

Commencement Remarks
Tad Roach
May 24, 2009

Welcome to St. Andrew's 2009 Commencement ceremony, our annual celebration of our graduating class and the vision and promise that inspired the creation of this School over 80 years ago.

Graduation is a ritual, a ceremony marking the end of one particular educational experience and the beginning of a new journey, full of new challenges and expectations. But at its best, a graduation is an announcement of readiness – readiness to engage in the broad and complex challenges that face humanity at this time in our history – readiness to use knowledge, wisdom and brilliance – readiness to use our humanity, generosity and creativity for the betterment and redemption of the world – readiness to roll up our sleeves and turn in our diplomas in exchange for hard work, dedicated work on behalf of the poor, the invisible, the oppressed and the despairing citizens of the world.

We meet this year amidst the shadow and reality of complex times. Our planet is threatened by environmental degradation and pollution, the legacy of an era of growth, consumption and materialism that has quite literally stripped our connection to nature. We gather in the wake of or perhaps still in the midst of a grand economic crisis that has forever affected and changed the lives and prospects of citizens across the nation and the world. We meet at a time when our country seeks to develop new approaches to the complex international world we share.

Yet in the midst of crisis, Americans see opportunity, opportunity to focus more effectively and passionately on our core values and principles, opportunity to address global environmental concerns in a

new and creative way, and the opportunity to reassert a culture of creativity, collaboration and innovation in our nation.

I believe hard work, persistence, courage, faith and education will fuel America's emergence from these challenges in the coming years; we are committed to making sure that St. Andrew's and our graduates continue to be sources of inspiration, wisdom and commitment. We must be very much part of the change, the solution, the vision that celebrates what is best in humanity in the 21st century. We as a school, you as graduates must develop answers to the two questions Wendell Berry poses: How can we work without doing irreparable damage to the world and its creatures, including ourselves? How can we live without destroying the sources of our life?

Of this, I am sure. Our graduates will be involved in the environmental, economic, intellectual, political, moral and spiritual recovery efforts, for they have responded to St. Andrew's call for engagement, hard work and creativity in their years on our campus. They understand what the late David Foster Wallace meant when he said:

" There are all different kinds of freedom, and the kind that is most precious, you will not hear much talked about in the great outside world of winning and achieving and displaying. The really important kind of freedom involved attention and awareness and discipline and effort and being able to care about other people and to sacrifice for them, over and over in myriad, petty, little, unsexy ways every day. That is real freedom."

This morning, we thank our Board of Trustees, faculty and staff and student body, for their contributions to the culture and spirit of St. Andrew's.

We thank the Board of Trustees for their dedicated and generous stewardship of the School. I deeply appreciate the leadership and vision of Board Chair Kitten Gahagan and Board President Kent Sweezy. And in this year of great challenge and complexity, I thank and salute Scott Sippelle, Chair of our Finance Committee, the group that stewards and protects St. Andrew's endowment, an endowment that is quite literally the source of St. Andrew's identity as a School open to all regardless of means.

Great boards do more than protect and support their schools – they also inspire, challenge and develop their leaders by asking vital questions, by posing interesting challenges, by sharing their expertise.

Steve Pfeiffer has served on the St. Andrew's Board throughout his five children's career at the School, and I am very happy to say that he will continue to serve on the Board even after Andrew graduates this morning. But I wanted to take this opportunity to thank Steve for all his remarkable contributions to St. Andrew's during the past 14 years. He has served as a great mentor and teacher to me, and he has expressed with great eloquence and passion the centrality of the faculty's role in the success and momentum of our School. His wisdom, brilliance, experience, passion and good humor have made him an essential part of our Board, our School, our community. Thank you, Steve.

I thank our faculty and staff for their dedicated work on behalf of the community this year. At our best, St. Andrew's faculty sees their work as a calling, what they were meant to do. This calling brings us the rich opportunities to mentor, teach, coach, direct and advise our gifted students, but our work together strengthens us, inspires us as well to become more thoughtful, intelligent, kind, moral and courageous people. The magic of St. Andrew's is that we adults

change and flourish in this setting just as powerfully as our students do.

Please join me in thanking the faculty for their gifts of kindness, support, encouragement and inspiration shared with our students this year.

Our staff makes the work of the School come alive each day. From the men and women who serve in our facilities and housekeeping departments, to the men and women who work in our offices throughout the School, the staff works each day to promote and protect the momentum and energy of the School. We particularly thank Lisa Henson, who works so hard each year, handling all the details of Commencement, and Barb Samson who so efficiently and carefully manages all the details associated with our college process.

Our parents have joined St. Andrew's in a collaborative enterprise designed to inspire our students to embrace the full potential and responsibility of their lives. No headmasters, no faculty, in independent schools today have a more supportive and inspiring group of parents than we do in the Class of 2009 group. You as parents have made great sacrifices to give your children this educational opportunity, and today we celebrate with you as you gather grandparents, relatives and friends to pause and reflect on the promise and accomplishments of your graduates. This year St. Andrew's VI Form parents and members of the Class of 2009 have contributed over \$150,000 to the St. Andrew's Annual Fund. We thank you.

Our students have embraced the challenge and opportunity of creating and strengthening a countercultural school of hope. When they assert and display kindness, empathy, integrity, service, engagement and a spirit of collaboration and responsibility for

themselves, their neighbors and the world, they affirm and celebrate the spirit of their School. As an 80-year old School, as a School defined and united by a profound mission of education, we have the opportunity now to be a School of inspiration and transformation. I thank the students of today for keeping the dream alive each year by the way they live, study and learn together.

Finally, on this Memorial Day, we honor those who have sacrificed their lives so that we might have the gift of freedom, hope and aspiration. We honor and celebrate the work of St. Andrew's graduates across the world, who serve their country in the military, and we are proud to announce that Sky Mackay has accepted an appointment this year to the United States Military Academy at West Point. As we salute Skylar, we remember the words President Obama delivered at the Annapolis graduation last week:

"These Americans have embraced the virtues we need most right now: self-discipline over self-interest, work over comfort, character over celebrity."