



# ST STITHIANS COLLEGE

## Founders' Day 2015 The Rector's Speech



Dumelang, Molweni, Sanibonani, Goeie Môre,

I greet you as we gather to give thanks to God and to our Founders. We are here to express gratitude in our College of Welcome and Wonder.

We are gathered here as students from the age of 5 to 18; staff members of the College; parents; governors; trustees; alumni; benefactors; past parents and staff; and special guests and friends of St Stithians. We have 243 VIP guests here with us today.

We say a big thank you to our guest speaker, Dr Gcina Mhlophe, who comes to us from sub-tropical Durban – where there is no winter. It is chilly here on the Highveld, but we welcome you with warm hearts.

We welcome many honourable guests with a colourful and venerable history of connection with Saints, including former chairs of Council, heads of school and teachers. We welcome leaders of schools and universities. We welcome donors and benefactors. I am also delighted that our VIP list includes our Junior Prep grandparents who read books to our children.

We enrol 160 little ones into Grade R, we matriculate 270 in Grade 12.

We are One & All – a place of unity and diversity, the team and the individual, the schools and the whole College. On this day of gathering we celebrate our synergy and energy.

I express a special welcome to our Matrics and their parents, celebrating their final Founders' Day. We thank you for the journey you have travelled at St Stithians, and we honour you.

I am joined on the podium by the members of the College Executive, and by

- Mr Colin Smith (Chair of the St Stithians Trust)
- Bishop Peter Witbooi (Bishop of the Central District of the Methodist Church),
- Mrs Ntombi Langa-Royds (Deputy Chair of the St Stithians Council)
- Mr Carel Nolte (Chair of the St Stithians Council)

As I welcome each one of you to this memorable occasion, I express thanks, on behalf of us all, to Mr Nolte and the Council he represents for their oversight as governors of this College.

## The stories that we tell

I take this as my theme today. It is fitting that we have as our guest of honour a famous South African story-teller, Dr Gcina Mhlophe.

Dr Mhlophe's stories are written for children. She is a teacher and inspirer of young people. Like a St Stithians education, she weaves a powerful narrative of experience, symbols, imagination, morality and relationships.

As a College we have a symphony of stories to tell. As we tell and listen, and get better at doing so, we will deepen our sense of belonging, of community, and of collective purpose. What a remarkable tapestry of stories express our past, our present and the promise of our future. We give thanks for the telling, the listening and the connecting.

On this day we celebrate two acts of founding, one in 1953 and one in 1995 – the first and second foundations in our unique offering of boys' and girls' education.

Like a family, we have a pattern of anniversaries. In 2013, we celebrated 60 years since the founding of the boys' schools. This year, the girls' schools turn 20, and next year is the 21<sup>st</sup>, the coming of age.

This year, 2015, we have two 10<sup>th</sup> birthdays to celebrate:

- the Thandulwazi Maths & Science Academy
- Crusaders Sports Club as a programme of the Old Stithian Association.

On Founders' Day, we give thanks for those who had the vision and courage to begin. As we gather to celebrate the beginnings in our College stories, we renew our commitment to carry the baton in the relay race our Founders began; be stewards of the gifts of previous generations; commit ourselves to grow the legacy of St Stithians. Today we are crafting our story of the future, which will give birth to a host of new narratives. We affirm our identity and reason for existing at this point in our history.

## Strategy 2025 and a New Statement of Intent and Purpose

On this day, I am pleased officially to launch *Strategy 2025* which provides a framework for our school's journey over the next decade and more.

The foundation of *Strategy 2025* is a new statement of Intent and Purpose: **Inspiring Excellence. Making a World of Difference**

That is our calling. That is our stretch. We seek to be a South African beacon of excellence, making a difference in our worlds of today and tomorrow. I refer you to the bookmark which has been distributed with your Founders' Day Programme. This contains the wording of our Statement of Purpose.

Our **Statement of Purpose** is as follows:

St Stithians College gives life to the words 'happy fulfilment' inscribed on our foundation stone. As a College of seven schools, we strive to:

- ❖ Educate individuals to be lifelong learners who participate, lead and serve.
- ❖ Live out a Methodist ethos, providing diverse opportunities for our students and staff to honour God, honour others and honour self; to know oneself, to be oneself, and to contribute as African and global citizens.
- ❖ Combine tradition with innovation, and academic ambition with holistic education as distinguishing features of the St Stithians journey.
- ❖ Promote personal growth and lives of significance for our staff and students in a College of welcome and wonder.
- ❖ Optimise educational and institutional synergies through our schools collaborating with each other.
- ❖ Create a community of belonging among our students, staff, parents and alumni.
- ❖ Provide facilities which enhance our educational mission, while developing our campus as a place of natural beauty, promoting environmental awareness and action.
- ❖ Manage our educational enterprise effectively and efficiently according to sound and accountable corporate governance policies.

St Stithians College is committed to the positive transformation and development of South African society. We seek to embrace *ubuntu*, to be *One and All*.

Guided by our Purpose, we have defined **Strategy 2025**, a framework with its six areas of focus:

- Shaping School Character
- Advancing Synergy Projects
- Growing People and Talent
- Creating a Community Engagement Curriculum
- Fostering a Community of Belonging through the Advancement Office
- Improving Campus Facilities to 2030

### **The two 10<sup>th</sup> birthdays we are celebrating today**

I come back to the two 10<sup>th</sup> birthdays we are celebrating today. These stories are woven into our life as St Stithians College:

#### ***Crusaders Sports Clubs***

The Crusaders Football Club, affiliated to the Old Stithian Association, was founded in 2005. The founders were Gary Elmes, Bruno Fernandes, Fernando da Silva and Christopher Williams. While soccer remains to this day the core pillar of Crusaders, another 12 sporting codes have been added, with another 6 possible codes coming on board. Annually, thousands of Crusaders play sport in our clubs – a remarkable record. The story of the Crusaders sports clubs is part of who we are today, as a College and Old Stithian Association engaging with the communities of greater Johannesburg.

## ***Thandulwazi Maths & Science Academy***

Ten years ago, under the leadership of Pete Backwell as Chair of the St Stithians Foundation, the Thandulwazi Maths & Science Academy was born. From these small beginnings, the Academy has grown remarkably into what is today the 7<sup>th</sup> school of St Stithians. St Stithians and the Thandulwazi Trust can proudly claim that the Thandulwazi Academy is unique among South African schools in its scale and impact on education within our wider community.

Today the Academy has four pillars:

- A Saturday School which educates 1 100 senior school students weekly in Maths, the Sciences, English and Accounting.
- A Teacher Development Programme which advances 1 300 primary school teachers through workshops on the Saints campus, and a further 400 teachers in Limpopo-based workshops.
- A Teacher Intern Programme which immerses 35 young teachers in the St Stithians schools while they complete their education degrees.
- A Scholarship programme to enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds to enrol at St Stithians.

The story of Thandulwazi's educational programmes contains the names of a group of key organisers and volunteers, led by Johanni la Vita, Linda Galanakis, Karen Walstra, Alistair Stewart, Alf Mitchley, Hermant Wagmarae, David Gear, Bev Johnson, Zeph Khoza, Thobeka Mngambi, and Khumo Morolo.

This year, I was pleased to appoint Dr Themba Mthethwa as the first full-time Director of Thandulwazi and a member of the St Stithians College Executive Committee.

Thandulwazi has been supported and sustained by the facilities and staff of St Stithians College, and through substantial funding in the form of corporate social investment and the donations of individuals. Today we pay tribute to the many Foundation governors who have worked tirelessly behind the scenes to secure the necessary funding. Many of these programme organisers, governors and donors are here today and we salute you.

I call on Hector Nkosi, a 2013 matriculant from Thandulwazi's Saturday School to give you a cameo of his story.

### **A story of two Heads of School**

My second last story today involves two Heads of School to whom we wish to say thank you this Founders' Day.

I ask you to hold your applause until the end of the story.

Mel Dace was appointed as founding Head of the Junior Prep in 2001, and she retires at the end of the year. She will be leaving the Junior Prep on a high note, and on behalf of us all, I thank her for her leadership and major contribution to our gateway to a Saints education.

Alistair Stewart has led the Boys' Prep as Head for the past 15 years. He has developed a wonderful sense of the heritage of St Stithians, linking back to origins in Cornwall, England. He has presided over

the growth and development of the Boys' Prep as a school with a strong reputation in South Africa's educational landscape.

Alistair moves on 1 July to take up the role as our first Advancement Director – an exciting new prospect for him. We thank Alistair for his vision and leadership of boys' education at St Stithians.

Alistair hands over the reins of the Boys' Prep to Jakes Fredericks, appointed from within the Boys' Prep having competed with a very strong field of applicants from across Southern Africa.

### **God's Guiding Hand**

In today's service of thanksgiving, we give thanks to God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit who nurtures and sustains us. Our founders in the 1940s and 1950s were committed Methodists, and to this day the Methodist Church is both a foundation of our identity and woven into the DNA of St Stithians. We have a profound sense, expressed in our Honour Code, of being agents of God's love in this place and time.

We seek to walk humbly with our God. We give prayerful thanks to God who sustains us.

### **A tapestry of stories**

Each of us here today has our individual experiences of St Stithians College, a full spectrum of life. Combined, we form a tapestry of stories that is beautiful, inspirational and challenging. We inspire excellence and make a world of difference.

Thank you.

Dr Tim Nuttall