relationships between schools as well as damaging values and morals of the bigger 'educational' picture. We need to guard against losing perspective. It has always been my view, that win or lose, the sun will come up the following day. Yes, we want to win, but we need to keep perspective that we are dealing with children and amateur athletes (at best), being forced to perform at a semi-professional level. The added pressure on players and coaches should never take away from the enjoyment of the game.

Sport is part of our South African DNA. It part of the boys school DNA. Each sporting code brings with it its own unique 'flavour'. The culture of each is different, and each contributes in its own way to the 'feel' and 'mood' of the school environment. As we move into the Winter season, the cricket pitches are finally given a breather, and along with the change in temperature, you will come to experience a change in the 'feel' alongside the sports fields. Friday Night Lights at the new Astro, Saturday Inter School Rugby Derbies with the smell of breakfast buns and fresh coffee in the early morning air, Soccer Night League under lights at Victoria Park, Kwaito music and Sesotho commentators adding to the atmosphere. What will remain constant is, that what we hold important will not be compromised. Every learner and every activity at the school will remain important, and our values of

Sportsmanship will be evident from both our spectators and participants across all the sporting codes. Gordon Forbes said; "Saint Andrew's is serious school that doesn't take itself too seriously."

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God"

Issue 109

14 March

We did not know what was behind those walls...

This week my team and I were fortunate enough to visit various towns in and around the Free State and surrounding provinces. It was a great opportunity to interact with prospective families. I am most thankful to the Saints families who provided us with venues and hosted our meet and greet sessions. In usual Saints fashion, guests were immediately made to feel part of the family.

Families who visit Saints, are more often than not blown away by what they get to experience within these walls. I have been very clear, that families interested in Saints do not need to make appointments to visit and walk the campus. We do not set up elaborate open days, where we have the bands playing, the Rugby 1st team training or have presentations on why we are the best. This is not what we are about. Gordon Forbes said, "Saint Andrew's is serious school that doesn't take itself too seriously."

When families arrive to Saints, I want them to get a genuine experience about what happens at Saints daily. Nothing is staged. Families are encouraged to walk around and interact with our boys, staff, and other parents. I am a firm believer in the fact that our boys are our best advert. Our boys are the ones who give visitors an honest impression of who we are and what we are about.

Making a decision about schooling for your son is probably one of the most important (and stressful) decisions you as a family will ever make. My advice to families is that not every school is the right school for every boy. A family must choose a school where they will be made to feel welcome. Parents must choose a school where they feel comfortable standing with other families along the side lines of the sport field or sitting together at a school concert. Choosing a school is like choosing between a Ford or Toyota or Isuzu. There is no right answer. They are all good cars, but we all do have our individual preferences.

I encourage families to do their homework on prospective schooling options. They must go and visit other schools. They must ask questions. They must speak with the boys and families. I caution families to be wary of those who 'declare' themselves the best, who brag about their achievements, who slander other schools, and who force families into strict deadlines to accept placement or scholarship offers etc. A school who respects the individual, will want to ensure that the reason a family is choosing their school, is because the family is making an informed decision, which will ultimately result in a happy boy. I hold firmly in my conversations with families that a boy must want to come to Saints.

Saints has been the best kept secret in Bloemfontein. Now I travel the town and country to spread the word about Saints. We are a traditional boys' school where we focus on relationships amongst the boys the staff, the families, the Old Boys, and the extended community. Our pastoral care – caring for the overall wellbeing of the individual (academic, spiritual, sporting, cultural and disciplinary), is what distinguishes us from other schools. At Saints, a boy is not just a number. At Saints, a boy is part of the family.

In my travels this week, a granny of one of our boys, said "I don't want to go back to Saints again. I was exhausted by the end of the day. I had been greeted by 300 boys and felt the need to greet each back. Whilst sitting on a bench minding my own business, the boys even approached me to ask if I was ok or whether they could help me." Another parent said, "There is something different and positive about the discipline at the school." Another parent went on to say, "Although my son is not English speaking, he feels comfortable in a diverse environment."

At Saints you can walk into the school at any time. Here you will find the boys interacting with one another on the playground or the sports field. In the dining room, you will find boys of different ages sitting together and sharing a meal. In the Chapel you will find the school singing together and taking part in praise and worship. You will be greeted, and you will be made to feel welcome. This is why I would choose Saints.

I want people to know what goes on inside those walls. As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 110 **4 April**

Standing at the beach, taking stock after a fairly eventful term, I found myself in a position to do some reflection.

Over the 1st term, Daniel and I were fortunate enough to go on some fishing expeditions. It is something that was difficult to find time for during the busy terms. Having started finding my feet again in Bloemfontein, I cracked the nod and was invited by friends to various well-kept secrets at remote locations across the Free State. I was told that each of these locations were special and home to the big ones.

Daniel's passion for fishing resurfaced, and he started speaking and breathing fishing. His passion and drive inevitably 'dragged' me along fuelling the embers of my own fishing passion, which was somehow lost in the business of life. In conversation with him, the following realities and life lessons came to the fore.

Daniel speaks of the want to be a professional fisherman. A dream I once shared as a young boy. The reality today of the fishing industry is that it no longer allows for small commercial fishermen to make a living off the sea. It is nearly impossible. The once commercial boat laden harbours, filled with the sights and sounds of fishermen offloading their catch to the admiration of friends and family is now but a distant memory. The introduction of trawlers and mega companies, have decimated the fish numbers, and continue to drive various species to the brink. I recall photographs of my Grandfather with a catch we could only but dream of these days. Today one would think it wasteful of recreational fishermen to bring home such a bounty. More than one could eat in an entire year, from one expedition.

Times were different then. So in discussion, Daniel has indicated that he would like to become a marine biologist and fulfil his passion through conservation and education. He has come to learn more about the delicate balance that exists between consumption and sustainability and that when in balance, it results in all thriving. It still blows my mind that conservation is not being prioritized to a greater degree. The will to make strong and unpopular decisions in terms of sustainability is not a priority and we pay the consequence daily. It is my hope that future generations will make the necessary mindset shift and tackle the impending crisis we are staring down. My generation is only scraping the surface of the tipping point. The reality is that the Rhino will also go extinct before Daniel has his own children.

Teeth chattering on the beach, being lashed by the rain and wind, Daniel and his cousin braved the elements. Lesser men would have run for shelter. I was amazed at how these youngsters held out for the hope of a big one. Catch after catch of the more commonly spotted kelp stalk, played havoc with these determined fishermen. The excitement of the sheer weight on the line and drag of the surge toing and froing with the action of the waves, resulted in many predictions of the type of big one expected at the end of the line. I enjoyed watching the boys fight the kelp stalks, hanging on for dear life as they were literally dragged along the beach. We would stay out whole day unless forced to retire home by

hunger or the fear of a scolding because of staying away much too long... On this occasion we were forced home because the local gulls emptied our sardine box when we had our backs turned.

Passion is a massive motivator. Les Brown says, "If you want a thing bad enough to go out and fight for it, to work day and night for it, to give up your time, your peace and sleep for it. If all that you dream and scheme is about it, and life seems useless and worthless without it. If dogged and grim you besiege and beset it, with the help of God, YOU WILL GET IT!" I hope Daniel never loses his passion. I hope that he does not get caught up in the busyness of life. I hope that he will live his passion.

Having watched this little man over the course of this term, his passion meant that all the other seemingly important events were only 'distractions'. His selection to teams and results in the classroom had less of an impact on him because his focus had shifted. This is not to minimize the importance of schooling and achievement at school, but one should always try keep perspective. The result of a Maths test or a sports match is just that... The sun will rise the next day irrespective. And if a Maths test or a sports match is your thing, then that is just fine as well. We need to encourage our kids to find what they are passionate about and to live it.

Time at the water is time we get to spend together. They are precious moments. I enjoy watching the little man live out his passion. I hope that every boy is able to have that someone who encourages his passion, and is able to share in the moments.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God."

Issue 111

9 April

The Year We Almost Died.

2008 was the year one of my good mates, a certain Justin Van Winkel, married his high school sweetheart Lauren. I recall the outdoor ceremony like it was yesterday. What a beautiful ceremony, and to add, what a privilege to be in attendance (for both the Groom and me)...

Justin had mentored and 'schooled' me in crayfish diving. Perhaps there was no one else stupid enough to go along with him... Over the initial weeks of the cray fish season, he would show me various of his "secret" dive spots he had frequented over the years. I recall my first somewhat terrifying dive at Hangklip... All I knew of the sea for certain was that diving meant swimming with the sharks. Here I was on my first dive nervously making my way through the kelp beds. The sight of even the smallest shark would instinctively send a jolt up my spine. It was not helped either by the fact that Justin took great pride in attempting to shove a shark down your wetsuit whenever he had the opportunity to do so. A lesson learnt by another of my mates, Riaan Crouse. There are so many stories.

Be it a shark being thrown at your head or being chased along the beach and then slapped by an Octopus wielding Van Winkel across the face, leaving a 'snot' covered victim reeling in the sand. Baboons raiding your skottel braai breakfast buns, or watching cyclists trying to escape enraged Ostriches chasing after them in Cape Point Reserve. Waking at 3am to leave on a diving trip to only to catch boys returning to the hostel after slipping out at night or slipping 'vrot' sardines into the rooms of colleagues (to stink them out) or strategically placing these very sardines under the door handles of cars parked outside resulting in stink finger (ask Riaan Crous). A certain prestigious Headmaster David Schenk peering out over the water to watch the result of deliberately failing to warn his fellow diving mates of a sizeable Cow Shark making its way to the unsuspecting divers - these diving expeditions always resulted in some form of excitement. Boys will be boys. We are by default hotwired

to be naturally mischievous and adventurous.

Two weeks before the groom appeared before the minister, we departed early morning in the direction of Long Beach, Noordhoek. It had somewhat become tradition that this "Bloemfontein Barbarian" as he called me, and this Southern Suburbs, blond-haired blue-eyed, rugby playing surfer boy would head out for our weekend dive. On arrival conditions were less than favourable. Being seasoned veterans, the allure of the elusive 'blue' 3kg crayfish proved too much. Under the watchful eye of the shark spotters we swam out to a distant reef, carrying bait bags stuffed to the max with fresh sardine now mist certainly filling the water with its fishy scent. With visibility close to zero, we swam back and decided to make our way in calmer waters behind the breakers another two odd kilometres down the beach.

It was at this point, with the swell ever increasing and visibility decreasing that in conversation we decided to call it a day and go and get a packet of hot, salt and vinegar drenched slap chips. The wind howling and the water simply unmanageable we had to clamber our way out of the rocky boulders, carefully timing a strategic exit, for fear of being smashed up against the rocks by the surge. Having narrowly made it up the beachfront, we noted the tide had come in, which would result in a rather difficult up and down passage back to the parking lot, over seemingly insurmountable boulders. It was then that we took the informed decision to take the easy route out (or so we thought).

We started clambering our way up the side of the mountain making our way up to Chapman Peaks Drive several hundred meters above. About halfway, these two fully geared divers were caught with nowhere to go. No going up and no going down, stuck and needing to be rescued. A term known as skårfast.

I recall Justin telling me to just hold on. Now with our bodies flat against the mountain side, with every movement, freeing the loose sediment below us, we held onto fynbos and some sort of thornbush for dear life as we slowly continued to shimmy our way up the mountain side. Several hours later, we piled over the side of the drive, being met by the bewildered look of construction workers in harnesses attending to road works several meters to our right. Lying atop the road, suffering from heat exhaustion and dehydration, our thick rubber wetsuits now soiled by the dirt, we mustered our energy and with as much bravado, and proceeded to walk past the bemused faces back to the parking lot. I wonder what passing motorists thought of these two fully clothed divers just meandering their way along Chapman's Peak. As adults we often forget those things we got up to as youngsters when we were invincible. We lose perspective and are unable to think that a boy can get up to something so stupid but in reality it is what they are hot wired to do.

Boys don't think things through. They act before they think. Testosterone clouds their better judgment. Looking back now, Justin and I laugh, but were we stupid. I think that there are many who if they wracked their brains they may well be shocked by the antics of their youth now long forgotten. I cannot but laugh to myself when a boy appears before me for doing something stupendously stupid. I remind myself that this was me too. Just when I think I have seen it all, the boys raise the bar... It is what they do. It is also here where adults need to act to mitigate ramifications by helping boys to at least attempt thinking things through and understanding the concept of consequence.

It is 15 odd years later since I last dived. Not because of Chapman's event. It is just that life happened. This past holiday, the stars aligned, and I found myself back in the water. This time I had my daughter, my son and my nephew with me. I was able to share with them something I came to love. Olivia was able to interact with and stroke an Octopus, and also catch her first shark by hand. I will add that she also got a shark to the head, compliments her father, and I considered shoving a pyjama shark down my son's shorts. It felt so good. It just felt right (being in the water that is). I also managed to fit into my wetsuit of old, be it only the boots, gloves and hood...

The wetsuit was stolen, and has nothing to do with the Weber I carry around with me under my shirt... I have a sunburn of note on my back as well as an ear infection to prove it. Both absolutely worth it. Life is busy yes, but one should never lose that which you are passionate about. Find it. Pursue it. Enjoy it. You need to stop and smell the roses every now and then. What is that which is your rose?

In 2014 I listened to speaker Celia Lashlie who said 'boys will be boys' should be changed to 'boys must become men'. If they don't, it becomes a lottery whether they will reach 21 as they do such stupid things.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 112

17 April

I have been involved in some form of leadership position in boarding houses since 2006. I love the boarding experience. My wife and I moved into the boarding house as newlyweds. This is where we quickly came to learn that living in a boarding house is a 24/7 deal. The benefits of residing in the boarding house needs is counterbalanced by the pound of flesh that is expected in return. The same can be said for accommodation on campus. It absolutely rubs me up the wrong way, when perspective is lost and entitlement sets in.

Littlewood House in Cape Town in the later years came to be home (this after leaving my home in Grey College Hostel). We (my wife and I) survived the hectic term times, and enjoyed the occasional silence when the hostel was empty and not occupied by touring teams. We adopted our first two pups who stayed with us in our small two bedroom apartment and later adopted the hostel brak as well. My daughter and son eventually came along and called this very same two-bedroom apartment home. Family members flocked to what they designated as a seaside destination over holidays resulting in many sleeping on the floor in the lounge or even in hostel dorms.

The noisy corridors at night, or boys playing the fool in their dorms would keep one awake for the first couple of years, before one eventually became 'immune' to the noise disturbance. One could always take revenge by waking the dorm in the early hours of the morning and getting them to do some kitchen chores or some maths exam printed from the evening before, at 4am on a cold and rainy winter morning... Family braai's were always expanded by two or three boarders, who smelling the smoke from the charcoal fire, would peer out their windows and enquire as to their invite.

My daughter was privileged to have 100 older brothers. It was most enjoyable watching the boys interact with her. On other occasions, boys being boys, they would use her for a rugby ball, and pass her from one to the other, ever increasing the distance, to the joy and exhilaration of my daughter and the dread of my wife. Daniel would pop out to play soccer and touch rugby in the afternoons with the boys. He could do this to his heart's desire, always being included, and made to feel special by the boys who clumsily would purposefully trip over their own feet or tackle each other, resulting in the inevitable try by him.

Living in a hostel gave me license to behave like a little boy again. As master's we took great pleasure in pranking the boys by shoving stink bombs under their doors or sending them on an errand to collect a lost bag strategically placed on the dark field and then abducting them. On other occasions we would catch a boy and cable tie him to the flag post and leave him there to be found by others. On other occasions we would strategically roam the streets of the suburb having egg fights. Paintball fights between the masters and the boys were common place, be it at a designated location or in and around the hostel corridors.

I have lost count of the number of children who lived with us for holidays or stayed with us because of a suspension with nowhere else to go. I have taught with men my wife would console as young boys crying because they missed home. I have coached with boys who once played for my team. Living in a hostel meant that one became more than friends. In many instances the hostel residents (staff and boys) became family. This is where you come to realise that you are parents to these boys. This is where you come to learn to manage consequence in the same way you would for your own child. You come to miss the hustle and bustle after a couple days of silence when the boys head off on holiday. I always said it is so awkward on the first evening of every holiday, when one comes to hear the crickets for the first time, realizing how irritating they actually are when you are trying to sleep.

The most important lesson I came to learn in the boarding house is that we operate on a system of trust. We set the expectation and ground rules, and we expect and trust the boys to commit to realizing them. This means that we don't lock the boys into the boarding house at night but expect of them not to bunk out - because we trust them. Yes, boys do take chances, but on the one or two occasions where they take a chance, 99.9% of the time, they can be trusted, especially if there is adult presence where there is a relationship with these adults for taking an interest in and caring for the boys.

The same can be said for the adults living and working together. The most important factor is that one must be able to trust each other. Without trust and without each pulling their weight, there is a systematic breakdown of relationships and effective functionality. I maintain that the hostel family must know that they can trust and rely on each other – at all times. In a family like this you come to see many things. Life and death of loved ones becomes a shared experience. Thus, those on the outside can't truly comprehend what it means to be part of this special family. We celebrate the good together. We tackle trying times together. We trust each other. Being part of this family is not always easy, but it is oh so rewarding. This is why boys and staff speak so fondly of the bonds and times shared in the boarding house.

Trust is of course of universal importance in all aspects of life. I dread disappointing my parents, my family or those close to me. As a young teacher, my greatest fear was disappointing my headmaster, and in fact, disappointing them - even now. I am loyal as a dog. I operate from the point of view that I choose to trust as opposed approaching a person or situation with scepticism. My hand has been bitten many times. They say, "Mak honde byt die seerste". I won't change who I am, but I may choose to handle you with a cricket glove on the next occasion.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 113 **23 April**

The mornings have been anything but cool. The temperature in Bloem may have plummeted, but the heat in the Junior Quad has only turned up.

Every morning at 7am I make my way to my office. The routine walk, with the inevitable youngster running up to me to come and share stories (from home), has now been complimented by an army of young aspiring cricketers waiting to face a ball bowled by the headmaster.

Ball in hand I confidently do a short run up, adding in a bit of twinkle toes, just to highlight my unique bowling technique, before delivering the ball to the grade one batsman. The batsman clearly stands no chance against an expert and experienced bowler like me. One must remember, in my opinion I excelled in cricket even playing Bakers Mini Cricket at Free

State Stadium during those Benson & Hedges night games. Yes, when the greats like Hansie Cronje and Alan Donald retired for the change of innings, the true 'talent' (us youngsters believed) came out onto the oval... I am sure Hansie and Alan would use their lunch break to watch from the cloakrooms and take some notes.

As I said, that batsman stands no chance. With the field of 30 set in every position imaginable, tip and run, means the odds are stacked against you. Swing and a miss - you're out. Tip and try to run - you're out. Your only chance is to try and 'spank' the ball out of the park. As captain, umpire, and television official, I hold a wonderful strike rate and still maintain the spot as top bowler, fast approaching 1000 wickets in my career...

I enjoy interacting with the boys, be it smuggling sweets to the little guys behind their teachers backs, often aiding and abetting in their escape by sending them out the other door, to hiding them behind my desk, to distracting the teacher whilst they quietly sneak out. I consider myself one of the gang. I can't say no to them (and they know it). Last week when my PA was away, my office was visited by many, and we engaged in building paper planes, which the teachers had to deal with at the start of the day. Yes, I am that little boy who acts with impunity...

At the Senior School we recently did away with cell phones during the academic day. Whilst initially an unpopular decision on the part of the boys - understandably so - the decision resulted in an almost instantaneous change for the positive. There was an uptake of ball sports and games during break time. Soccer and touch rugby games attracted large crowds of spectators. Wrestling matches resulting in a 1-2-3 pin would unfold right before my eyes. Boys sat in groups and engaged with one another by having face to face conversations. I must say that I am pleased by the way the boys responded, despite their initial objection. I think secretly this is what some boys really craved - a forced restriction on their always on, unlimited cyber pseudo lives, of having to face and impress faceless followers.

Boys returning from break times breathing heavily (and smelling of sweat), or having laughed over conversations, or sharing in tuck food each vying for the biggest bite of pizza slice, is much more a natural fit for boys. Boys need to be active, they need to be loud, they need to flex their wings and rid their body of testosterone in one way or the other. A inactive, self-absorbed, uninterested, and emotionally drained young man is like a pressure cooker waiting to release steam - the problem - the valve is shut...

Full fields, shouts of laughter, engaged learners, and a busy campus, is the sign of a healthy and happy student population. Staff 'competing' with and living out their childhood aspirations alongside the boys is not bad either - even be it the headmaster. The return to play has presented me with an opportunity to surpass my personal best - now 1001 wickets. It has also created the space and opportunity for the boys to start along a journey to their own personal best.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God."

Issue 114

30 April

Until no one goes to sleep hungry...

An email earlier this year prompted me to consider whether we give enough respect and attention to 14 notable occasions, known by most as public holidays or simply as a day off work. Test yourself. Try naming all of these days and if you are able to name them, are you able to explain the history and meaning behind them - Christmas and Good Friday excluded of course. Even these seem to have lost their significance in and amongst the rush for presents, Easter Eggs, Hot Cross Buns and other goodies.

Have these events lost their significance and being treated as tick box exercises - an opportunity to sleep late? Prompted by a missive from Mr Roger Crawford, I made work of studying the 14 public holidays in 2024 that we are set to celebrate or have already passed. These include New Year's Day, Human Rights Day, Good Friday, Family Day, 2024 National Election, Freedom Day, Workers' Day, Youth Day, National Women's Day, Heritage Day, Day of Reconciliation, Christmas Day and Day of Goodwill (also known as Boxing Day to many). I encourage you to do the same and look into the significance of these.

This past Sunday, I visited the youngsters participating in the local afternoon league at Freedom Park. These barefoot warriors went about their business playing soccer on a barren field - not a blade of grass. As a bunch of outsiders we pulled up to watch the children. Some rather inquisitive youngsters probably thought the talent scouts had arrived. My son asked me why boys his equal in age and size were looking 'funny' at him. To be honest, it is because these youngsters have probably never seen a white boy visit their field. Daniel was quizzed as to whether he played soccer and what position he played. On determining he was a goalkeeper, the invitation was extended to him to take to the field. Daniel declined the invitation probably overwhelmed by the surreal feeling of the present moment. The privilege of playing on lush green fields could not compare to the daunting task of having to dive on rock hard dirt. In conversation I found myself reminding Daniel, that these boys were for all intents and purpose just like him - save for privilege and circumstance. 30 years on from the advent of a free South Africa, there is still so much to do in achieving the dream born in 1994.

After my visit to Freedom Park, the answer to the question as to whether it is important that we celebrate Freedom Day by a member of the press, my answer was an unequivocal yes. More than 90% of the population were given equal rights and had their dignity acknowledged and restored. One must remember, most children at school, along with some educators, were not born 30 years ago. Whilst we are now a free and democratic society - it is difficult to explain the disparities that still exist. Children and families living in shacks and squalor, unemployment, lack of pay, pit toilets, crime, lack of access to education and medical facilities etc. is really difficult to explain. Apartheid set the country on a trajectory that will take generations to correct. Freedom Day should be celebrated and serve as a reminder that we have much to do in building our nation.

This year is the 30th anniversary celebration of South Africa's first non-racial democratic elections of 1994, the establishment of a new democratic government led by Nelson Mandela as well as the unfurling of the National Flag on the day that Nelson Mandela was inaugurated as the President of South Africa. On the day of Nelson Mandela's inauguration, the "new" national flag was seen for the first time when three helicopters in a flypast national salute carried flags. Initially the "new" flag was considered to be a temporary symbol until a new constitution was accepted. Such was the positive reaction to the flag that it was soon accepted into law. National symbols are essential to the achievement of national unity and the "new" flag has become the primary symbol of identification of South Africa and its people. The acceptance and recognition of the national flag has been accelerated by the activities and success of South African sporting teams and individuals.

The date is also an important date for the school because the National Flag was designed by Old Andrean, Fred Brownell. The meaningful symbolism in the flag is the Y-shape, which, according to Fred Brownell, can be interpreted as "the convergence of diverse elements within South African society, taking the road ahead in unity." In effect the "Y" on our national flag shows how we as a nation started out divergent and are being unified. South Africa's bold, colourful and unifying national flag is widely recognized the world over. One of the features of a remarkable flag, according to Fred Brownell, is that it should be easy for children to draw it and colour it.

According to school legend, Fred Brownell took his inspiration for the traditional cassock worn by past Chaplains of the school. I can't help but think that the visual impact and the

lessons learnt in this Chapel, made such an impression on Fred that he poured this into the design of our National Flag. Our National Flag is therefore a product of Godly influence from this, our Heart of the School.

Fred Brownell died on the 10th May 2019, and was a recipient of the Fiat Lux Award, the highest award of the school. As a school we honour both the great and ordinary South African alike. We recognize and salute you for the role you have played in establishing a free and democratic South Africa. We also recognize the role we must play in continuing the fight against injustice and intolerance worldwide whilst working towards building a unified South Africa, where we as a country can take centre stage and lead the way in an increasingly turbulent and polarized world. May our National Flag continue to serve as a promise of hope and unity. Until no one goes to sleep hungry, we still have much to do.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 115

7 May

Perspective: The occasions where one is woken to the important things in life.

I was reminded of a story shared by friend of mine when walking around the Chapel field watching the little rugby players in action not too long ago. It was one of those fine Free State Autumn afternoons. The spectators comprising parents and boys, encircled each field cheering their respective teams on. For an U7 lining up inside the small, demarcated pitch, it must feel like something like what the gladiators experienced walking out into the arena of the colosseum to face their destiny.

Having been shooed out of my office by my PA to go and watch little 'Jo' and others in action, I arrived at the fields, to find the very recognizable excitement and hustle and bustle one finds in 'little guy' sport. The chaos of a coach organising a team of youngsters, whilst trying to keep tabs on every boy who rushes in and out of a team meeting to go and greet or collect a bottle of water from a frantic parent who just arrived on scene, having clearly just beat the afternoon rush, makes for wonderful entertainment (well, on my part at least). After the necessary pep talks from the parents and a last message from the coach, the atmosphere builds in anticipation of the 'titanic' clash. Pre-game nerves now clearly evident in the players eyes and body language, and with final last words of encouragement in and amongst fellow teammates, the whistle blows, and the game is on.

Arguably, these are the matches I love most. They are entertaining in so many ways. In most instances everything taught and run through at training sessions goes right out the window. Players running backwards away from the opposition team is a regular sight. Players diving and scoring spectacular tries before the try line is not out of place either. The disappointment and disbelief on the face of the player as he is called back by the referee delivering the devastating news is something to behold. Watching mothers charging down the line trying to keep pace whilst encouraging their young man forward provides much entertainment as well. You best be on your lookout anytime a break is made by a player down the sideline, failing that you stand the chance of being run over by one or more of these mothers. Fathers high fiving and congratulating one another when a player scores, acknowledging both the talent on the field, and the invaluable and indispensable 'advice' they offered based on their unmatched sporting career, is the topic of conversation in many cases long after celebrations on the field have ceased.

On this occasion a little expectant boy had made his way prior the game to my office asking whether Mrs Meyer and I would make it to watch his match. It was important enough for him to take time out of his lunch break to request our attendance. Shooting off a last email, I hurried off to find the team on the field in action. Keeping an eye on 'Jo', whilst simultaneously watching as much of the other three concurrent games, 'Jo', picked up the

ball. Running in an arc, with the opposition closing in on him, he managed to place the ball over the try line with two of his opponents having made a decent effort at trying to stop him short. Before the try was awarded he was up and ran straight into the arms of his Dunn House mother, Mrs Meyer, for a big hug.

Few would know, but 'Jo', is for all intents and purposes an orphan. Special seeing that moment knowing his background. Thinking on this, he is no different to any other boy. Standing along the field, my son often looks to see that we (my wife and me) are present. I often notice how a boy looks to find his loved one, be it on the field, on stage at a concert, or at a prize giving etc. The look is unmistakable, as is the look of excitement for seeing their loved one, or the look of disappointment for no one present... I insist that teachers make it their priority to get round in support of boys in their tutor groups, register classes and family groups. The impact on the boys in their care is immeasurable. I always tell parents not to keep themselves scarce. Their presence on campus and their involvement is needed, valued and appreciated. A healthy campus is a busy campus. A healthy community is an involved and present community. A healthy boy is a happy boy.

'He is just a boy' is the mantra I have adopted, and further to that, it is just schoolboy sport... Some simple guidelines and lessons learnt about keeping perspective:

- Irrespective the result, the sun will rise tomorrow. We are not 'chasing the sun'... It's schoolboy sport after all. We play for enjoyment.
- Participation for all involved is a priority. There is nothing more disappointing to a boy and a parent than not having a chance to take to the field. He has worked for his place in the team be it as starting player or substitute.
- There is no letter 'I' in the word team. Team stands for Together Everyone Achieves More. Talent on a field is evident, but talent at the expense of teammates is counterproductive and destructive. Everyone has a role to play.
- Keep perspective about your child, his abilities and the games we play. Be proud of him irrespective the team he plays for or how far he goes. He is just a boy.
- Your child is not you. He may be more or less talented. That is ok. There is no pressure for him to live up to your achievements or to be driven to surpass your lack thereof. He is just a boy.
- The officials are amateurs. They provide a service for love of the game. Armchair coaches and officials have it easy because they are always right... Can you recall when last you donned your boots and picked up a whistle?
- Assume the best and seek first the lessons to be learnt and the intent behind an action before criticizing and or reacting. Sport provides the opportunity to learn life lessons in a safe environment. Life is made up of success and disappointments. How we respond is what matters.
- Above all, be present. He is just a boy. He is your boy. He is our boy. Sometimes in life there are more important things than dropping a pass or missing a tackle. Always keep perspective when watching your boy. He is healthy. He is happy playing with his friends. Don't ruin it by putting totally unnecessary pressure on him.

The story shared by my friend was that when he took part in a charity hike up the mountain one Saturday, he was rather tired on the way up. Grumpy and looking forward to getting back to a nice shower, in the height of his grumpiness, he passed an elderly lady who was sitting down who had taken off her prosthetic leg. He asked her if she was okay and she cheerfully replied that "she was just giving her stump a break".

I look forward to seeing you next to the sports fields, courts and in our halls. We celebrate with you, we support with you and we love with you. As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 116
14 May
They called us "Meester".

Back in the day, the Afrikaans word to describe teachers was "Meester" or in English "School Master". I like both descriptions equally. What a respectful way to describe a teacher.

Truth be told that there are people who speak in the past tense of a time when a teacher was revered in the community, someone considered an upstanding member of society, a highly qualified individual, known by all for work done in and for the community. I have heard colleagues speak of a time when there was a certain gravitas in the words used to speak of teachers. I have come to hear of young people not wanting to become teachers because of the fact that teachers are poorly paid, that kids have no discipline, that working circumstances are unbearable and that the teaching profession is a mere shadow of what it used to be. How sad.

I believe teachers are the single most important commodity for any community. Holding the office of teacher is one of the most demanding and rewarding roles one can have. Being a teacher is a calling - there is no other way to describe it. As a parent, one takes the raising of your own child seriously. Your dreams, hopes and aspirations are poured into preparing the way so that your child may reap the benefits of a disciplined and fulfilling life. This is what we as teachers do daily for the 50 - 100 learners in our care daily. We work with your most precious possession. We also know that we mould and shape our community and country through the children in our classes. Yes, teachers literally shape the direction of a country through the generations sent out. In many instances, teachers are mentors and surrogate parents to the children in our care. The role of a teacher cannot be underestimated.

Whilst some may speak of the significant role of teachers in the past tense, this is not what I experience daily. I can attest to the changemakers in action daily. I see it in the way my teachers lead in their community, I see by the way they interact with a child in their care, I hear by the words they use, I see by the care and concern for that lost little soul. More so, parents tell me daily how they appreciate the teachers. The stories of appreciation shared by the parents for teachers far outnumber and concerns or complaints. I see parents' faces light up as they drive by waving at staff from their cars or how parents make a point of going up to greet staff alongside the fields. I see the young boys excitedly running up to greet staff in town. I see the older boys celebrating victories and sharing in defeat with teachers. I am blown away by how many people come up to me and ask after my father, who taught them in grade 7 or coached them soccer back in their youth - now years after his retirement. I am here to tell you that the reverence people still hold in teachers is alive and well. Teachers truly send ripples through eternity. The community recognizes and appreciates what teachers continue to do – probably now more than ever.

A teacher understands that holding this important position means that much is expected. There is a dignity of office that comes with position that cannot be compromised. This means that in all we do we need to act above reproach. Teachers are trained professionals and masters of their art and are so much more as well. Teachers go between being mentors, counsellors, psychologists, coaches, entrepreneurs, HR specialists, investigators and auditors, to teaching their subjects as well. Teachers are dynamic people, and probably one of the most employable in terms of skill set.

COVID pushed the world into crisis. The education system was challenged to reinvent itself and parents were provided with a stark reminder of how challenging 'babysitting' and 'teaching' their own children could be, let alone trying to fulfil the role of teacher. We are facing another impending crisis in education, and quite possibly, soon your child may be considered privileged to actually have a teacher present. Minister of Education Angie Motshekga reported that there are currently 31 000 teacher vacancies in South Africa, with the number on the increase. Teachers are leaving the profession in their droves for better

pay and better working conditions. The Centre for Development and Enterprise has estimated that South Africa will need 456,000 teachers by 2025 for the country to offer quality education. UN chief António Guterres said "Now, more than ever, we need to move towards learning societies. People everywhere need high-quality skills, knowledge and education. Above all, they need the best teachers possible."

Whilst few may be lining up to take on the responsibility that comes with being a teacher, working at Saints is a privilege. We are blessed with good and supportive families, respectful and enthusiastic learners, wonderful facilities, and a safe and pleasant working environment. We teach in a place where we are respected and appreciated by our community as change makers. We are blessed beyond measure. May we always maintain a sense of appreciation, pride and the dignity of office that comes with being a teacher.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God."

Issue 117

22 May

Understanding boys and helping them to become men.

Sitting around the fireplace with my father and a good family friend, we were reminiscing about fishing, school and many other things. A lekker 'gesels' around a fire always makes for entertaining stories. Planning the demise of my buttocks, compliments the 'cowboy' skipper who does not know when to ease off the throttles thereby joyfully sending the 18ft Cape Craft hurtling through the air and pounding his crew. The crew always bear the brunt of decisions taken by the skipper. One best be quiet at sea, because at sea, the skipper is king. Back on land, all is fair in love and war... My mate and skipper, David Schenk, remarked whilst enjoying fellowship that "The best headmasters were naughty at school". It got me thinking...

When a boy walks into my office, often tale between his legs, I am always interested to hear what will be laid bare. More often than not the boy is accompanied by an adult (parent or teacher), fuming at the imbecilic actions of the boy in question. I suppose what amuses me most, is that I never get tired of hearing the new and ingenious ways that the boys try and reinvent the wheel. Boys doing stupid things has been a feature of adolescence since the dawn of time. Smoking behind bushes, having a sip of alcohol when the adults are not looking or present or looking at naughty pictures, has never been ok. My role is to get boys to learn from their mistakes, and then reflect and do things differently in the future.

If we claim to understand boys, then we must understand that boys test boundaries. They get up to nonsense. They make crazy, frivolous, idiotic, inappropriate, irresponsible and simple decisions. Our role as adults is to set the boundaries and to guide the boys in our care, whilst understand that boys make mistakes. I hold that school is a place boys must make mistakes. It is a safe space, a controlled environment, under the care of adults, where boys can make mistakes and learn from the consequences of their actions. The ramifications for mistakes after school is so much more serious. Consequence, not punishment. Punishment has negative connotations whilst consequence is the result of and equal to an action. Punishment is enforced by the 'punisher' and is beyond the control of the 'offender', whereas a consequence, is controlled by the 'doer'. For a certain action, there is a consequence. It is unemotional. For example, if you choose to slip out of hostel and get caught, the consequence for your action is a two-week automatic suspension.

'Boys will be boys' must not be an excuse for bad behaviour. It is our job as adults to assist our boys to become men. People should not endeavour to excuse the behaviour of the likes of our top sports stars who through their reckless and careless behaviour leave their 'careers in ruins'. Boys must be mentored to manhood. This includes how to treat women, how to use alcohol, how to make responsible decisions. Boys need to be mentored to put their foot

on the break, and not on the accelerator when approaching a yellow traffic light. Boys need to realise from young that every action has a consequence so that he thinks when he is 19 of the consequence when he approaches the traffic light.

Don't confuse what I am saying with having a sense of humour. Laughing and doing mischievous things are part of growing up. And boy oh boy are the boys good at it. This is one of the things I most love about my job. Take for instance the situation where one of my teachers burst into my office infuriated for the excrement that was left on the floor during her lesson. After the class was lambasted, and upon further investigation, it turns out that the boys dropped a piece of carefully crafted sausage on the floor and sat back to watch the scene unfold. A good dressing down about expectations one has of the class is more than sufficient to address the matter. Seeing the humour and having a good laugh, on the part of the adult concerned, earns the respect of the class. But there is a fine line. Little boy shenanigans become big boy shenanigans which become life-threatening shenanigans in adulthood - especially when alcohol is in play. The use and abuse of an alcohol with young people is a recipe for disaster. That is why role models are so important and why adults need to differentiate between mischief and actions that can lead to much more serious consequences.

I recall the silly antics I got up to as a youngster - a time when I felt invincible. I think to myself how different my life could have been, had it not been for my parents and loving adults who modelled good behaviour, who intervened when necessary and who guided me always. There are many who don't have role models, and in many instances, innocent unchecked mischief can lead to tragedy. When I have to 'deal' with a boy, I think how I would deal with my own son. My children are after all my most precious possession. I often remind those round me that we are working with someone else's most precious possession. Our role as adults is not to accept 'boys will be boys', but rather to understand that 'boys must become men'. Becoming a man is to realise that every action has a consequence.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 118

28 May

Are you a Crabber?

I love watching Deadliest Catch, a television show detailing the harrowing adventures of fishermen braving the Bering Sea during the Alaskan King Crab and Opilio Crab fishing season. The show's title is derived from the inherent high risk of injury or death associated with this line of work often regarded as one of the most dangerous jobs in the world.. The crew go about fishing for lucrative haul of crab, reliant on their skipper to find the crab, whilst just trying to stay alive. Navigating a deck strewn with hazards, ducking heavy crab pots swinging into position, avoiding getting tangled in rope that could drag one overboard and to the bottom of the Bering Sea, and manoeuvring crab about the deck during gale force winds and high seas, is all in a day's work. These fishermen love what they are doing, and the stakes are high.

The skippers search for the crab, plotting the course and steering the vessel, drawing on experience and gut feel, whilst gambling on where to set their pots. Skippers work with their crew (and other boats), to find the crab. A tenuous relationship sometimes exists between the crews of the respective boats as they hunt for the crab. Setting pots on or too close to another boat, results in tempers flaring and the sabotaging of fishing equipment. More often than not, boats try and keep what is happening secret. Long standing relationships spanning generations dictate cooperation between boats whose families have fished these waters for many years.

Once a boat finds a honey hole (a secret spot with a lot of crab), the crew wants to haul in as

much crab as possible for as long as the weather allows. Conditions on the Bering Sea are unpredictable and dangerous with one rogue wave or mechanical breakdown destroying an entire crabbing expedition. There is always an air of anticipation when crab pots are being pulled to the surface to reveal the catch. Full pots are met with excitement and jubilation, as the crew excitedly measure, and collect the crabs. Not even bad weather can dampen the spirits of excited fishermen hoarding their treasure and precious cargo. The skipper is seen as a hero for his work in finding the crab. Empty pots on the other hand, break hearts and dampen the spirits. It is then when fishing is at its most difficult. The livelihood of the crew, the skipper is at stake.

On a crab boat, time is money. Every pot set, counts, as the boats race against time before the Arctic freeze sets in, making the waters unfishable. When a skipper has considered options, and makes a decision to set the pots, the deck comes alive with activity. Thousands of kilograms of bait are chopped up, the pots are baited, meters of rope are secured to each pot along with a buoy before the pots are slipped overboard. This process can take several hours to complete, with hundreds of pots being set along a line. The work is certainly not pleasant. In the down time as the pots 'soak' in the water, the crew gets some food and rest.

New crewmembers to a vessel are met with a certain level of scepticism and are required to 'prove' themselves. On a crab boat they are called 'greenhorns', originally referred to an animal with green (or young) horns. These newbies may have no previous fishing experience or may still be learning the ropes on a particular boat. In many instances, greenhorns quit after their first trip because of the punishing and dangerous work, despite the handsome pay. Greenhorns are the lowest ranking members, having to do all the 'grunt' work for a season or two. Whilst the crew get some sleep, greenhorns are usually set to work chopping ice off boat rails with a sledgehammer. Crews do this to ensure the boat doesn't get weighed down by hundreds of kilograms of ice that can quickly form in the freezing temperatures as well as preventing the dangers of falling ice leading to injury or death. I recall watching a greenhorn on a boat, the Aleutian Ballad, threaten to jump overboard and have the Coast Guard rescue him, rather than staying on board. This resulted in an unscheduled stop, and the loss of valuable fishing time. Crab fishing is simply not for the weak of spirit as explained by one of the new crew: *"I would describe the bait boy process as being swallowed by a seagull and having to live inside its stomach for three or four days."*

I can't help but liken the complex working environment of a school to that of the skipper and crew aboard a crab fishing vessel in the Bering Sea. An effective skipper and crew make for an effective fishing vessel. Every member of the crew has an important role to play in ensuring the success of the mission and expedition. Individual crew with diverse and complimentary skillsets and strengths must work together to get the most out of each other and the vessel, in a changing and challenging environment. The skipper is required to plot the course, navigate the ship and find the crab. Being a teacher, like being a fisherman, can be exceptionally hard work. It often involves long hours, unpredictable and changing situations, demanding tasks and requirements, high expectations, and a high level of endurance and love for what you do, to reap the rewards at the end of the day. Being a teacher is anything but boring... Seeing a teacher at the end of the term is like watching a crabber return to land after four weeks at sea.

On a crab boat, everyone wants to fish but not everyone wants to mend nets. *Mending time* is considered a necessary evil in fishing. Mending is something hated by the crew. It is monotonous work spreading out the nets and sifting through them to repair holes, retie knots, and clean out debris. This is the "grind" behind the appeal of fishing. Noone likes the mending of nets, but if not done, the bigger fish can see the holes and debris, whilst the smaller fish escape and the integrity of the net is compromised. There comes a time when fishermen are required to stay ashore and attend to the little things. Just like with teaching, and life, there comes a time when one must take stock, reflect and attend to the little important things. Scrubbing the deck, replenishing the fuel, servicing the engines, and checking the electronics and safety equipment is all part and parcel of the job. Lack of

attention to the vessel results in a vessel getting to the point of disrepair, posing a serious risk to the crew and the environment. Not every day is sunshine and roses, but when one gets to go out fishing, it makes it all worthwhile. When the fish are running, one certainly does not want to be in the position of having your boat flounder and miss out on the action. Similarly as teachers, we must be prepared and in the best possible position to set our bait and catch the fish we encounter daily.

From the start, I knew I wanted to Captain my own vessel. I did my time as a greenhorn. I have pulled the anchor and worked while others have slept. Over the years, I have got to fish with and learn from some of the best in the business. They have sacrificed and put everything on the line, and they know how to catch fish and run their boat. They have shared in experience and wisdom and have warned against the change from fishing recreationally to being a paid fisherman. This is when you run the risk of ruining something that once let you escape the real world to live your passion. For me, the last 20 years of being a full-time teacher has been the best 20 years of my life. It's been tough; it's been easy; I have been able to share these experiences and adventures with family and friends and have met some amazing people along the way. Teaching may not be the highest paid job in the world but you sure will be rich from experiences!

Like with anything in life, when considering a career, first you need to consider what you're after in the long term. Do you want to be the Captain or the Deckhand? Is this something you want to do forever or just as short-term gig? Are you prepared to sacrifice? Being a greenhorn, is part of the process, and you must be willing to do the 'grunt' work, and maybe one day you will skipper your own vessel. Captain Phil Harris said: *"Everyone wants the big time. They just don't wanna work for it"*.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 119

4 June

How does one measure success?

Last week I spent time in conversation with one of my mentors, a highly respected educationalist. I do this to soundboard ideas and also ask for advice. Sitting as a headmaster, can be a very lonely position, something few people understand. A headmaster and a English Premier League Soccer Manager can relate to one another. People love you when things are going well. The opposite is also true. Principals enjoy having conversations with other Principals, because they understand the complexities of the position. The 45 minutes in conversation chatting about how things were going at Saints, brought back fond memories.

We characteristically started philosophising and debating school matters and about how one measures success. The first step on the ladder of success is to have a mentor - a parent, a teacher, and older boy in the school. These mentors can also fulfil the role of coaches. A coach can also perform the function of a bus which transports someone from one point to another. Isn't that actually the essence of what a good coach / teacher / parent does? Transports someone from one point of expertise to a further point of expertise. In conversation we arrived at the conclusion that "Distance travelled is the measure of success". What a wonderful analogy.

As a seasoned veteran cricket coach, in the provincial setup, he had the privilege of working with one of the all-time great Proteas. A man, arguably regarded as the best all-rounder with over 10 000 runs in both test and one day internationals. I am sure that working with this future Protea, there was little doubt, that he was going to go far. According to Keith, working with this player, was very rewarding, because he went on to do it all. It is one of those very rewarding moments in teaching, when you see your student go on to greater

things and achieve at the highest level. Having reflected on the impact he was able to make, he would say that whilst he was able to move this player in terms of ability, his talent was such, that the distance moved, in terms of skills development, would be comparatively little. Having shared this story with Gregg Hobson, he agreed, that there are players that one simply knows are going to go the distance when you see them. I would of course add, that a coaches ability to move a high calibre player, even a little in a positive direction, is a massive accomplishment on its own and testament to the quality of the coach/mentor.

We got into discussing a boy who arrived at the New Boy Nets, in his Grade 7 year. This young man was unable to hit the pitch as bowler when he started out. The batsmen in the two nets on either side would prep, for an unintended ball hurtling at them. This bowler was awkward by all accounts in terms of physique and bowling action, but had a massively positive attitude that he would carry with him throughout his schooling career. He immersed himself in the life of the school, and was taken under the wing by the First Rugby Coach, where this young man volunteered as a manager and waterboy of the team through the respective age groups – 14A, then 15A, then 16A, and then eventually 1st team. The player's attitude was such, that he took every opportunity to learn, remained positive, celebrated in the success of others, was dedicated in terms of attending training sessions religiously, and went from not being able to hit the pitch, to representing the 1st Cricket team.

The distance travelled in terms of this youngster's development and progress, was massive. The story of this young man, reminded me of a story of one of my 1st Soccer players. One of the most dedicated and loyal players I had ever come across. There was something special in terms of the positivity that this player brought to the team, which meant he could not be left out, on this attribute alone. His skill was lacking, and he was clumsy on the field, but he stuck to the team, having kept the bench warm for most of the season. After every session and match he would ask what he could do better and what he needed to work on. It was at the end of the season, at the Nedbank Challenge, arguably one of the toughest competitions, that this player, played 100% of the fixtures on tour, and came through in my opinion as our best defender of the season. He went from being a replacement in desperate times, to carrying the defensive setup of the team at the end of the season. Now that is distance moved, that is success.

The same can be held for any other activity at school (and in life). Not all learners are A candidates, or A team players, or great musicians, or wonderful artists etc. Whilst we do celebrate this as success, it is important that we also celebrate success as distance travelled as well. For example, a learner giving it their all, and moving from 55% to 65%, is most impressive, and an indicator of success. A player moving from the bench to the starting line-up, or a player moving from the D to the C team, or a player improving and being required to play in another position, is also a measure of success. We must not miss out on the opportunity to celebrate success, because we mistakenly overlook other indicators as a measure of success. We must not get caught up in the perfection trap. Personal development is also a key indicator of success. Perhaps we should take a another look at how we measure success, and keep perspective around what we choose to recognise as success. The U14D coach and the 4th set Maths teacher must rate their success in distance travelled and in context. You can't expect fluid cover drives or a 97% maths pass, but the coach / teacher reward is the smile of success when the moment occurs - a cover drive for a single or a maths problem solved. The role of the teacher / coach / mentor is to be there, high-fiving the boy and celebrating as his partner on the journey. A teacher / coach / mentor must strive to make a positive difference in someone else's life

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 120
11 June
Heroes

"There are heroes and then there are legends. Heroes get remembered but legends never die". What a fitting description for our very own father, Mr Colin Hickling.

This week we will be paying our final respects to arguably one of Saints' favourite and most influential sons. Colin Hickling was enrolled at St Andrew's in 1949. He has in one way, or the other, been involved with the school for a period of 70 plus years, as pupil, Old Boy and Governor.

At school, Colin excelled in sport. He loved his Rugby and Cricket. He also represented the Free State Schools' Cricket team. In a Facebook post this past week, an old friend of Colin, Mr Hennie Van Deventer shared the story of Colin's aspiring fast bowler career. Colin was apparently flagged in one of the local fixtures for an unusual bowling action. As is always the case, it usually takes one finger pointed in your direction, for others to sit up and take notice. The local umpires having decided that Colin 'chucks', were fortunate to have an Australian Test Umpire visit, to ascertain for certain. The story goes that at Ramblers nets, Colin steamed in and delivered his characteristic fast ball to which the umpire begrudgingly shook his head asking for "another one please". Again, Colin steamed in and pitched the ball with force. The umpire now decidedly unhappy, asked for one more. Colin now clinching his teeth, steamed in with determination and catapulted the ball in with all his might. "My, what an unfortunate action", said the visiting umpire - that being the end of Colin's career as a fast bowler. I can just imagine what Colin had to say about this Aussie... Colin excelled at Rugby, and his Rugby coach described him as the *"backbone of the 1st team, an excellent leader of the pack and a most able captain"*. Such were his leadership abilities and charismatic character that he was made Deputy Head Prefect in his Matric year. At his matriculation in 1957, his headmaster recognized Colin's service and reputation when Colin was awarded the Masey Service Prize – the highest award that can be given to a learner, and an award we still hand out today. His headmaster remarked that Colin *"had distinguished himself in loyalty and devotion to St Andrew's, and had been a very real service by his helpfulness and splendid example."*

After school, Colin lived a life of service. He served in the Round Table both as chairman of the Bloemfontein Club, Round Table 25, and area chairman of the Free State Round Table. He also served on the Bloemfontein City Council serving the interests of the citizens and the city with distinction and was eventually elected as mayor of Bloemfontein in 1985. Such was the reputation of Colin that the local press said *"Mr. Hickling deserves the position of mayor, and the position deserves him."* Colin also had the distinction of being honoured with the 'Bloemfontein of the Year' award. Colin's influence extended beyond the Free State, at National level, where he was appointed to serve on the boards of the South African Broadcasting Corporation and Sentech. In the Free State he was tasked with leading the Highland Development Corporation as well as serving on the council of the University of the Free State. In celebration of his 56 years in the financial services and fiduciary industry he also received the Chairman's Award from the Fiduciary Institute of SA.

Our "Godfather" has over the years nurtured, encouraged, and inspired people to improve and enhance the school. He was at the helm of the Old Andrean Association for decades linking Old Boys world over with their alma-mater and encouraging countless generations of boys to invest themselves into the life of the school through their affiliation of the Old Boys Association. Colin lived and breathed St Andrew's, being a father, mentor and brother to many. Successive headmasters were enriched by Colin's support, encouragement, and wisdom. I can attest to the frequent visits and regular conversations about the school and what support he offered me. He was a man genuinely interested in all the workings at the school and took great pride in building the reputation of the school. He would always ask and enquire after staff and boys. He was intimately involved in the negotiations leading to

the historic sale of the school to the Free State Education Department in 1975, securing the future of Saints as a flag ship educational institution in the Free State and South Africa. Colin also spearheaded the drive to secure a lease agreement of Victoria Park, home to Little Saints and a sports facility we now enjoy. Colin has served as a Trustee, safeguarding the financial interests of the school, and also ensuring the success of Capital Development Projects such as the Chapel, The Lindsay Tuckett Indoor Centre, and the first-of-its-kind-in-the-world Cabbage Patch Astro.

Colin continued to support the school community despite his ailing health. There was never a time that Colin's love for his alma mater faded. He loved telling stories of the school and sharing his vast intuitional knowledge. When he arrived to campus he always interacted with teachers, parents and most especially the boys. Often, I would see him tear up with pride when he looked at a young man proudly dressed in blue. Colin had a great sense for humour and loved sharing in a joke. He had this wonderful way about him, where one was always made to feel respected and appreciated. Colin always encouraged visitors to share in his daily whiskey at 17h10. His choice whiskey was Vat 69 because it was also founded, like Saints, in 1863. Colin was remarkable person, not just in terms of how he fulfilled his responsibilities as a civic minded citizen and Old Andrean, but also how he related to the Family of St Andrew's School - the headmasters, the bishops and chaplains, the teachers and personnel, the parents, the Old Boys, and more particularly the boys. His passion for the school was equal to the pride he had in being an Old Andrean. He embodied what it meant to be a Saints Brother and Gentleman, and on being the recipient of the Fiat Lux Award in 1990 it was said that *"his worth to the school is immeasurable, his contribution indeterminable."*

A man with a wonderful charismatic personality. A man who had time for everyone. A man unrivalled in his love for and dedication to the school. Colin we salute you. May future generations continue to reflect on and appreciate your legacy and your love for our school. Rest easy brother. *"LEGENDS NEVER DIE! Their body may leave this earth... But the EXAMPLE lives on forever. The INSPIRATION lives on forever. The SPIRIT lives on forever. The LEGACY lives on forever."* – Fearless Motivation. Thank you, Colin! I am going to miss you. There will never be another like you.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God."

Issue 121

16 July

On our road trip to Still Bay, my daughter was playing the new Green Day album, trying to 'school' her Mother for what she could expect at the live concert in Johannesburg next year. We had to systematically work our way through the whole new album with my daughter offering factual input about every song. Little did my daughter know that her mother and me were rocking away to Green Day in the 90s already, and know quite a bit more about the band than my daughter could have ever imagined her parents to know. Good never gets old, and their new album certainly does not disappoint. We came across a track titled "Father to a Son" and it got me thinking...

Raising children is a richly rewarding experience. I struggle to think of my life before my children. I never thought that I could ever love someone more than my first born, until my second born arrived, and I realised that love knows no bounds. I love both equally and unconditionally. I say this to any of the first-time expectant parents - your life will never be the same again - but for the better. There is of course no manual or rule book when it comes to raising children. As parents we simply give and try our best, and somehow our kids make it out at the end, somewhat 'ok'.

As teachers and coaches in schools, we are in the privileged position that we get to 'raise'. Assist in raising someone else's child. We get to interact daily in different areas, be it

in the classroom or in extracurricular activities. In the case of boarders, we share homes and share siblings, because essentially, we become family. In all our interactions with the boys in our care, we must remember that we are raising someone else's future Father and Husband.

The kind of a Father and Husband you are wanting to raise, should be a paramount guiding principle when you engage and interact with any boy in your care. It is important that we as parents, teachers and coaches model behaviour of the type of husband and father that is loving, caring, understanding, empathetic and kind. The kind of husband and father you would want for your daughter or son. The same can be said for raising girls. What kind of mother and wife are you wanting to raise? What kind of example are you setting? I recall a story from Celia Lashlie who tells a story about a mother who was shocked when her son - sitting in the front seat with her driving - starting mouthing off at a vendor at a traffic light. When she admonished him, he protested by saying "that's what Dad says." We don't realise how our children are imitating what we do and say without us even realising it.

What boys are modelled they strive to become. A simplistic example is how boys imitate their heroes they see on TV by celebrating goals scored in a certain way and by wearing the same clothes and hairstyles, and by even talking like them. In the absence of role models or a sense of belonging at home (primarily) and thereafter at school or church, a substitute will be found - and this is often where the danger lies. It is my goal that every learner at school should be able to find themselves a role model, a mentor, and a confidant. At school we are there to supplement what happens at home, and in the event of a void at home, to fill that void.

Much of what we do at school is having values-based discussions with the boys in our care, and then backing this up by modelling this behaviour. It is the basis of the pastoral support system at Saints - where the overall wellbeing (emotional, psychological, spiritual, disciplinary wellbeing) of the child is paramount in all that we do. At Saints there will always be at least one adult who does not give up on a boy - this is a promise.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God."

Issue 122

23 July

Changing the world one pupil at a time and or changing the world for one pupil at a time...

When one enters my office, you will notice a portrait of me hanging on the wall. Upon closer inspection you will come to realize that this portrait is incomplete, and even the page itself has fold marks on it. I deliberately had this portrait framed and put up in my office as it tells a wonderful story and serves as a reminder to me that everyone has a story to tell.

I recall attending a board meeting, and as always sidled up next to Colin Hickling and shared in a joke or two ahead of the meeting. We often found ourselves chuckling together during these meetings like naughty schoolboys as well. Whilst serious business was always on the agenda, what I appreciated about Colin was that he could make even the most serious moments less intimidating, and often reminded us not to take ourselves too seriously. It was in one of these meetings that Colin handed me a newspaper article, and a handwritten note.

A young aspiring artist had entered a competition in Bloemfontein and had won the competition, donating his winnings to Engo Bloemfontein, a non-profit organisation that gives assistance and creates hope in the lives of people. This young man was interviewed and when asked about his future, he indicated that his dream was to attend St Andrew's School. The newspaper article came to the attention of Colin, who made a point to get the information to me. At the meeting we agreed that I would get the young man in for an

interview. We reached out to the school, and the principal of Wilgehof Primary immediately confirmed the talent of this special young man, whom she and his art teacher would bring to Saints for the interview. An hour later, the principal and art teacher were at my office with the young man, who delivered a pencil portrait of me. It turns out that upon the call, the principal and art teacher, tracked down a photo of me, and had the young man draw it. I recall in our meeting that he apologized for not completing the portrait in question.

In conversation with the aspiring artist, the principal, and his art teacher, they also advocated for his best friend at the same school, who also happened to be the head boy. The young man could not bear leaving his friend behind. Although it was not said, it was clear to me, that these two were inseparable. I suspect that the young man in question would not have accepted a space without his friend joining him, so I invited him to join in the conversation. I accepted both boys then and there and took them for a walk around the campus along with their supporting staff. The 'Fund Our Saints' campaign was launched, to provide for the need of these two young men. Members from all over the community (Old Boys and current parents) came on board and still contribute towards assisting these two young men.

The boys have excelled at St Andrew's both placing in the top 10 consistently – they have certainly made full use of the opportunity. I have no doubt that these two young men, will go onto to change the world. The world for both these pupils was changed when Colin passed on the note to me with the scribbled name Siyabonga Gaans on it. This note, forms part of the framed portrait of me, symbolically linking Colin (past), me (present) and Siyabonga (future) generations of St Andrew's together. It is fitting that Siyabonga went on to draw a portrait of Colin that the school presented to Colin at his birthday. Siyabonga's art works have gone on to make a difference in the lives of others, with his latest artwork fetching R40 000 at an auction in support of Engo.

This is a story of changing the world for one pupil, as well as the story of one pupil changing the world. So often these stories play out all around us, more so and often at school. We need to look for and celebrate these stories and we need to do more to create more stories like these. Siya Kolisi, our two-time world cup winning captain, and his 'Rugby' journey at school is another. It may be one moment, of being in the right place at the right time, that everything can change, and that the destiny of another is changed forever. Or at other times it may be as Josh Shipp put it that "Every child is one caring adult away from being a success story", simply meaning that there is one adult who refuses to give up on a child, and that their life is changed. This is particularly true when a child loses his way and is one adult away from becoming a statistic.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 123

30 July

What it means...

With the buzz around the need to start making subject choices leading into grade 10, there has been much conversation in our household. The excitement (and anxiety) around making the first decision impacting career opportunities, is something all grade 9's now face. The schools and universities are hosting respective information opportunities in a bid to market career paths and also provide input into what subject combinations are necessary to access a particular course at the Tertiary institution of one's choice.

Last week my daughter took a walk to the University of the Free State, along with the other grade 9's of her school and visited the Callie Human Hall where the respective faculties and departments had set up information stations. The top achievers flocked to the Medical Faculty whilst those with less than an average A aggregate flocked to the other faculty

stations. The day was by all accounts very successful, and my daughter returned home with a batch of pamphlets and a better idea of entrance requirements, subject combinations and options going forward. The all-important need to obtain not only a Bachelors Pass, but a good one, was emphasised by the respective faculty representatives. I always tell the boys, that a Bachelors Pass is a Passport to Opportunity. Not everyone wants to study after school, but it is nice to have the opportunity to choose to do so.

Having quizzed my daughter about the information session, I was disappointed when she mentioned that all the stations were busy, except for Education. I was told that no one even drifted in that direction, and that internal jokes about the profession were being made. A missed opportunity that got me thinking...

What picture are we painting? There was a time in South Africa, where being a teacher was a position of reverence. Not only were you known to the community, but you also carried the respect of the community. The teaching qualification itself, was regarded as a qualification of substance, and lawyers, engineers, doctors, architects, and accountants etc. all studied alongside teachers. For example, a teacher studying to be a maths teacher would sit in the same maths classes as the finance students whilst a student studying to be a biology (now life sciences) teacher, would sit in the zoology and botany classes. Teachers were trained to be skilled in multiple fields, as well as being subject specialists, and human relation experts. Much of this is still the case. Teachers are adaptable jacks of all trades and are often sought after for the variety of skills they offer.

The picture being painted of an undesirable career is causing young people not to enter education. Should we not rather be painting the picture that for the future of this country, we should be encouraging our top pupils to go into the greatest and the most rewarding profession of all. I don't doubt the fact that we all want our children to be taught by committed, hardworking and competent teachers. In fact, we expect this of all our children's teachers - and quite rightly so. The next generation of children also deserve teachers of this calibre. Nothing can beat the gratifying and fulfilling feeling of making a difference in a young person's life. The narrative around what it means to be a teacher needs to change.

What do the statistics say? We have a serious problem. The number of vacant teacher posts in SA's state schools soared 28% in the past three years, from more than 24 000 in 2021 to more than 31 000 in 2024. The trend is not only limited to South Africa. In many developed countries such as the US, UK, the Netherlands, Canada and Australia, the teaching profession is ageing because it no longer attracts young people. The trend is what has led to huge shortages of teachers prompting these countries to actively attract many young and qualified South African teachers. The South African Council of Educators (SACE) reports that the massive exits are of great concern. While these teachers emigrate, the ability to provide quality education to future generations is compromised, because a vacuum is left as teachers move to greener pastures. Instead of training more teachers and making this an exciting prospect of a wonderful and rewarding career to young people, the numbers of aspiring teachers are dwindling.

My own experience:

1. Travelled widely: The teaching profession has afforded me the privilege to see the world allowing me to travel to Australia, Turkey, Singapore and Italy on school tours. As teacher and coach, I have seen more of South Africa than most, visiting six of the nine provinces and exploring their major cities and surrounding towns using various forms of transport – airplanes, busses, trains, and motor vehicles. I have managed to make friends all around South Africa through interactions with schools that I have hosted or toured to.
2. Accommodation & Community: I have had the opportunity to live in hostels reaping the benefit of living as a close community and expanding on what one would call family, hosting boys and staff in my home for extended periods. As a family we have benefitted from access to campus life, facilities, fields and space to explore and spend

our time in a safe space. My family have grown and been enriched through our interactions with the school community – teachers, learners, parents and the extended community.

3. Networking: Contacts through networking have provided access to opportunities and professionals and expertise in a diverse range of fields from medical to legal to automotive to insurance to finance etc. A network of Old Boys dotted worldwide, has expanded the horizon of possibilities exponentially.
4. Salary & Financial Benefits: A stable source of income, in the form of a regular salary, has provided financial stability. State benefits in the form of medical aid and pension contributions have ensured access to world class medical facilities and pave the way for a retirement income. A regular salary has also provided access to loans to pay for vehicles and a house. My children have benefitted from accessing education in top flagship schools in South Africa and thereby changing their future trajectory. I have been sent on professional development opportunities, interacting with leaders both nationally and internationally. Support has been afforded to me to further my studies and constantly upskill myself.
5. Other Benefits: I have been privileged to learn from and engage with people I have come to classify as mentors. I have interacted with and watched young men grow up before me and grow to be my friends and colleagues. I have benefitted from being able to be part of the life of my children, be it at school during term times or during the holidays. Be it at Saturday markets, walking around in the mall, visiting a restaurant, going for a swim at the beach or heading out on a fishing trip, someone with a connection to a school inevitably comes up and greets me.

I could carry on listing opportunities, advantages and privilege. I wonder how many other individuals in their respective professions could claim the same. So why not teaching? In the next 10 years we will be faced with a crisis. I look around, and I wonder where the next generation of teachers and leaders will come from. A community who neglects its teachers is setting itself up for failure. The teaching profession is still a very worthwhile profession. The narrative around what it means to be a teacher needs to change. The world of a teacher is a world of opportunities. Keeping perspective as a teacher can prove to be challenging when faced with what is perhaps a cynical and bleak narrative about our profession. The role of a teacher changes like the seasons in a Cape Town day - teacher, psychologist, detective, mediator, doctor, coach, auditor, politician, parent, mentor are all in a day's work. Teachers are not nearly paid what they are worth, so whilst the bank balance at the end of the month may not be large, our hearts are full and the other 'unseen' benefits still tip the scale in favour of a very rewarding profession. To this day, I reflect fondly on the teachers and coaches who positively impacted my life as a child and into adulthood.

Our job as teachers is specialising in educating children. We don't only go about teaching the curriculum or turning out as many A's as possible. There is so much more to what we do as teachers. We also specialise in teaching the 'hidden curriculum', that is, we also teach 'life'.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 124

7 August

Recipe For Success

When I was younger, my Ouma would turn to her trusted 'favourites' when having to receive and entertain family and guests. Milk tart and scones became a staple diet when visiting my Ouma. My Ouma kept her collection of recipes a secret, save for those who were close to her, and by close, I meant family members in good standing... The collection of recipes was kept in a hardcover book, that contained recipes passed down by generations, to those she had appropriated without compensation from friends to clippings from magazines

and cookbooks. It really was a mish mash of oversized pages and handwritten notes, that had stretched the cover of the book beyond its intended size, and was a closely guarded possession of my Ouma. The only time the book would make an appearance, was when Ouma readied the kitchen for the cooking storm to follow – everyone knew to clear out then.

My Ouma was a stickler for what worked. She did not complicate matters and believed in sticking to a winning recipe. Any change would inevitably affect how fluffy the scones would turn out or whether the crust of the milk tart and the milky contents was just firm enough. She was unwilling to compromise and saw herself as the custodian of good food. She could not understand the logic of going out and buying a garage pie, when the sausage rolls, she prepared was in any case tastier and fresher. The cost factor involved in preparing home bakes was not necessarily a consideration, as guests interested in enjoying these foods would have to fund their own meals. She spared no cost in securing only the finest ingredients. Any deviation and substitution in name brand would be met with a scolding and an inevitable trip back to the shops to secure the 'correct' ingredients. Ouma believed in doing things the right way, that being her way, and in many ways, this meant she was always to put out snacks and food to her standard, without risk of failure.

Yes, I have learnt most of what I know about cooking from my Ouma, and whilst keeping the main thing the main thing, I have taken to being a little more adventurous when it comes to my food. I love experimenting with food. I saw see nothing wrong with keeping the 'basics' in place and 'spicing' things up a bit. I will add cheese to anything. In fact, I dare say that I improved on many of my Ouma's recipes by adding cheese and then claiming it as my own.

St Andrew's and schools like it, no doubt have a winning recipe. These institutions have been turning out generations of learners over a period of more than 160 years, as is the case with St Andrew's, and is in higher demand than ever. We must be doing something right. I believe it has to do with the fact that, firstly like my Ouma believed, we keep the main thing the main thing, and secondly, we constantly adapt, change and improve on what has gone before. In keeping the main thing the main thing, we focus on traditional values-based education, where manners, respect, pride, morals, hard work, honesty and integrity, responsibility and accountability and religion are the cornerstone of our educational offering. Then we also equip learners with 21st Century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication skills, perseverance and problem-solving skills etc. This ensures we turn out well-rounded young men who will go out to be good husbands and fathers and also contributors towards society. Past generations have all contributed to the secret recipe book and in so doing have made St Andrew's the school of choice in the Free State. The Old Boys, families past and present, the teachers and the boys all continuously add to and improve on a winning recipe.

So whilst it is important to provide opportunities for learners to excel and turn out their best possible results at the end of their Matric year, there is so much more to a St Andrew's Pass. Our aim is to turn out a quality human, with a high EQ, a religious and moral compass equipped with the necessary 21st century skills like critical thinking, collaboration, creativity, communication skills, perseverance and problem-solving skills etc. who will go out and add value and make a difference to the world. This is what the world so desperately needs right now. A generation of men, who know right from wrong, who are prepared to stand up and stand by their beliefs, and who chose to walk the right path.

There is something undeniable about when a Saints boy walks into a room. It has everything to do with the way he carries himself and the way he interacts with others. The same can be said for other schools of the same ilk. This is why, what the Traditional Boys' schools have to offer, remains very desirable for families raising boys.

Issue 125
13 August
The Question Why...

I have the privilege of watching my son walk the corridors of St Andrew's daily. I enjoy the fact, that I see him buzzing past my office, or I get to see him on the playground on a winter's morning speaking to friends in a group. He often pops by my office, wearing various Saints regalia, often red faced from exercising and covered in grass. More often than not, my office is a 'pitstop' as he navigates his way through the day. A quick five-minute chat, and off he goes to the next activity he has taken interest in. The reality is, Daniel is privileged to be part of this school. People often ask me why they should choose Saints.

My son is at Saints, and I want to be clear, it was his choice to attend Saints. When moving to Bloemfontein, Daniel was afforded the opportunity to make a choice. Had it not been for his Grandfather's teasing of which the better school was between Wynberg (his old school), and his Grandfathers favourite, (Grey College), he may have very well been at Grey and I would have been fine with it, because they are both good schools. I often say to folks, choosing a school is like choosing between a Mercedes, a BMW and a Volvo. They are all good, but each has its own advantages, and certainly, each appeal to a different market.

Firstly, when choosing a school, one needs to understand that no particular school is right for every boy. I encourage families to explore their options, to visit schools and experience the environment, and to speak to the community. This will quickly inform and give one a sense of the culture and the ethos of a school. Parents need to decide on a school where they feel comfortable interacting with other families – like standing next to the field and supporting the team. One can tell so much from how spectators behave next to the field, about the culture and ethos of the school.

A child must want to come to the school. This is always a primary consideration for me. When a family has taken the time to do their homework, and there is a want to attend the school, this is a recipe for success. This is because a decision is being taken for the right reason. This results in a happy child, a happy parent, and happy teachers, and this is then when magic happens. A child/family must not be 'coerced' into making a choice by the 'powers that be'.

At Saints, we don't do 'flashy' open days where we put the school on show. I always tell families that they must come and see what happens at the school daily. I claim that we are the best kept secret in the Free State. Families don't have to book an appointment with me, they are welcome to visit the campus, interact with our community, view our facilities, and get a genuine feel for who we are. A family will get the most authentic experience of what a school is about when they arrive unexpectedly, and no one knows who they are. At Saints, the boys will greet you, and will come up to you and ask if they can assist you.

Families seeking admission to the school, will know that at Saints, we don't 'bash' the opposition. We will never put pressure on a family and place a deadline on a decision to be made. This is not the way we operate. We want boys and families who choose to come to the school. Those who choose to come to the school will:

- Be happy.
- Be made to feel welcome.
- And will not be a number.

At Saints, the overall wellbeing of every learner is of paramount importance. In other words, our Christian ethos, and the pastoral care we offer our boys is our USP (Unique Selling Point). This is what makes Saints special. This is why Daniel is happy. This is why I am happy. In my journey at Saints, I have come to realise that there are many 'Daniel's' of varying shapes and sizes running around daily. At Saints we realise that we are working with someone's most precious possession.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 126
20 August
A School of Opportunities

Since arriving to St Andrew's three years ago, I have set about creating opportunities for staff to grow, to learn, to make mistakes, to take up opportunities. Early in my career I was taught that opportunity is never lost, it is simply taken by someone else. I have spent some time in reflection, around staff who have jumped when an opportunity has presented itself. Some were successful and others not, but what was important was the want and willingness for staff to put their name in a hat.

I was speaking to an ex-colleague at a Reunion Dinner, and he intimated to me how beneficial he found the experience of going through an interview at one of the top Boys schools in the country. He was not successful but found the process rewarding. He reflected on how what I had told him about my journey served as inspiration. Saints was not my first attempt at applying for headship, but it came at the right time, and at a time I needed it. There comes a time when one risks becoming stale and there is a need to re-invent oneself.

I tell the boys that Saints is a school of opportunities. There is just so much on offer, and so many doors are opened to them by their association with this institution of 160 plus years. The same is true for staff.

Over the past three years I have interacted with, and got to know several staff members well. I have always worked towards having more than just a employer/employee relationship because I maintain that Saints is a school built on relationships. Everything flows from having a relationship and a sense of mutual respect. This is what we tell the boys, and this is what I try to live out - albeit that it is not always easy for me separating work talk from braai talk.

There are too many examples to mention of staff, young and old, who have jumped at opportunities and have grown exponentially over a period of three years, and continue on an upward trajectory. Staff who probably never looked further, thought further, dreamed bigger and believed in themselves, now having stepped up into leadership positions. They have gone about jumping at professional development activities and opportunities, have visited schools and institutions across the country, have continued to seek advice and unskilled themselves, and in turn I have seen the benefits manifest, both in terms of the growth of the person and the school. From Qwa-Qwa to Bethlehem, from Cape Town to Nelspruit, from Eunice to Oranje, from Saints to Grey, staff from differing backgrounds and experiences all continue to add value to our beloved school. Unlocking the full potential of every individual is what will differentiate us from other good schools. I believe that the staff of our school, remains our most precious resource and key to unlocking the potential of the children in our care.

I see my role as one of creating opportunities and growing future leaders. I want staff to use the opportunities afforded and go on to promotion positions and running their own schools into the future. It also gives me a great sense of relief and I am very proud, when visiting teams, are not able to identify me as a head - and no it's not because I am barefooted at functions. There are so many leaders around me, that it is becoming increasingly difficult for visitors to recognize my position - and that I see as a massive positive. What staff don't know is that I spend much time watching and listening, I offer input when needed, and also prompt them to come with their own ideas to improve on what has gone before. I suppose my role is very much to make myself redundant.

How fortunate our boys are to be able to find fine examples of people who have grabbed opportunities, overcome difficulties, and are pursuing what makes them happy. I continue to learn from the staff, the boys, the parents, my circuit manager and the community. I mentioned to a member of the board, that I consider myself privileged to be working alongside a man of his calibre.

The moment we stop learning, we stop growing. Becoming stale is a disservice to ourselves and those we serve. I have recently started a process of restructuring at the school, where staff are being moved between the schools, grades and subjects to present an opportunity for growth and reinvigoration as a teacher but also as a well-rounded individual.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 127

27 August

The "curse" of an unbeaten season.

Much hype has aired in the media this past weekend about unbeaten sports seasons at schoolboy level. Probably one of the most widely talked about events was when the number one ranked team took on the number two ranked team at Rugby, to determine who would end top dog. In the Southern Suburbs of Cape Town, the boys' schools also got talking about who would earn bragging rights of an unbeaten home/away season.

It was not too long ago, that a parent sidled up to me alongside the touchline and had a conversation around how well one of our junior soccer teams had been doing. They had qualified for the league semi-finals with several fixtures in hand, topping the league standing comfortably, having beaten all and sundry from the start. These youngsters were well on their way to an unbeaten season. I was fretting where the conversation was going. A dangerous obsession to win has raised its head in our schools and is perhaps unashamedly starting to heavily influence the culture of our schools.

From an early age, youngsters are encouraged to participate in school sport because of the proven benefits, physically, mentally and socially. We encourage them to play for love of the game, to learn the wonderful lessons of teamwork, comradeship, sportsmanship, humility in victory and grace in defeat. The values tie in so well with the overall product we aim to turn out, a well-rounded human being. I am starting to fear that the want to win is dictating philosophy around how and why we play sport, and more specifically the outcomes we are wanting to achieve. Unchecked, this can quickly degenerate into a unhealthy environment counter to the philosophy traditionally associated with schools.

An unrealistic and unnecessary pressure is increasingly being placed on schoolboys and schools to perform in sports as a defining feature of success. School sport rankings (often inaccurate), and league standings proliferate media, and focus the spotlight on schools in terms of the pursuit to be number 1. Entire communities come to lose perspective. The school community is often at the mercy of destructive comments by the media, arm-chair coaches, tv referees, commentators, opposition supporters, Old Boys and even one's own parent body because of sport results. How have we got to this point? Does anyone really believe that a player walks out in front of friends and family with the aim of missing a penalty, or losing a game intentionally to ruin your weekend?

Yes, sport is played with the intention to win, but losing is also part of sport. One cannot escape this. With every consecutive win, you are one game closer to your next defeat. I also maintain that sport seasons are like waves. Sometimes you are on top and able to ride the crest of the wave, whilst at other times, you are at the bottom, and perhaps even get swamped by the crashing waves. Winning and losing serves their own purpose, and both have value – we must remember this. I would argue that a well-timed loss is just as special

as an unbeaten season. In my view, an unbeaten season should be seen as an absolute anomaly, and then celebrated for the fact that it is a remarkable achievement, but should not be the primary outcome sought. Losing on the other hand provides plenty of room for personal growth, reflection, and improvement. Winning and losing should never come to affect the rising and setting of the sun.

Folks, we risk seriously damaging the young men in our care when we lose perspective and adult egos, become bigger than the game and the people who play it. We need to refocus and ensure the educational values we hold dear, and the life lessons sport can impart, should remain our North Star (guiding light). I would hate for the prospect of friendly rivalry and competition, and lifelong friendships that we traditionally associate with schoolboy derbies, to erode into menacing, harrowing and unsavoury experiences. We are teetering on the point where uncontrolled behaviour on the part of all and sundry is becoming commonplace. Players need to be coached and mentally prepped not to respond to abuse being hurled their way, and any exchange of 'handbags' has the possibility of escalating into mass crowd brawls and tit-for-tat ensuing lawsuits. This is the stuff of nightmares for schools. Time for some serious introspection and reflection on the way forward.

Like other families, I prefer taking my family to games where they can enjoy special play by talented players, where sportsmanship, respect and honour are held in the highest regard, and they get to witness what it means to be a true fan. Someone who loves and appreciates the game and behaves in a manner becoming of a supporter. I don't want to continually have to point out to my children that shouting the odds at the referee and the opposition, or interfering with the game, is not the what is expected. A school sporting event should be a special occasion for young and old, where valuable life lessons are learnt and showcased like showing grit and determination, never giving up, respect for your opponent and officials, and winning with grace and losing with humility. These lessons will stand them in good stead into the future.

Everything we do at school is about Learning. Every word in the classroom, every camp, every excursion, every assembly, every bit of homework, every altercation in the sandpit in Grade R, every sport practice and match. When your son comes home after school, you must rather say 'what did you learn today?' as opposed to 'what did you do in class today'. The same must apply to sport. It is only natural to ask first 'Who won?' 'How many run / tries / goals did you score?' However, the main gist of a conversation after a match should be 'what did you learn from today's game?' Teaching our sons how to reflect in this manner will assist them the higher they go in education. They should reflect on the reason for their essay mark, reflect on the message in assembly, reflect on their performance on the sports field rather than results. Teaching our son the art of reflection is what bringing up a child really means.

Jemima Montag, Olympic Bronze Medallist, summed it up so beautifully. She said that "this journey is not without its challenges" and that her message is "that it does not matter whether you are doing sport for fun, with your girlfriends in the backyard, or whether you want to take it to the Olympic level. Sport is about community and a sense of belonging, making friends, looking after our physical and mental health and learning amazing life skills like dedication and leadership."

Winning and losing will always be part of the game. Both have its place and value. May our egos never come to dominate why we play sport in the first place. Long may we play sport for love of the game.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 128
3 September
How you use your influence.

Much has been said in the past about teams, and the importance of members of a team working together. I think it is widely accepted that superficially, when members are seen to work together, then the team can function. I would however argue that working together is only scratching the surface of what it really means to be part of a team. Every member of a team has a realm in influence. How one uses this influence is important.

In the search for what it means to be a successful team, I believe it is important to get individuals to reflect on their levels or circles of influence. Every action, every word can influence and affect others, for the good or the bad. If you read about, support and follow successful sporting teams, take for instance the Springboks, or the All Blacks, they speak of culture, values, and influence. Culture in these teams is driven by core values such as integrity, respect, humility, and excellence. This drives the way players are expected to behave, and in return promotes how the players influence one another and beyond the team.

In a team every member is equally important and of equal value. When one starts speaking of another as being less than because they carry the ball bag, or the water bottles, the narrative is one not conducive to building a team. Have you ever tried having a training session with no balls? The excellent teams realise that every member has their place, and their actions and words reflect this as well. Leaders in teams go about building a leadership base and work towards increasing levels of influence in the different layers and circles. The ball boy and the water boy for instance have a say. Based on experience, what works and what does not, is considered, and even something so 'menial' can influence and affect performance and a win.

At the Headmaster's Conference this past week, I listened to a former Proteas coach. In establishing team culture within the Proteas, they agreed to keep it simple. Team culture, values and influence revolved around the statement 'don't be that guy. In all that you do, and say, just be a 'lekker' person. Don't undermine teammates, don't work against management, and don't use your influence to negatively affect the team. Keep the bigger picture in mind. Of course, more is expected of the leadership team and senior players to set the standard and example to follow.

I have in the past spoken about the way I see my role at school. In terms of staff, it is simple, I am here to grow the leadership base, and provide opportunities for staff to take up leadership positions. In this way staff are given the opportunity to grow, to be creative, to make mistakes and to add their voice, their unique flavour and their influence on the growth and evolution of the team (and the direction of the school). I have maintained that the headmaster is no more important than the post level one teacher, the cleaner, the groundsman the sports coach, or the security guard. In terms of the boys, it is even more simple. They are our priority. They are the reason we are here. They influence everything that we do. This is the reason we got into teaching in the first place.

I will continue to use my influence, to create a space and place that is 'lekker' for people to be at. It is my hope that whatever you do, and in whatever space you find yourself, that you do the same. Sometimes it is as simple as just not being 'that guy'.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and walk Humbly with God".

Issue 129
10 September
Tales from behind the desk.

It's not all business when it comes to my office. I try to also not lose perspective when it comes to the plethora of matters that I have to deal with daily. Keeping the main thing, the main thing, that being the boys, and the reason I am here, helps me keep perspective. I thought it an opportune time to reflect on some of those interesting stories that I happen upon in my position.

Sitting at my desk this week unapologetically, pounding away at my keyboard, a young man wondered into my office. Mrs Meyer, my PA, often comments that my computer is sorry for what it has done. Peering up from over my screen Andrew proceeded to ask me how my day was. We got into a bit of back and forth, like the boys do when they want to waste a bit of time getting a breather from the academic lesson, when Andrew took the conversation in another direction. He commented, saying that he liked my haircut. He proceeded to ask me where I had my hair cut, to which I proudly replied, that I had done it myself. Andrew went on that I should perhaps try his mother who is a hairdresser and proceeded to give me her number. A wise businessman, subtly hinting at the fact that he disapproved of my haircut, or both... I will let you decide.

I arrived at my office early morning and was met by a host of youngsters who had gathered in the front office for their morning chat. I decided that this was an opportune time that morning to drop my daughter off at school using my motorbike that I seldom ride these days. On entering my office, I was followed by a line of boys, where a young man named KC, stood and looked enquiringly at me, like he normally does. I knew he was burning to ask a question. True to form KC took the opportunity and asked me why I had a racing car helmet. I said to him that I thought it good to take my racing car for a drive in preparation for the next Grand Prix. KC excitedly left my office in a rush proclaiming to all and sundry down the corridors that Mr Rudd is in fact a race car driver. KC, I can't disagree with you. My office sometimes feel like a racecourse.

I think the young boys may have caught on to my dentistry skills. Not a week goes by, without a learner arriving to my office to wiggle a tooth and enquire as to when I think the tooth will be ready for extraction (for the brave ones), or when the tooth is going to fall out (for the not so brave). It is pretty difficult to explain to a youngster excited, that of the various options presented, none were in fact even close to needing extraction or falling out. My advice varies from eating an apple to chewing on a toffee, pending the condition of the lunch box packed and prepared or what is at disposal in my office. I can tell you that the tooth mouse is externally grateful for an endless supply of teeth, but he is starting to feel the pinch financially. The language teachers are even less impressed with the sudden spike in 'lips' from missing 'toofs'.

If you think it is only the kids, I can categorically tell you that is not the case. At the end of every term, we award what we call the Sorry Award, to a staff member for messing up. No one is spared, and I am the current holder of the Sorry Award, but that is a story for another day. Some of my favourite stories include when a teacher absolutely lost it with a class for leaving a piece of dog faeces in the aisle between desks that she came to notice, mid lesson. After lambasting the boys and me, it turns out that one of the boys strategically placed a piece of boerewors. Or the time a carefully planned 350km odd marketing trip to a town, turned out to be the wrong school in the wrong town. On another occasion found me having to calm a staff member down when work was being done to the Memorial Wall. The staff member held it was inappropriate to move the remains of people, and how would we in any case know which plaque belonged to which person. I went on to explain, that the wall, was not in fact a receptacle for remains, but rather that plaques were placed on the wall in memoriam and that we were simply updating and making space for additional names. On another occasion, at our auspicious Sports Award Dinner, Mr van Kasterop was recognized

for his stellar service to sport, with a staff member proudly unveiling a Plaque (instead of plaque) in his honour.

I maintain to parents the golden rule that, if they don't believe everything their boys tell them, I won't believe everything the boys tell me. Generally, I am armed with a couple of stories I can tell parents when they walk into my office. The stories that have come across my desk because of misunderstandings are on many occasions quite amusing. When I started, a parent arrived to my office, to voice their concern about someone handing sweets to their son at school. Their child had told them, that he gets sweets from a man at school. Whilst telling me the story, his son entered my office, to collect a sweet from the famous or infamous sweet jar, needless to say, conversation over. The value of the sweet jar depends on perspective, the boys love it, the teachers hate it.

I love what I do. I love interacting with the boys and the school community. Sometimes I get bogged down in the office, with 'office' stuff, but I am so blessed that I can draw of on all that good that happens daily. What a privilege to be able to laugh and share the space with an amazing bunch of people, young and old. In my very first meeting with my new headmaster, he taught me the importance of being able to laugh with the boys and to be able to laugh at myself.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires, "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 130 **18 September** **Why the 'Barefoot' Headmaster?**

A while back, my mother sent on a message to me about one of her past pupils (from her teaching days), who had reached out enquiring as to why people choose to call me or I call myself the "Barefoot" Headmaster. I had a chuckle to myself and thought it was probably worth explaining it as part of my reflections.

Those who know me, know that I love walking around barefoot. I would walk barefoot every day of the week if I could. In fact, at the end of holidays, my feet are so cracked and worn, because the confined and cushy environment of my shoes termly, soften my heels and feet, so that when I do go without them, my feet take a serious pounding. I wear shoes out of respect for the position of office, something that is a delicate balance in itself.

I love being outdoors. I would spend all my time outdoors and out of the office if possible. At school, I love being out in the corridors and on the fields interacting with the boys and the rest of the Saints community. A good game of corridor cricket, fives soccer, touch rugby or red rover is something I get drawn into quickly. After an over or two or a goal or three, where the team I join has inevitably won, I withdraw whilst on top... It is fun getting to know the boys out of the classroom setting or the office environment. I have of course had more hamstring injuries due to these spontaneous sporting escapades than during my amateur days playing school sport. It would seem my body cannot keep up with my mind anymore. The positive spinoff is that my broken ankles are more accurate and reliable than the evening weather. I can with a high level of certainty predict an approaching cold front or inclement weather.

Outside school, I am going on walks, or fishing or trying to find some adventure or other. I am usually in shorts and t-shirt and barefooted of course. My wife has given up on trying to get me to wear jeans, or collared shirts. My kids know me this way, and they often comment on what or where I am going when I have to dress up. Yes, I prefer it this way. I go hiking barefoot, be it Table Mountain, the beaches, or the veld in the Free State. I enjoy the feeling of the earth below my feet. The feeling of warm sand, or dew-covered grass, frost covered

fields or the coarse grain of sandstone make me feel connected and free. When heading out to sea, the others go out in their oil skins and gum boots, I don't. It has resulted in me getting stabbed by various kinds of spiny poisonous sharks and other creatures. It sure makes for interesting comments and jokes being hurled my way by the crew. In my opinion a good braai can simply not be done wearing shoes... A stray ember/coal under foot is par for the course.

Over and above all of that, being barefoot, represents the fact that I see myself as a 'gewone' mens. I really don't have airs or qualms about me. What you see is what you get. I am the same at home as I am on the mountain, the beach, the ocean, or the office. My family, loved ones, my animals and friends are important to me. I am just as loyal to people as my dogs are to me. I don't enjoy politics, and I don't enjoy conflict, although my position sometimes requires this of me.

I am sure that one day, they will talk of me as the old man without shoes... I can assure you, that I would have it no other way. I prefer going my own way and walking my own path, barefooted of course.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 131 **8 October** **The million-rand decision...**

I have had the privilege to spend a lot of time interacting with various boys' schools, both public and private, from across the country. Be it because of interschool activities, tours or conferences, I can say with confidence, that I have a fairly good understanding of the look and feel of the educational landscape of the boys' schools across the country. Let me start by saying that each of these are good schools, in fact, they are world class and do an excellent job as leaders in educational excellence. Each of these are steeped in a rich history, with some of these being around for even longer than St Andrew's. They have positively impacted the trajectory of South Africa, in one way or the other, be it through academic excellence, sporting achievements or their ability to turn out leaders. There is something special about the boys' schools in South Africa, which continues to make them a desirable option for families.

So, you might ask, like I often am, which of these is the best, or why St Andrew's, and not one of the other schools. The honest answer is that one is not able to identify the best. Each of these schools have their own 'flavour'. Each of them does things well, albeit differently. Each have their strengths and weaknesses. I say to parents, choosing between St Andrew's and another school, it is like choosing between a BMW and a Mercedes. Both are good, both come with an outstanding reputation, but they are different in their own way. That is why you get a BMW client and a Mercedes client. The brand offers something the client wants, be it prestige, reliability, comfort, or value for money. To the uninformed, the name speaks for itself. On climbing into the vehicle and taking it for a drive, is where the subtle differences begin to manifest and you get a feel for the drive. It is in these subtle differences and the drive, that choices are made. You must understand that by choices, I mean the choices in excess of a million-rand. Subtle differences do matter. I often quote Mr van Wyk, who says "take care of the small things so the big things take care of themselves".

It is easy to find the 'best' school - it is the best school for YOUR son. There is no one best school. All teachers are different. All schools are different. Some families will choose a school because it is the best at rugby. There is nothing wrong with that decision, it is the best school for that family, because of personal choice. This is no different to a family choosing a school because of water polo, cricket, music or academics.

Choosing between a BMW and a Mercedes is a big deal. Few of us can afford a vehicle like this - I would be happy with either. Just like your choice of vehicle, your choice of boys' school is also a decision in excess of a million rand. Allow me to qualify this for you. Tuition alone in these schools averages out at around R600 000 over 15 years of schooling i.e. 000 - 12. Add to this extramural activities, uniform, stationary, tuck shop money, daily food, travel costs, tour fees and one quickly surpass the million-rand threshold. If you include boarding, then can double this figure. Boys who leave schools of this calibre leave millionaires... I bet you did not realise South Africa turns out so many millionaires yearly... A million-rand investment into your son's future. What a sobering thought.

So, it is then only right to ask of our boys:

1. Have you thanked those who have invested in you?
2. Can you walk out of your school saying that you made full use of opportunities on offer.
3. Was the million-rand investment a wise decision?

I maintain that an education and matric pass at one of these schools is a passport to privilege. A world of opportunity awaits these matriculants. They been afforded a head start in life the equivalent of a BMW M class or Mercedes AMG taking on an ordinary sedan. The question of course is what the boys choose to do with the vehicle at their disposal.

Getting back to answering the question of parents as to why St Andrew's, you may be surprised at my answer. It is not because we are the best at academics, or sport, or culture. It is not because we have the best facilities, or small classes. I maintain the following five reasons for choosing St Andrew's:

1. We pride ourselves in turning out well-rounded human beings. Men who will go on to be good fathers and good husbands.
2. We have a happy school, a school focused on relationships, a school where we look out for one another and a school where the boys are not just a number. A school where we don't tolerate bullying or intimidation in any form.
3. We are an unashamedly Christian school with the Chapel at the heart of the school. We focus on Christian values and morals as the foundation of the education boys will receive at St Andrew's
4. We are a South African school, a school home to different races and cultures, a school that brings together and celebrates the strengths of our diversity.
5. St Andrew's is the kind of school with the kind of education that I want for my own child.

One could argue that the difference between a good car and super car is in the detail, perhaps even the engine and the drive. I would suggest that whilst this plays a role, there is more to it. It is also the people involved. The engineers, the designers, the salesperson and the entire team standing behind the brand because they sell the car as well. The same can be said for a school. And Saints is a special school.

It is when you come to interact with members of the St Andrew's community, that you come to notice the subtle differences in detail. And it is in these details that makes the difference between a good school and a special school. We have a winning brand at Saints, a brand that we can all be proud to be associated with. The brand however is only as strong as the entire team behind the brand. Whilst there are many good reasons to choose St Andrew's, the overriding deciding factor for families choosing St Andrew's boils down to the people. Mr Gordon, past headmaster of St Andrew's, was right when he said, 'people matter here'. I would add, at Saints, people matter most.

As always it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 132
15 October
Lessons from Baggio's Boot.

In 1994 I was but 11 years old. 1994 is a date synonymous with the first democratic elections for our country. To be honest I was unaware of the happenings leading up to the 1994 elections. Even trying to think back, I can't ever remember a sense of panic or fear for what was to come. Well certainly that was the case in our household. 1994 does however represent an iconic and important memory for me.

The soccer world cup was hosted in the USA, taking place at nine venues across the country. I recall the excitement in my home, and this was really the first televised sporting event I can remember following. Having been briefed by my father, as to his favourites and past champions, it was easy to default to supporting a particular team. Netherlands, Spain, Argentina, Italy and of course the favourites, three-time champions Brazil. The Brazilian team was laden with stars the likes of Dunga, Romario, Bebeto and Ronaldo. There were of course other superstars the likes of Jurgen Klinsmann (German striker, and later coach of Germany), Dennis Bergkamp (famous Arsenal striker), Roy Keane (a fierce Manchester United player and captain) and legendary Italian defender Paolo Maldini. One of the more famous players at the tournament was Diego Maradona who made famous the 'Hand of God Goal.' On the scene burst Jorge Campos, of Mexico. He was eccentric, wearing multicoloured keeper uniforms designed by himself, and would constantly play outside the penalty area, often playing as a sweeper-keeper. His play could be described as flamboyant, risky and acrobatic. At the same world cup, was another keeper Rene Higuita, who earned the nickname El Loco (The "Madman"), for his high risk-acrobatics. In a game against England at Wembley Stadium in 1995 this busy haired "Madman" famously scorpion kicked the ball of his penalty line.

As the world cup progressed to the quarter finals, Italy took on Spain, Netherlands took on Brazil, Bulgaria took on Germany and Romania took on Sweden. Some of the bigger names began to exit the competition by the semi-final stage when Bulgaria took on Italy and Sweden took on Brazil. The final would be contested between world ranked number 1 Brazil and 13th ranked Italy. It could be argued that despite Italy's ranking, these two soccer crazy nations, one known for a flamboyant style of play, and the other for technical excellence, would set up a wonderful exhibition. That match proved to be a true showcase of opposing styles with neither side being able to break the deadlock at the end of fulltime. A penalty shootout would for the first time determine who would lift the world cup by the end of the day. For those of you that have ever been involved in a penalty shootout, it is an absolutely nerve wrecking event. Sitting from the comfort of one's home, you only get an inkling of what the players themselves feel. The Italian captain Baresi stepped up to take the first penalty and put the penalty over the bar. Brazilian center-back Márcio Santos went next, but the Italian keeper saved his effort low to his right. The following four penalties were each converted. Centre-forward Massaro from Italy stepped up to take his penalty and missed whilst Dunga from Brazil scored. With Italy needing to score to keep its dreams alive, talisman Roberto Baggio stepped up to take the penalty. In what would become an infamous moment in World Cup History, Baggio blazed his penalty over the bar, in similar fashion to Baresi, and this gave Brazil its fourth title.

At the age of 27 years, "The Divine Ponytail", missed a penalty like three other players that day, the difference being that his penalty was the decider. Despite being awarded the FIFA Silver Ball for being the second-best player at the world cup, this penalty miss was in all likelihood a career ender and the kind event that would haunt any other player for his entire life. You must understand that football is as important as breathing in Italy. Baggio went from hopeful hero to villain in a matter of seconds. In many ways Baggio was harassed and basically ex-communicated from being Italian. He could find no refuge from his fellow countrymen and the world media who seemed pre-occupied by Italy losing the **first penalty shootout in a world cup final**. The Italian talisman was plagued by injury in the following

years, with many fans doubted Baggio and attributed any sign of faltering to his psychosomatic state, a condition caused or aggravated by a mental factor such as stress or internal conflict.

Fast forward to the 1998 world cup. Baggio after a prolonged absence from the Italian team was included in the squad, by coach Cesare Maldini. Baggio would by all accounts, warm the bench, playing behind Allesandro Del Piero. As fate had it, Del Piero was injured, and Baggio was given the start for Italy's opening match vs Chile at France 98. He played the entire 90 minutes. Towards the end of the match Chile were leading 2-1, when Baggio delivered a low cross and hit the hand of the Chilean defender, resulting in a penalty. Despite missing the decisive penalty in the 1994 World Cup final shootout, Baggio stepped up to take the penalty (show 1998 Penalty), and he scored Italy's equalising goal, becoming the first Italian player to score in three World Cups. This was the first penalty he had taken for Italy since the 1994 World Cup final miss; Baggio described the goal as "liberating". Later in the competition, Italy was eventually eliminated by France, the host nation, following a penalty shootout, in which Baggio scored and two of his fellow countrymen missed. This meant that Italy was eliminated from a World Cup on penalties for the third consecutive time.

Baggio played for [Italy](#) in 56 matches, scoring 27 goals, and is the joint [fourth-highest goal scorer](#) for his national team. Baggio is the only Italian to score in three [World Cups](#), and with nine goals holds the record for [most goals scored in World Cup tournaments for Italy](#). Baggio is not only known for his football career but also as an activist. In 2002, Baggio was nominated [Goodwill Ambassador](#) of the [Food and Agriculture Organization](#) of the United Nations. In 2003, he was the inaugural winner of the [Golden Foot](#) award. In recognition of his human rights activism, he received the [Man of Peace](#) award from the [Nobel Peace Prize](#) Laureates in 2010. In 2011, he was the first footballer to be inducted into the [Italian Football Hall of Fame](#).

What are some of the lessons we can learn from the boot of Baggio:

1. Despite what could have been a career-ending penalty, Baggio took the decision to **rise above the self-pity and disappointment** and continue to follow his passion.
2. Despite the overwhelming 'noise' from the neigh sayers, and people who had written him off, Baggio took the decision not to listen to the 'noise' and refocus his attention and surround himself with supportive people, whose voices came to mean more. **Be selective about who you are listening to.**
3. Disappointment is not permanent. Be brave enough to try again. Despite missing a penalty at a world cup, given a first chance to make it right, he stepped up and took the opportunity to do so. A lesser man would have shied away. **One cannot allow disappointments to define you.** Highest trees catch the most wind.
4. Whilst sport is important, sport is not the be all and end all. Despite losing the most coveted sporting trophy, the sun came up the next day for player and fan alike, and the world continued spinning about its axis with the next world cup scheduled for 2026. **Life carries on.**

The next time you think that your performance defines you, or that a mistake is the end of the road, or your friends are few and far between, I trust that you will remember the lessons learnt from the boot of Il Divin Codino. You are just human, and at best you are an amateur sportsman, of whom we are very proud. Go easy on yourself, keep perspective, follow your passion and most importantly have fun. Losing the world cup in a penalty shootout has thankfully already been done.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 133
22 October
Who's your pit crew?

Over the last couple weeks, we have been celebrating the achievements of our boys at the respective Prize Givings. These ranged from the celebrating the little guys in grade 1, having navigated their first year of "big" school, to bidding farewell to the Matrics at Valedictory who have now come to the last leg of their school journey. Having surveyed the scene and listening to the achievements of our young men, I was struck by the awesome potential of the 750 odd young men who could all go on to change the world for the better – this being one of our objectives at the school.

Much of the focus at a prize giving is about individual achievement, and rightfully so. The name of learner is read out and he comes up to receive his certificate / trophy / award. I wondered to myself how many people were actually represented by this individual on stage... What we often tend to forget is that this individual accolade is actually the culmination of a collective effort of many vested individuals. In fact, I emphasize to boys that they need to realise that Mom, Dad, Teacher and Coach should be standing there with them. The truth is the list is a lot longer than this...

In past newsletters and in prize giving speeches I had likened an education at Saints to being like that of a world class motor vehicle, especially referencing Mercedes Benz and BMW. Learners at the school have the very best money can buy at their disposal, so much so, that the competition in life is overwhelmingly skewed in their favour. As driver of the vehicle, responsibility falls to them to maximise what they can get out of the car. Driving the vehicle requires skill, dedication and commitment no doubt, but driver and car alone, can only go so far.

Behind every driver is an entire crew of people, who assist in best positioning the driver to finish the race. When the driver wins the race, he gets to stand on the podium and is celebrated, but in reality, the win is a collective one. Did you know that in F1, the pit crew comprises 20 people. They are responsible for stabilising the car, changing the tyres, making adjustments to the aerodynamics, and safely releasing the car. Sounds to me exactly like what parents and teachers do daily...

At home, the pit crew keep the driver fed, clothed and get him to the race, whilst the pit crew at school impart knowledge and skill and tweak the vehicle to maximise performance. Collectively the people standing behind our young driver, provide the best opportunity possible for them to excel. The pit crew goes far beyond parents and teachers and includes the security staff who keep our boys safe, the grounds staff who keep our grounds in top shape and the kitchen staff who provide homely meals for our hostel boys. Our boys would not be able to achieve without these critical members either. In many ways they are frontline workers acting very much like the front wing of the F1 car - the first part of the car to come into contact with the oncoming airflow when the car hits the track and the wing is fundamental for the car's aerodynamic performance.

According to experts, a "long-held belief" that the car and the team contribute to 80% of race success with the skill of the driver makes up the other 20% has now been debunked. Evidence now points to the biggest factor being the nuanced interaction between driver and team accounting for 30-40%. When team, car and driver are in sync, that is when the magic happens, that is when races and championships are won. So, whilst we celebrate individual performance and achievement at our prize giving, we do so knowing that there is a team behind the accolade. Celebrating our boys is celebrating the success of the team.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God"

There are many children who are only one adult and one decision away from being a statistic.

I suppose it is easy to be lulled into a false sense of belief that all boys come from an equal footing when attending a school like St Andrew's. The reality of course is so much more sobering. The idea of 'privilege' is relative and circumstantial. I was reminded again of this over the course of the week.

Several years ago, I came across a talented hockey player, who had made name for himself. He came from a school less equipped, and by all accounts operating several tiers below the school that I was teaching at. Schools in South Africa operate on quintiles, and assistance from the state is afforded according to the quintile of the school. This system is disproportionate, as no fee-paying schools receive the 'greatest' assistance, but that is in reality hardly enough to adequately meet the needs of the school community. At St Andrews for instance more than 50% of the staff are SGB employees – funded by the parents, and the departmental allocation of grounds and buildings is exhausted in the first week of the school year, which once again means facilities and grounds are maintained and developed by the funds raised through parents.

The prospect of attending a prestigious school was a no-brainer. Schools like ours often open doors to further opportunities. The young man arrived at the school, in what he would later explain to be a world totally removed from his own. Boys working on laptops, spending hundreds of rands ordering in Uber Eats and being dropped off by parents driving luxury vehicles was not what he was accustomed to. Having worked with long-established organisations who specialise in providing opportunities for children from similar backgrounds, I went about tailoring a package like what was offered to others, to give him the best chance of 'fitting' into this new environment.

After what I knew to be an initial teething phase, for the first week, then quarter and then year, it somewhat became easy to forget that these 12 months were supposedly enough to integrate this young man in terms of him functioning 'normally'. It was later in conversation as colleagues that I was reminded that this 'teething' process in fact did not end for him throughout his school career. For any of us who have made a big change, you will know how unsettling this can be. I just think back to our move to Bloemfontein. It was by all accounts a massive upheaval and brought along various stresses that in many ways we are still dealing with. To this day I still ask myself whether I fit the community.

The story of this young man turned tragic. He was plagued by making decisions that I struggled to comprehend. He came across as defiant, ungrateful, and oblivious to what was at stake. By all accounts he had been touted to play for the Protea Hockey team, as one of the most talented hockey players around, and this in turn would surely pave the way into university and unlock a world of other opportunities. Fast forward through another year of frustration and struggles, and this young man took the decision to drop out of school. This despite the pleas of his mother and me not to do so. At this point, this 15 going on 16-year-old, was taking decisions, that in essence we knew meant giving up opportunity and inevitably being caught up in the spiral so many of our youth get caught up in and end up a statistic.

Fast forward a several years, and out of the blue a WhatsApp message, "Hi Sir. This is XXX. You were right". Things had not worked out very well for him. Unemployed, hockey career in a mess, father to a child he had not seen and divorced, added to that COVID that had been wreaking havoc with families, the economy and our way of life. He was in a bad way, sitting at home with little to no prospect for the future. Having expressed the desire to turn things around and making the necessary commitment, an opportunity was created for employment for him. This included the expectation to having to attend Night School to

finish his school qualification. Working and studying is not the easiest thing to do, as those of us who have had to do so will know. This reality check is just what he needed.

Despite all the wrong choices and mistakes made, he's now a colleague and friend of mine, managed to turn things around. There are many examples like him. Some obvious to identify, whilst others not so much. This is why it is so important that we walk with our eyes wide open be it at school or in our community. We cannot afford to allow even one to slip through the cracks. The bottom line is, as a boy / young man he was eventually one adult away from becoming a statistic. This is why I believe in never writing off a boy. I believe in walking with a boy beyond what one thinks is possible, with the hope that the penny drops, and that they can make the decision to turn things around. Every child should be given the opportunity to say that he was one adult / one decision away from not being able to turn things around. That is what I would call privilege. That is what I would call a privileged education.

Too often it is too easy to make a judgement call and write someone off. Calling the police and expelling someone or just writing them off is the easy way out. It is however not easy to do when you have not walked a mile in their shoes. Very often, you are the last person standing between someone becoming a statistic. Now that is food for thought.

It is my hope as always that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 135
5 November 2024

"Cricket is not just a sport; it's a reflection of life's challenges and triumphs." — Imran Khan

Last Sunday afternoon we were treated to a cricket showcase between the best in the Free State; Saints taking on Grey in the T-20 Final. The grounds at Vossies were packed with spectators strewn out on camping chairs and picnic blankets. The fires were lit, and people congregated around the braais as the smell of boerewors and chops filled the air. Children were playing a variety of games from touch rugby to soccer to cricket. The atmosphere reminded me of my childhood days at Goodyear park watching Benson & Hedges day night cricket.

Early on Sunday morning I got into a conversation with Mr Hobson about the prospects of the afternoon's big game. I was intrigued by the attention to detail around the odds of the result pending who batted first, the condition of the wicket, the weather and a variety of other considerations. As reigning T-20 Free State Champions, the pressure would be on Saints to retain the title, but admittedly Grey had beaten our team earlier this year and proved themselves to be a formidable force in the T-20 format.

I marched my way up to Vossies, picnic basket in hand, and deliberated with Daniel around the odds based on the expert opinion of Mr Hobson. Grey was batting first... I considered myself enlightened after the morning chat, and better positioned to understand the intricacies and nuances of this gentlemen's game. As each team got going, and the score board started ticking away, the tension around the buildup to every ball, run and wicket was palpable.

Spectators started getting nervy when Saints got to the 100 mark, chasing down a target of 144. That is when my nerves prompted me to take a walk around the ground. What became abundantly clear was that there was a stoic determination emanating from the Saints bench. Coaches and players were laser focused on the task at hand. As the deficit slowly begun to shrink, the atmosphere changed to one of anticipation. The Grey team show pertinacious determination, and to their credit made Saints fight for every run, setting up a real nail-biter.

The winning runs hit by Johan Liebenberg sent the spectators bounding onto the field to congratulate the team. As I stood alongside the field, match ball in hand, I watched the scenes unfold. In many ways, this was so much more than a victory. It was a culmination of the collective effort, blood sweat and tears over the course of the year, that all came together on the day, in probably one of the team's finest performances. The narrowest of margins that had cost the team previously, had turned in their favour. The resilience and dogged determination of this team is to be applauded.

The photos captured by various members of the community summed up so much of what Saints is about. Seeing coach and player embrace each other, where once this young man was defiant, rebellious, and stubborn, to one of a mutually respectful and appreciative relationship is testimony to the emphasis we place on building relationships and investing in our boys. Sitting at the coaches' function, I noted to the coaches, that what was seemingly impossible, was made possible, and that in many ways, the collective effort of the community probably saved this boy's life.

Seeing Johan Liebenberg arms outstretched, with his younger brother running up to celebrate with him, personifies the brotherhood this school stands for. Three generations of Liebenberg boys present and in support at the field. This along with the newly inducted Old Boys, all adorned in black, flooding the field to celebrate with their brothers in blue, symbolic of the link between generations at Saints, strong as ever. The interest from past and present families, with parents and children from all sections of the school, and visitors from the community, all bear testimony to the profound impact Saints continues to have on both the immediate community and those beyond our gates. People want to and pride themselves in their association and affiliation with the school.

Nelson Mandela was right when he said "Sport has the power to change the world. It has the power to unite in a way that little else does. It speaks to youth in a language they understand. Sport can create hope where once there was only despair".

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; *"Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God"*.

Issue 136
12 November 2024
Howzat! Not Out...

Whilst sitting in my office working away, a young man arrived at my office asking if he could bowl to me. It did not take much convincing to get me out of my office. As I made my way to the brick pitch, I could feel things heating up as more and more members came rushing to the scene. The fact that I was all dressed in black added fuel to the flames. This is possibly what it feels like walking out at Lords. Several players of varying sizes had joined in keen to 'school' their headmaster in the art of cricket.

It is important for me to have the boys know they can come to me for anything. Be it assistance because of a would-be bully, problems at home or for having forgotten lunch. Sometimes a chat is all that is needed, and at other times it is required of me to pad up and join in the playground games. The easiest and best part of the job is interacting with the boys. The most rewarding part of the job is being able to assist a boy in need.

Just the other day I was sitting with a prominent banker in my office. We were on a virtual call with his boss. The boys were popping in and out of my office, and the virtual boss, was even greeted as the young men peered over my shoulder. The bankers surprisingly noted my open-door policy. I explained to them that it is really no different to what they do in their line of work. The boys are my private clients, and get special treatment, just like their private clients...

Getting back to the pavement cricket game and lessons that can be taken from it:

1. Boys need to belong. They must feel part of something bigger than themselves. That afternoon, the informal cricket game served that purpose. It created the opportunity for a lonely boy to feel a sense of purpose and belonging. In fact, he took great pride in having set up this match. At Saints we focus on creating a sense of belonging through our emphasis on the House Structure, and through our expectation that boys participate in school life. No boy likes sitting alone, and that is why it is a rule at Saints, that no boy may sit alone.
2. Having dispatched several junior players for fours and sixes, the boys realised there was a need for a different approach. At the end of every over, the random approach of anyone wanting to bowl, was replaced by elected bowlers the team thought best positioned to take out their would-be adversary. I could not help but chuckle to myself as I watched the fielders shuffling about trying to limit skin contact with the baking bricks... On top of that, whenever I sent a ball rushing through the outfield, these barefooted fielders would have to navigate a variety of obstacles, none more challenging than the Syringa berry laden outfield. A hundred-meter sprint quickly turned into a tiptoe ballet, with varying levels of sounds of OOOH, OUCH, OH emanating from the pursuit of the ball. This of course just got me more focused and determined to send many more balls that way. Their focus on the cause just reminded me again of boys having a steely/dogged determination about them. They are resilient, and when they apply themselves, they can achieve to great heights. You set the challenge, and boys will rise to the occasion.
3. Playing with these young aspiring Proteas, and listening to comments made at teammates in gest, and watching the reaction of the recipient, reminded me of just how sensitive boys really are. The stereotypical perception is that boys are tough, but in reality, they hide emotions really well by putting up macho bravado. They are in fact sensitive, caring, and kind – the qualities we aspire for in good husbands and fathers. Just watch a boy and how he interacts with his beloved pet. I often think to myself, that paints the truest picture of who a boy is. What one may think is innocent 'sledging' as evidenced in this informal game, has a much deeper impact than you realise, as it hits right at the heart of the confidence of a young man. Confidence in a young man is a fragile thing. Be careful of the words you use around boys. In addressing the youngsters, I explained to them that a wise cricket coach once said "Bowl him out. Don't shout him out!".
4. Having declared at the end of my very successful innings, I declined the invitation to face the first team opening bowler who arrived on scene. Faced with the problem of an 'insurmountable' batsman, who seemed to invent new rules, and punish the poor bowlers, one of the youngsters in his wisdom and probably out of desperation, went to find reinforcements. Having stuck to the task at hand for a seeming indefinite period, improvisation was necessary. Boys are ingenious. They are problem solvers. Given enough time, boys inevitably come up with the most incredible solutions. This is supported statistically as well in that 83% of inventors holding international patents are men. One could also argue this is the same reason why boys seemingly also do so many stupid things...

I look forward to my next invitation to go and play some cricket. I can guarantee, the next time, plans would have been made, and I will face a total new outfit, ready to take on the head batsman.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 137

19 November

"Nemo Resideo" - No man left behind.

At our recent Remembrance Day Service, where we took time to recognize and honour our fallen brothers and hero's, I listened with intent to the message delivered by Father Steenbok, around the parable of the lost sheep. The story goes around the shepherd who leaves his 99 sheep to go and look for his lost sheep. What an apt lesson and story for Remembrance Day, and equally so for our daily lives. Father Ashe was at pains to share this message with the boys in the lead up to Remembrance Day.

As teachers we need to constantly be on the lookout for the one at risk of being lost. In our academic classrooms, we need to be alert to a learner falling behind or the learner getting lost in the hustle and bustle of a frantic academic program. There are so many distractions in the form of curriculum coverage, check box exercises and prescriptive content, that it is easy to miss out on that wayward sheep. We cannot afford for a learner quietly to slip away from the watchful eye of the shepherd. Those who do, need to be sought out as soon as possible, and brought back to the safety of the flock. The same is applicable to any activity at school. As the shepherd, it is beholden on you to protect the flock in your care.

The concept of no man left behind, is a foundational concept of military leadership, as old as warfare itself. It comes from the Latin phrase, "Nemo Resideo". Of course, in military terms, this literally refers to the concept that no man will be left behind, or as the Three Musketeers would say "All for one and one for all". What a wonderful concept to apply in class, at work or as part of a team. This concept is of course easier said than done, and this is why war heroes, great teachers and exceptional leaders are few and far between. They dare to go where others won't, they dare do what others won't.

Reflecting on the care and the concern of the shepherd to leave the flock, and the relative safety of the known pasture and venture on a perhaps a perilous journey, facing down a hungry wolf or bear, is testament to the unwavering commitment of the shepherd. The action of the shepherd should be a lesson for each of us in itself. The shepherd refuses to give up on the 'lost' sheep. Perhaps a lesson in persistence and tenacity for our modern-day mindset, where persistence and tenacity are something lacking. In this case the lost sheep was doomed, save for the action of the shepherd. Is the same not applicable to a marriage, a friendship, a colleague in need, or a learner in trouble, save for the action of someone who refuses to give up on what is 'lost'.

The parable of the lost sheep is an apt reminder to be a doer and not to be a spectator. At Saints we constantly remind boys that; Saints men are not bystanders. Saints men, respond when the occasion demands it. Such a valuable lesson to be instilled in the young men in our care, that will stand them in good stead into the future.

As always it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 138

27 November

The Road Trip, the Legends, and the Reunion.

I recently attended the Western Cape Old Boys Reunion, the final Reunion for the year. Several Old Boys, in attendance had made the effort to attend the Gauteng, Central and Western Cape Reunions, with one of the Old Boys in attendance having flown in from the 'Land Down Under' just for this occasion. Thank you to Mr Rocky Bester, for his concerted efforts to get there. Perhaps he missed a good 'ol South African Braai just a little too much. Thank you to Sean Stockdale and his friendly staff for hosting us, as well as Craig Anderson

our MC for the evening, and to Luke Wollenschlager and the Cape Town crew for a lovely evening.

As has become customary, the Chair of the Old Boys and the Headmaster travel down to the Reunion together. I recall my first trip down to the Eastern Cape with Mr John Bridger, in 2022. I can tell you that all the stories told about Mr Bridger's illustrious 'driving' career are true. It was on that trip, that I came to realise just how narrow South African roads can be, because Mr Bridger is notoriously known for hugging the shoulder of the road... Luckily, having planned for the eventuality, the Fortuner we were travelling in was able to manage anything the road could throw at us in clouding that which Mr Bridger could not see or simply ignored - potholes no worries. In and amongst visiting the respective towns and gatherings, I came to show Mr Bridger my adventurous side much to his frustration, by ignoring his carefully planned itinerary, detailing exactly how far we would travel, and when and where we would stop for lunch and comfort breaks. A carefully planned 'rustige' road trip, quickly turned into 4x4 adventures, and visits to hidden gems. On one occasion I took Mr Bridger off the beaten track, navigating the treacherous terrain of the Prince Albert Pass, and ending at a dodgy spot called Angie's G-Spot, where they serve 'warm beer and \$\$\$ food' - as per the sign at their entrance. I have never felt more relieved to see level tarred road, after escaping the cliffs and gorges with Mr Bridger at the wheel. Good times.

Mr Bridger has been threatening to step back from Chair of the Old Boys for several years now, predating my arrival to Saints. A legend who in his time has given over 60 years of his life to the school, he attended as pupil, matriculated from as head boy, where he taught and eventually retired as Deputy, and not forgetting how he then diligently served the institution through the Old Boys. I am thankful for all John has done for the school, for his support, advice, and guidance. He went out of his way to make me feel at home, and has stood by me through thick and thin. Mr Bridger, I salute you and thank you. I think there will still be time for one more road trip.

That brings me to the new Chair of the Old Boys, a certain young and ambitious Mr Richard Chemaly. I got to know Richard through his unwavering commitment to working at the Saints' Club, as the man behind the bar, where nothing asked was ever too much. A avid and loyal supporter of the school and the Old Boys Association. Much like me, Richard loves an adventure and a road trip. If you follow Richard on social media, you will see that he is often away on a trip exploring and doing some Geocaching. I recall on a previous road trip, whilst sitting at the table enjoying the seafood on offer, a fellow enthusiast approached Richard in a way you would approach some movie star. Nervously he approached Richard asking him if it was indeed, he, the President of Geocaching South Africa. I was quite unaware that I was in the presence of a celebrity. A man with an expansive general knowledge, road trips are made fun. He is like a walking Chappies Wrapper bearing interesting facts and a wealth of knowledge from home and afar. One simply needs to read the column Richard writes on a weekly basis, and you will quickly come to realise the calibre of this man.

So, it seemed only right, that for our first Reunion, as Head and Chairman, we plan a road trip of our own. Distinctly different to the carefully thought-out plans of my past navigator, Mr Bridger, our plans were a lot 'looser'. Having planned to stop whenever and wherever we wanted, we knew that we needed to leave a day earlier and would sleep where we found ourselves that evening. I knew already, this trip was going to prove to be interesting, when I started looking at the map, searching for the names of places off the beaten track. For instance, I did not know that Richmond, had one of the only two museums dedicated to horses in the world. A fact compliments 'Mr Chappie Wrapper' himself. Having travelled with my previous navigator in cars ranging from Fortuners, to Volvos to Discoveries, we decided that we would travel in Richard's, we'll known, Mazda MX5 drop top. Just two 'manne' going for a 1000km odd cruise. The morning could not have gotten off to a better start. Having managed to squeeze our two kit bags into the boot, we set off at 4am. Before reaching the N1, we were well into the 'padkos', my PA, Mrs Meyer had packed for us. I

don't know about you, but when travelling, the tucking into 'padkos' begins as soon as the wheels start rolling, irrespective of just having had breakfast, coffee, and the likes or not.

Sitting (or lying), in what can only be likened to the 'Batmobile', sleek and refined, with your rear end probably only 10cm from the tar, this aerodynamic masterpiece whizzed its way down the N1. Before I knew it, we were at Colesberg, and I needed to replenish my caffeine levels. Music playing on a system, Richard claims he loves showing off, things could not be going better. That was until the sun started peering over the Karoo plains at around 07:00. Having admired the beautiful orange sunrise, the temperature steadily started ticking upwards, as did the aircon fan. It quickly became apparent to me, that my Lebanese compatriot, was seemingly adverse to any form of cool air, unlike my previous navigator. As indicated to me, I was welcome to explore the gadgets and buttons, and so I decided at this point, due to the uncomfortable uptick in degrees, that I would take control of the aircon. Having initially not come to successfully operate the aircon, and after the intervention of Richard, it was at the first roadblock, that we came to realise the aircon was bust... Chatting to the traffic officials, as they admired the beautiful vehicle, I became envious of every Golfie, Toyota Tazz, Cressida and a whole selection of 'skedonkies' etc. that came to a stop next to us and exited their 'refrigerated' cabins to my dismay. This was going to get hot...

By the time we got to Beaufort West, the search for a local aircon re-gas entrepreneur started in earnest. By Laingsburg, the temperature inside, was decidedly warmer than the scorching temperatures of the Karoo outside the cabin. At the local Agri, a Afrikaans 'tannie', attempted giving us directions to one of the local 'ooms' who worked from his house. No address, just a verbal description of jy ry daar, en draai daar, en dan order die drug etc. Wholly unsuccessful, my driver decided that he was going to brave it to Cape Town. Several hours later, suffering from heat exhaustion, despite the blocks of ice I constantly placed on my head, that evaporated like they weren't there in the first place, the top came down, as we legends entered the Hugenote Tunnel. By the time we arrived to Milnerton, I was decidedly scorched by the blazing sun and half blinded by the glare. Falling out the vehicle, as we arrived at our destination, I dragged myself to my room and plunged into the guest house pool.

That evening, Roy Gordon remarked, that a Headmaster must make the most of his weekends, and likened the weekly activities of a Headmaster, to one of pushing a boulder uphill. Having really giving it my all to get the boulder uphill by Thursday mid-morning in time for our original departure time, the boulder came tumbling down, nearly crushing me, save for the efforts of a great team. Within an afternoon we got it back up the hill again and Richard and I were able to depart early Friday morning. Our planned evening and stay at the Lord Milner Hotel in Matjiesfontein never materialized, but an epic road trip and awesome Reunion did.

I opened my talk with those present, posing the question as to what the difference between a good school and a special school is. I would put it down to the people the likes of a John Bridger and Colin Hickling who have given many more years than I have been on this planet to the school that they love. It is in the fact that at a Reunion like this two former Headmasters in Roy Gordon and Chris Thomas are in attendance. It is that folk, young and old travel from near and far to share in a night of fellowship, reminisce and get excited for what the future holds. This is the strength of a school like ours.

As always, it is my hope that you will do as the Prophet Micah requires, "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Issue 139
3 December
Make your own highlights.

With the sound of Christmas carols ringing in the malls and decorations springing up in every store, I found myself reflecting on the happenings this past year. Much of the year seemed to be a blur, and looking back there are so many highlights that seem a distant memory. For instance one quickly forgets that it was earlier this year, that we achieved the remarkable milestone, of turning a dream twenty years in the making, into reality, a first-of-its-kind waterless Astro in the world.

I have been in conversation with so many people over the course of the year, and it would seem that by September/October people were well and truly over this year, and perhaps have even lost sight of highlights both personally and professionally. We have all been there. Life gets busy. It gets rough and tough, and sometimes we find ourselves spinning. It seemed in conversation with a lot of people that this year turned out to be more hectic than others. Perhaps people are just very tired this year. My advice is at times, one needs to create your own highlights, and keep perspective of course.

It so happened that through the purchase of a rickety little old boat, my son and I would embark on an adventure, the likes that all the money in the world could not buy. Therein lies the truth of the lesson learned this year, make your own highlights. Having come across our boat on Facebook, after some deliberation and some 500km later of dusty old dirt roads, late one Saturday afternoon, we arrived at a farm to collect Daniel's first boat, soon to be dubbed 'Katvis'.

We were privileged that both my brother and I would spend hours on our own sail boats as youngsters, my father's Hobie Cat where we would act as crew, or out at sea on our family Westcoast Kreef Bakkie where we would just share in the fishing experience. Those are of the fondest memories of my childhood. Daniel having fished the waters with his Grandpa, and other pirates the like of Uncle Dave, has come to love going to sea. He toughs it out, even when green from being seasick, you cannot keep him from heading out. Driven by his passion he freely spends hours preparing, and wakes in the early hours of the morning to get to the harbour in time to launch the boat.

It just so worked out, that this little boat project, came at the opportune time, and by opportune, I mean when I was in a tough space. You know, when life gets consumed by responsibilities at work, that it seems it requires 100% of your attention, 100% of the time. It is so that in my position the buck stops with me. That is when it is so easy to lose perspective. A mentor of mine reminded me not so long ago, "to stop and smell the roses".

On getting the boat back home, after a long journey, we started planning and preparing what exactly we were wanting to do. What turned out to be a simple acquisition of a rickety boat, quickly turned into a grand plan that kept us busy for weekends on end. It provided the opportunity for a change and a break in focus after a day in the office. Hours would pass spent sanding down the hull, prepping it and repainting it. The electrical wiring involved connecting up a solar panel, battery and a large selection of lights. The project snowballed on us, and before we knew it, we sat with a boat that both of us could be proud of.

A highlight for Daniel was the regular reporting he did to his grandparents. He made videos explaining our progress as well as the use and functionality of every component. The lessons learnt in terms of dedication and application towards achieving a goal, patience, and perseverance in seeing through what one starts, as well as the practical understanding of what we were doing will stand him in good stead into the future. The experience is something that will stay with him for the rest of his life. He too now can stand at the harbour and speak with the other skippers of their own boats. Katvis will always be so

much more than just a boat.

For me, this was time that was priceless. Father and son working away, sweating together, retiring exhausted together in the evenings, sharing thoughts and plans and inevitably discussing the adventures we were planning to embark on. The point is it took some serious complications and difficult times for me to regain perspective. People often wait for the magic to happen instead of making their own magic. Sometimes you just need to build a Boat.

As always, it is my hope that you will continue to do as the Prophet Micah requires; "Do Justice, Love Mercy and Walk Humbly with God".

Kind Regards
Mr Roland Rudd
Headmaster.