

Term 2 Assembly – Rector's Address

Mark Wilson

Friday 16 May 2025



Tēnā koutou katoa, nau mai, haere mai.

I trust that you all have enjoyed the first three weeks of this second term. This assembly is an opportunity for us as a school community to celebrate some of the amazingly diverse range of talents and achievements.

I am pleased to welcome and thank our Board member, Mr Alan Merry, for joining us this morning, and he will be assisting with some presentations within this assembly.

Today is our Pink Shirt Day. Here at StAC, we support this national initiative, that is in support of the Mental Health Foundation of New Zealand. Next term I look forward to the Boarders' Assembly in Week 3, which I understand will build on this well-being and health focus with their support of the Gumboot Friday charity.

The aim of Pink Shirt Day is designed to help reduce bullying and celebrate our human diversity in all its forms across our schools, businesses and communities. Thankfully, we all have different talents and gifts, and it is important we recognise and celebrate our diversity.

Our diversity of talents here at St Andrew's has been very evident over these first few weeks of Term 2. This assembly will be acknowledging and celebrating a wide range of these diverse skills and successes, especially across the performing arts and sports.

This includes our talented students showing their personal excellence, not only on the stage with our stunning school production, but also on the sports fields competing in a range of different codes, and in exchanging intellectual wit and arguments in debating, and crafting beautiful and powerful language in the Festival of Spoken Word competition.

Every week there are so many excellent diverse talents in action here at StAC. Using our recent school production of *Twelfth Night* as a great example, this production illustrates the diverse range of exceptional skills we have within StAC. For example, no one else could have produced such hilarious and entertaining acting of the character Sir Andrew Aguecheek as superbly as Rory Forsythe; no one else could project a powerful voice and his character's greatness as brilliantly as Noah Fanene; no one could have created the heartbroken Duke Orsino as well as Sean Liddiard did; or achieve dance performances like those by Yinan (Vivian) Lu and her team; and no one else could replicate the wonderful portrayal of the lead character Viola, as performed by Emily Edwards; or be such a clever "fool" as performed by Mookmanee (Mookee) Lee. A huge congratulations to all involved: cast, stage and technical crew and band.

Thank you to Director Ginnie Thorner, Musical Director Duncan Ferguson, Choreographer Hana Pearce, Hair Designer Mel Howel, Theatre Operations Manager Stuart Lloyd-Harris, and Costume Design and Construction volunteer, Sylvia Campbell, for another exceptional St Andrew's production.

For all of us, the development of our diverse skills and talents grows through the support, coaching, teaching and encouragement of others. We are so blessed here at StAC to have such wonderful staff to help grow and develop your abilities, through the wide range of opportunities on offer here.



The same growth and development of diversity of skills can be seen in our sports offerings. For example, in rugby, there can be some very clear differences in the skill sets needed for specific positions for players, and even different body types, typically more suited for the various roles, such as the strength and height needed traditionally for forwards, and the speed and agility of the backs.

What a boring and dull world it would be if we were all the same. Diversity adds colour and interest in our world, and it also makes our world a better place.

It is through our diversity of thinking that will see progress in scientific research for medicines, diverse problem solving is required to create technological inventions to improve our lives, and diverse creativity within entrepreneurial business will grow our wealth and help enhance the quality of life.

This recognition of diversity encourages us to let our unique light shine, inspiring others to do the same, and be the very best they can be. And so, we all help to make the world a better place.

Our school's five values support diversity – as we need to be true to who we individually are, have faith to live out our unique talents, strive to be the most excellent version of ourselves, using our own creativity and through being inclusive we can support each other to grow and be better together.

In a time when it's easy to compare ourselves to others – whether that's on social media, in the classroom, or on the sports field – remember that your uniqueness is your strength.

One of our greatest accomplishments in life, can be to simply learn to be yourself, in a world that is constantly trying to make you something, or someone else.

Don't be afraid to stand out or to follow your own path. Grow and develop your own unique gifts and talents. You'll face setbacks and moments of doubt. We all do.

That's part of growing up. Take chances, make mistakes. That is how we all learn and grow.

As the "wise fool" in Shakespeare's plays teaches us:

Wisdom is not always learnt from being safe and doing everything right, but real wisdom is often found in our mistakes, in taking risks and being courageous.

Winston Churchill famously said:

"Success is not final, failure is not fatal: it is the courage to continue that counts."

Every mistake is a lesson, and every challenge is an opportunity to grow stronger and wiser.

Now, after our awesome College production last week, I'll conclude my message today on our theme of diversity, with a quote from William Shakespeare. This famous author and playwright wrote this simple advice within his play, *Hamlet*:

"This above all: to thine own self be true."

No reira, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou katoa.