



ST STITHIANS  
COLLEGE

**Address by the Rector, Dr Tim Nuttall, at St Stithians College Founders' Day, 7 June 2014**

Students from the age of 5 to 18; staff members of the College; parents; governors and trustees; alumni; past parents and staff; special guests and friends of St Stithians:

I greet you warmly on this cold, sunlit morning as we gather in impressive numbers to give thanks to God and to our Founders. Look around you at this rainbow school: we enrol 170 little ones into Grade R, we matriculate 270 in Grade 12. We total 2 600 students, drawn from 1 800 families. We employ 380 permanent staff, and our total staff complement is double that number.

I say, we are big and beautiful.

We are *One and All* – a place of unity and diversity, the team and the individual, the constituent schools and the whole College. The “and” between *One and All* signals our value-add, our multiplier, our multiple possibilities as a village of schools, our opportunity for synergy. We are a College of synergy and energy. We are proud of who we are, what we stand for, and we embrace humility, gratitude and service. Thank you to ‘One and All’ for being here.

In welcoming you all to this august occasion, I am going to risk mentioning a few names, and categories, of guests:

First, I pay tribute to the Nash clan – Paul Nash was a founder pupil of 1953. Since then, 18 members of the Nash family have attended, or are currently enrolled, at St Stithians: together they account for 106 years spent at this school – that is a remarkable century!

We welcome Christopher Aitken – Founder pupil and Dux Scholar of 1957.

We pay tribute to the families who have invested in the education of generations at St Stithians over the past 61 years of our existence.

We are graced by the presence of many honourable guests with a colourful and venerable history of connection with Saints, including former chairs of Council, heads of school and our first Rector.

Among our guests are invited students of the Thandulwazi Maths & Science Academy, and sponsors and funders of Thandulwazi.

I am also delighted that our VIP list includes Junior Prep grandparents who read books to our children, inspiring a love of reading and story-telling.

## **Openings**

It is customary to have ‘openings’ and blessing of facilities on Founders’ Day, held prior to this ceremony. We have had two openings this year. First, the new indigenous garden next to our dams were opened by the St Stithians Gardener of 33 years, Pauline Dickson. No one has greater knowledge of, and love for, this campus. Second, the new basketball courts were opened by George Harris, CEO of the Royal Bafokeng Institute on behalf of Kgosi Leruo Molotlegi, King of the Bafokeng Nation. Kgosi Molotlegi was due to be present with us this morning, but has been called at short notice to an emergency high-level meeting aimed to end the lengthy strike that has crippled the platinum mines. The presence of Royal Bafokeng representatives symbolises the relationship which is being kindled between St Stithians College and Lebone II College, where the founding Head was Ian McLachlan, former Head of our Boys’ College.

## **Professor Habib**

Thank you to Professor Adam Habib, Vice-Chancellor and Principal of the University of the Witwatersrand, for being present as our guest of honour and speaker here this morning. We look forward to your message and we know that it will contain challenges as we live out our lives in this complex and unequal South African society, this society of hope and possibility. Your presence here reminds us of the continuity of education, from the children of Grade R here to the university graduates under your care.

## **The Founders**

We gather here to open our hands, hearts and minds to carry the baton in the relay race our Founders began; to be stewards of the gifts of previous generations; and to commit ourselves to grow the legacy of St Stithians.

I look out at this gathered, significant South African school, this rainbow school in our rainbow nation. I see the hopes and dreams of the next generation. The words of Bishop Zipho Siwa, presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church, ring in our ears: ‘May this be a School of Dreams, a Valley of Hope’.

It is on this day that we express collective thanks for the foresight, courage and determination of our founders. Albert Collins, William Mountstephens and Gilbert Tucker were the three founders, united and inspired by the vision of founding a Methodist School. It is striking that the first two men died before the opening of the College in 1953. People of vision who take a long view often do not see the fruit of their labours, but this does not deter their enthusiasm. Their idea lit a flame, and a group of men and women took the flame and founded a school.

The Foundation Stone on the chapel wall carries the delightful phrase which informs us that the College was founded ‘in happy fulfilment’. St Stithians is privileged to have a Second Foundation, when the Collegiate was founded in 1995. The same phrase – happy fulfilment –

is carried on the Foundation Stone of the schools that grew into the Girls' Prep and Girls' College. We therefore have a double birthday to celebrate on Founders' Day, and the legacy of our village of schools which makes us unique in South Africa.

We have present today those who were present at the First Founding and the Second Founding, and we honour you. We appreciate deeply how succeeding generations have built on the vision to create St Stithians College.

Today we commit ourselves afresh to the advancement of our schools, offering a meaningful and fulfilling education, for the present and into the future. We pledge ourselves to educational excellence. We seek to make an impact in our society beyond the school gates as we live out the injunction to be *A South African School Making a World of Difference*.

### **We belong to this place**

We belong to this place, and there are joys and responsibilities which flow. I draw inspiration from the thoughts of the Harvard University geographer, Yi-Fu Tuan; of Peter Block who writes about Community and the Structure of Belonging; and of Benjamin Barber who writes about Civil Society and Democracy.

#### *A school of welcome and belonging*

A top priority for me is to lead a school of welcome, a school which says 'I see you', a school in which my being human is enhanced by your being human, and a school which affirms the dignity of each individual. St Stithians is a school which invites us to participate, to make our contribution, to belong.

We belong because we know and treasure our past. We belong because we feel warmth and comfort in this place. We belong to the Chapel and the Christian ethos of this Methodist School. We belong to the long Christian tradition which understands schools to be the outworking of God's love for humanity. We belong because we share daily life in the classroom, on the sports field, in cultural expression, in outdoor education, and in community service.

We belong because we pledge to Honour God, Honour Others, and Honour Self. We belong because the impulse of gratitude runs deep – let us be a community which says thank you in word and deed.

#### *St Stithians educating citizens*

We are citizens of this place: we care for it, we feel strongly about it, we want to participate, we want make a difference, we support progress. *One and All* is a call to citizenship.

I have a dream – that we educate and challenge ourselves to be citizens of our suburbs, our city, our nation, our continent, and our globe.

I have a dream – that St Stithians grows its influence as an institutional citizen, making an impact in education beyond educating our own students, contributing to the advancement and health of our society.

## **Nelson Mandela**

Among the many memories of Nelson Mandela’s legacy, we treasure today the way he made South Africans belong. Let us draw inspiration from his example as he united a divided, angry and fearful apartheid society.

Let Madiba’s legacy challenge us to continue to build a better future for our land, to be active citizens. I make mention of Nelson Mandela because we have a special ceremony as part of my address today. Our beautiful chapel stained glass windows were created by the artist Paul Blomkamp in a labour of love which took a decade to complete.

Mr Mandela sat in our chapel and saw those windows. This past year, in celebration of Nelson Mandela’s life, Mr Blomkamp painted a portrait of Madiba, with a style that has visual echoes of those stained glass windows. Mr Blomkamp has generously decided to donate this portrait to St Stithians College, and members of his family are here to hand over the painting to us today. Members of Nelson and Winnie Mandela’s family, who are part of the St Stithians family, are also present.

I invite Zwelami Mandela, who is in Grade 6 and is the Mandelas’ great grandson, to join me on the stage. On behalf of Paul Blomkamp, I invite two Grade 4 students to come forward to present the portrait to us: Devon Williams and Neo Monthe. I ask that we remain in silent appreciation while this presentation takes place.

## **The Future**

If we belong, we want to embrace the future. If we belong, we want to leave a legacy for those who follow after us. And so we have begun to talk in our Executive and Council about Campus 2053 – asking the question: what should our St Stithians education and campus look like when we turn 100 in 39 years time?

As we inhabit this school, what is the song that we sing? What are the dreams that we have? Like many of you, I have recently had the pleasure of watching *The Sound of Music* performed live here in Johannesburg. Thinking of our St Stithians community, and the messages of Founders’ Day, I was particularly moved by one of the songs of the show: Climb Every Mountain.

I invite Cayleigh Galatis and Jo Etzinger, two Matrics in the Girls’ College, to sing this song for us.

“Climb every mountain  
Ford every stream,  
Follow every rainbow,  
'Till you find your dream”.

**In conclusion,**

I take closing inspiration from the words of the 2014 Men's Winner of the Comrades Marathon, Bongmusa Mthembu. When interviewed recently on Radio 702 he said: "If you have joy in your heart, you can do anything."

May this College, which has grown from the humble beginnings of the seed planted by our Founders, bring happy fulfilment, bring joy to our hearts: joy to all who study and work here; and joy to our parents, governors and alumni who hold this school in the palm of their hands.

Thank you.



*Caption: Dr Tim Nuttall, Professor Adam Habib, Mr Carel Nolte (Chair of Council)*