



# 109<sup>th</sup> Founders' Day Assembly – Rector's Address

**Mark Wilson**

**Friday 13 March 2026**



Tēnā koutou katoa,  
Nau mai, haere mai.

A very warm welcome to you all, on this 109th Founders' Day for St Andrew's College.

I would like to especially welcome some very special invited guests, whānau and those attending their 60 Years On reunion – Old Collegians who were in their third Form, or Year 9 as we call it today, back in 1966.

I acknowledge some special guests with us this morning including:

- our Old Collegian representative on our Board of Governors, Stephanie Bain; along with Old Collegian Jamie-Lee Tuuta who is also on our Board;
- three Old Collegians who will each be presenting special awards to students during this service, so I will reserve the honour of sharing their introduced to those moments in our programme;
- and an Old Collegian, Tomo Yee, who attended St Andrew's College for 13 years from 1996 to 2008, and just last year was appointed as our new Head of Development of Community Relations here, and will be our special guest speaker a little later in this Founders' Day Assembly.
- in addition, we welcome Rev. Lynmaree Sopoaga, or 'Aunty Lyn', who is the current Moderator of the Alpine Presbytery.

It is important we come together and take the time to acknowledge our Founders' Day. A day when we take the time to reminisce, reflect upon our school in days gone by, remember some of our history, and give thanks for what we enjoy today.

We give thanks to the vision and persistence of Presbyterian Minister, Rev. Alexander T Thompson – who we now celebrate and acknowledge with the name of Thompson House, and it was his poem that is honoured and engraved in what we call The Poet's Walk, the path from Papanui Ave entrance up along our driveway.

Rev. A T Thompson founded this school in 1917, with Dr Robert Erwin as the Board chairperson.

Our College's humble beginnings were initially in the St Andrew's Presbyterian Manse at Hospital Corner near Hagley Park. Our College then moved to this present site here at Strowan in 1918, thanks to a substantial bequest left by Mr Duncan Rutherford, a well-known runholder from North Canterbury.



Today, as we celebrate our Founders' Day, I will speak to the Story Behind the Name of St Andrew's College. To know who we are, how we belong, we must know the story behind the name we proudly carry.

The real man Andrew was a simple fisherman on the Sea of Galilee, along with his brother Simon – who was later named Peter by Jesus. Both brothers were the very first disciples called by Jesus. History describes Andrew as someone who invited others, who built community, and who brought people toward faith – qualities we strive to reflect here at our college.

Andrew was one of 12 chosen disciples who closely followed Jesus during his years of teaching, healing and miracles. After the arrest, and then death, of Jesus on the cross, Andrew and the other devoted and loyal disciples of Jesus *initially* panicked and fled in fear at the loss of Jesus.

However, then something miraculous occurred, that transformed all the disciples, from fearful people to people of renewed confidence and faith. This change occurred when they saw and powerfully experienced a resurrected Jesus.

Andrew, like the other disciples, then became full of confidence and strengthened faith, which enabled him to travel widely to share a message of truth – about love, compassion, salvation, and the inherent worth of every person.

Tradition tells us that Andrew continued this mission until his own martyrdom, when he was executed for his faith by others who opposed and were threatened by his message. The people who killed Andrew, did so by crucifying him on a cross.

Stories say that Andrew felt unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus, who was crucified on a conventional upright, t-shaped cross. Andrew asked for his executors that his death be a x-shaped cross. So, Andrew's cross that he died on, is now famously known as the saltire, the diagonal cross.

What happened after Andrew's death is also a remarkable story of devotion and identity. Out of respect and admiration for Andrew, many Christians over centuries kept his body and bones – which they saw as relics.

According to medieval tradition, a monk named Saint Regulus brought some of Andrew's relics to the coast of Scotland. Regulus was apparently shipwrecked on the east coast of Fife in Scotland, what is now the harbour of St Andrew's, at a place called "Kings Mount by the Grey North Sea." At this place, a settlement grew, eventually becoming called the town of St Andrews. A monastery – and later a cathedral – was built on that site, becoming one of the greatest pilgrimage destinations in medieval Europe. People from across kingdoms journeyed there in Faith, hoping for guidance, healing, or a deeper connection with God.

The connection between St Andrews and Scotland deepened through historical events. King Angus in Scotland, who was preparing for a battle against a much larger English army, prayed to God for help. The next day he saw a shining white saltire cross appear in the blue sky. King Angus saw this as the symbol of Saint Andrew. Angus and his soldiers were convinced that his prayers had been answered.



Filled with confidence the Scots went on to win a remarkable and unexpected victory over the much larger English army.

Inspired by the King's vision, and their success in this battle, Angus pledged his allegiance to Andrew, as the patron saint of his people and Scotland. This is how the saltire, the white cross on a blue-sky background became the national symbol and flag of Scotland.

The saltire flag of Scotland is now the oldest flag of any country in the world. This historic story is captured and retold in our *College Song*.

The first part of our song describes "Regulus" arriving at Scotland, at "King's Mount by the grey North Sea". "Angus" is the King of Scotland, who goes on to make Andrew the patron Saint of Scotland and the saltire the national flag. Regulus not only brings the relics, but also the teachings of "truth", with the purpose of helping convert local people, referred to in old language as "heathen" who did not yet know about or follow Christianity. The final lines celebrate St Andrew's name as one worthy of "honour and fame", declaring that his "glory" will endure forever.

The second part of the song explains how the people of Scotland worked and fought through many difficult times, such as their battles for freedom against the English, and how the vision of St Andrew helped encourage and inspire them to endure and succeed. It also relays how St Andrew's cross continues to be a symbol of freedom, courage and national pride.

This final section of our song speaks to us, who belong to St Andrew's, and who carry an important name and legacy. We are called to live with truth, strength and wisdom, so that both Andrew and his value and character endures, and future generations will continue to honour it.

Our song paints a picture of how we should aspire to be:

- these words echo the College's value of **Truth** – the commitment not only to the Christian message, but also honesty, integrity and doing what is right;
- this calls us to have **Faith**, in the spiritual sense, and ability to step forward in confidence and with purpose;
- the words express striving toward strength, wisdom and high standards – that of **Excellence**;
- the song uses symbolic imagery to express what we as the College stands for – **Creativity** – thinking imaginatively, contributing to culture, and building in new and meaningful ways;
- the song's repeated use of "we" – "we who bear St Andrew's name... we shall praise her" – speaks to belonging. This mirrors **Inclusivity**, reminding everyone in our community – students, staff, families, Old Collegians – that they are part of a shared identity and responsibility.

So, in closing, may our values of Truth, Faith, Excellence, Creativity, and Inclusivity guide us not only today, but every day, as we continue the work of building a College worthy of its name. The name of St Andrew's.

Thank you, and happy Founders' Day to the entire St Andrew's community.