

Opening Remarks to Faculty August 1999



THIS SUMMER, BEGINNING ON JUNE 7, I watched with growing nervousness and anxiety as workers destroyed the Founders' Hall basement with tremendous ferocity and effectiveness. Within days the hallway and office where I worked as a Dean for seven years was shattered; the classroom I had once taught in was gone. The basement, quite simply, had turned to rubble. Our architect, Dick Meyer, met me outside the construction site in mid-June. He surveyed the wreckage and said ominously, "Every project, Tad, is like going to war."

By the middle of July, I simply wanted the bleeding to stop; I simply wanted the hole in the ground to be filled. Perhaps, I thought that old, dark, dank, mildewed basement was fine after all; but in July, there was no turning back.

Now in late August, the brilliance of the project bursts forth a little bit more each day. The vision Dick Meyer created last spring was not simply the creation of a new space for the School, separate and self-contained. Rather, the project represented both a study and appreciation of the beauty of the first floor of Founders' Hall and a brilliant attempt to bring the ground floor into a beautiful form of symmetry with the space above it.

It became clear early on for Dick Meyer that the creation of light, the rediscovery of light was the only way to make the ground floor come alive and begin to breathe. It also became clear that the renovation of the basement would uncover and connect with the very foundation of the School. As our construction crew dug and opened up light that now pours into the space, we discovered that, indeed, the School's original architect, Mr. Brockey, had planned all along for the original windows to bring light to the ground floor. Dick Meyer also discovered that the very landscaping of the lawn outside my office was intended to introduce the visitor to the vista of the pond we will now enjoy from the new terrace. With these discoveries, our project now involved a renovation that spoke to the original intent of the School's architect in 1929. We have completed the original vision with remarkable power and clarity, 70 years later.

This remarkable process of renovation, restoration and creation going on all around me through the summer inspired me to reflect on the metaphor, the symbolism of the Meyer/Brockey communication. I considered and evaluated the essential foundation of St. Andrew's and our faculty's responsibility to guard, enhance and develop it in the coming years. And I began to think of specific excavation projects that could meet our mission and transform our work with the majesty and power of this particular architectural creation.

What are our foundations as a school, as a community of adults and students? Following our faculty-trustee strategic planning retreat, I identified the following elements of St. Andrew's that represent the School's strength, identity and quality:

- the centrality of the Christian faith and the regular worship of the Episcopal church;
- our commitment to remaining a small (265-270 students), all residential school for students and faculty;
- the quality and diversity of our faculty as human beings, teachers, mentors, coaches and advisors;

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- the quality and diversity of our students;
- our commitment to an exemplary academic and co-curricular program;
- the presentation and protection of our beautiful campus and surrounding lands.

The above elements define us as a small educational and residential community. They remind us that the present and future of the School depend on the humanity of this place. Everything we do as a faculty should serve to protect and nourish our identity as a warm, accepting, inclusive, human community. Everything at St. Andrew’s is built on a human scale, created to bring small groups together for worship, learning, creative expression, residential living, conversation and service. Our apartments, homes, Chapel, classrooms, dining hall, common rooms and theatre reflect this commitment to community, to intimacy, to the individual. At a time when our culture separates and fragments communities and families, St. Andrew’s retains its commitment to human fellowship and connection.

Our Chapel is the place where our identity as a human community is formed, takes root and flourishes. We see the Chapel as a place of worship, of gathering, for the spiritual formation of our community. Here we remember that humanity can be cruel, insensitive, violent and selfish. Here we remember how communities can unite for goodness, for the celebration of the individual within the context of others, and how communities also can unite behind forces of jealousy, envy, cruelty, insensitivity and hypocrisy. Here we admit human fallibility and weakness and affirm our ability to amend our lives. Here we understand the power of goodness, forgiveness, compassion, courage and sacrifice.

We see the Chapel as a source of inspiration for our commitment to the outside world. We affirm our long-standing relationship with St. Mark’s College in South Africa, with St. Anne’s Parish in Middletown, with Friendship House in Wilmington, with the Diocese of Delaware, with community service programs set across local, national and international communities. We celebrate and protect our tradition and intent to be inclusive and to welcome and encourage the spiritual development of each person as we respect the beliefs and faiths of all individuals.

Our retreat confirmed my belief that you, the faculty, are the most important resource within the School. No building, no program, no computer network, no innovation could be more valuable to the students, the School and to me than you. With a faculty of this caliber, we could teach brilliantly and creatively without the facilities, luxuries and tools that characterize our 1999 classrooms, for teaching, quite simply, involves the miracle of inspiration. You inspire our students as scholars, as artists, athletes, leaders and citizens. You serve as crucial, life transforming role models and mentors. You share your lives generously and responsibly with our students and advise, counsel, support them during their adolescent years. You do so by knowing our students well, by believing in them, by holding them to high expectations, by recognizing them as individuals. You are here because you bring diverse gifts, backgrounds, interests and talents to our School. You see teaching not as a job, but as a calling, what you were meant to be and do.

You have the opportunity in one week to literally transform the lives of your students. Here is an excerpt from a VI Former’s letter to an advisor last year:



She has expanded my horizons in every way possible. She has, as a teacher, taught me how to take intellectual risks, how to write, how to voice my opinion in class. As an advisor, she has given me advice to get me through each day of my life. As a mother of her own children, she has made me feel like a part of her family and given me a home away from home as I adjusted to boarding school life. Her family has become my family; she has given me a kitchen table at which to do my homework, little siblings to baby-sit for and cookies to stop tears in their tracks on a bad day. But most importantly, perhaps, she has been a friend to me, and by being one of my closest friends she has taught me how very possible it is to find friendship in a teacher. She has guided me. Laughed with me, dried my tears, cheered me on, and helped me grow. Her incredible personal traits are too wonderful to be counted or even described, but all I can say is that among so many other gifts she has given me, she has also unknowingly epitomized every personal quality for which I strive myself. Because of her presence in my life, I will leave St. Andrew's in a few months a changed person; I now have a specific goal in my head of what kind of person I would like to be.

As a teacher at St. Andrew's, you also have the opportunity to work and live with other men and women who share your passion for teaching, your idealism, your professionalism. The greatest gift I have received as a teacher and Head at St. Andrew's is working and living with men and women who become mentors, friends and colleagues for me for the rest of my life. Our relationships sustain us, inspire us, invigorate us, save us, transform us. In a profession that breeds turf conscious arrogance, selfishness, petty jealousies and backbiting, we have the opportunity to work cooperatively, collaboratively with one another. The men and women who surround you in this room are a remarkable group, a precious resource. Learn from one another, respect one another and inspire one another.

I believe inspired teaching and learning develop through intensive individual attention and commitment. Such teaching is hard work. It involves the formulation of clear course objectives and authentic, high quality assessments. Such teaching requires frequent and varied assessments, informed and comprehensive comments and evaluation and instructors who hold themselves accountable for the highest standards for their students. Teaching is rigorous; it is painful; it is exhausting. It is not a passive exercise; it does not involve repetitive lecturing and passive learning. Teaching crumbles when papers are not returned, when lab reports pile up, when students know that they can get by with much less than their best. Great teachers evaluate the culture of their classes, the work of their students, the quality of their instruction each and every day. Great teachers adjust, change and re-create their syllabi constantly as a term unfolds.

Because we believe in intensive, responsible, accountable teaching, we have remained a small school. This year our average class size is 10.5 students. Our enrollment has dropped from 286 to 271 students. We are poised with these numbers and the quality of our faculty to create and sustain the best academic program in the country.

Our desire to remain a boarding school of 265-270 students is a reflection of our belief that a small school can best provide students with the attention, structure and mentoring necessary for a great educational program, one that matches a commitment to academics with an even greater commitment to the development of students' good character. At the same time, our Founder's vision of St. Andrew's as a school open to all regardless of means inspires us to

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recruit students from a wide variety of backgrounds. We seek public and private school students; we seek students from all socio-economic groups; we seek students from a wide variety of races, cultures and backgrounds. We seek students who have the ability, desire and character to make significant contributions to all aspects of our program. We seek to graduate young men and women who are responsible, empathetic, active members of this nation and the world.

Our campus and grounds give our students the opportunity to live and learn in a beautiful, natural environment. Our students develop an appreciation for the beauty of our natural world; they begin to see that stewardship and the protection of the environment are essential parts of their responsibilities as world citizens. I believe that our campus, our natural setting helps to nourish our community, our identity. We must preserve these precious attributes, even as Delaware endures unprecedented development.

What do we need to excavate and create to make the St. Andrew's of 1999 and beyond gleam with new light and promise? Much as already begun to take place.

- We have made preliminary improvements to our kitchen facility for the opening of the year.
- We have worked to improve the faculty apartments and houses you live in at St. Andrew's.
- We have expanded the day care program by adding an infant and pre-school division.
- We have developed a computer policy that enables each teacher to have the use of his/her own computer.
- We have expanded the faculty fellowship program to fund professional development work.
- We have purchased new copier equipment for the faculty's use.
- We need to evaluate the quality of our teaching, our academic program through careful assessment of our departmental and course standards; through consultation with colleges and fellow high school teachers; through young alumni evaluation and consultation; through effective, dynamic teacher evaluation and development plans.
- We need to continue to find ways to provide faculty with professional growth opportunities, particularly in the area of technology.
- We need to develop a deeper and broader sense of racial and cultural diversity within the faculty.
- We need to develop a more comprehensive program to teach our students about stewardship of the environment.
- We need to recruit and retain women in their 40s and 50s to the faculty.



- We need to develop a greater sense of diversity within our student body.
- We need to continue to pursue admissions strategies that will identify financial aid families for St. Andrew's.
- We need to make renovations to our kitchen facility.
- We need to explore renovations in our boys' dormitories.
- We need to continue to explore ways to make St. Andrew's more accessible to those who are disabled.

You may have other excavations in mind, and I hope you will share them with me. I hope any such projects will capture the mission and foundation of St. Andrew's as perfectly as Harvey Zendt's Summer Quest program did this summer.

In July, St. Andrew's began a summer school for eighth graders in the Delaware area who had demonstrated academic potential in their middle school years. Harvey headed the school. He created it, ran admissions, hired the faculty, developed the program, consulted with parents, arranged transportation and handled the day-to-day affairs of the school. On the last day of the program, the kids, like their St. Andrew's counterparts, simply did not want to leave. As I watched the program during the summer, I realized that yes, this was the kind of program Mr. duPont had in mind when he created a school called St. Andrew's, just as Dick Meyer recognized that the Founders' Hall renovation was the perfect response to Mr. Brockey's original vision. We are very lucky to be at a school where miraculous things can happen.

I wish you all a year full of promise, joy and fulfillment. I thank you for your commitment to this noble enterprise.

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