



Prefects' Investiture and Leadership Assembly

Rector's Address

Friday 30 January 2026

Mark Wilson



E nga mana
E nga reo
E nga iwi
O te motu
Tēnā koutou katoa
nau mai, haere mai.

"The Power of One – The Star Fish Story"

Good morning everyone. These special assemblies are important, as they provide the opportunity for us as a community to gather together, foster a sense of belonging, reinforce our customs and traditions, and what we value, they are a time to celebrate, and to mark significant moments and achievements.

Today we gather to recognise the importance of leadership development in all young people, and we hope that you will all continue to seek opportunities to grow and develop your leadership capacity.

It gives me pleasure to welcome Mrs Felicity Odlin here today, to be part of this assembly as Chair of our Board of Governors.

Mrs Odlin – I thank you, and all of our Board members, for your voluntary time and your dedicated work in creating such strong governance here at St Andrew's.

Here at StAC, our College values and Christian character promotes the servant model of leadership.

This approach seeks leaders to serve their community and think beyond themselves to prioritise the welfare and interest of others.

At StAC we foster leadership attributes within all our young people through allowing individuals to explore and pursue their own personal strengths and interests, where they can grow, learn and prosper.

In such an environment people will find opportunities and occasions to act as leaders, and in other occasions to be active and supportive team members.

We recognise people can be leaders in some contexts, and not in others, just as there are formal and informal roles for leadership.

Developing young people who know and live out their values, and know what is right, will help ensure they are capable of making good decisions for themselves and their community.

We believe that having a foundation of strong personal character is fundamental to being a good leader and being a good person.



I appreciate that as young people in this big, busy and complex world, you may sometimes question what impact or difference you might make.

Or even how can one young person make a difference in their school, whether you are in a formal leadership role or not?

I'd like to give you some genuine reassurance, by beginning with a simple parable – a story that some of you may have heard before, and that carries a special message worth remembering.

This is called ***The Star Fish Story***:

A young child was walking along a beach after a storm.

The tide had gone out, leaving thousands of starfish stranded on the sand.

The child began to pick them up, one by one, and gently throw them back into the sea.

An older person came along and watched for a while before saying, "Why are you doing this?

There are so many starfish – you can't possibly make a difference."

The child paused, looked at the starfish in their hand, threw it into the ocean, and replied, "It made a difference for that one."

The older person stood in silence for a moment – and then, inspired by the child's determination, bent down, picked up a starfish, and joined in.

Soon others walking along the beach joined too. By the end of the day, almost all the starfish had been saved.

Consider the possible message here for us all.

This story reminds us of what true leadership looks like.

It's not about titles, badges, or recognition – it's about making a difference.

Leadership begins with the courage to act – even when it seems small, even when others doubt you, and even when you think no one is watching.

Our new Prefects are being asked to do just this: to lead with kindness, to think beyond themselves, and to make a positive impact in the lives of others – one act, one person, one moment at a time.

Because, as the Star Fish story shows, leadership is contagious.

When one person acts with purpose, others are inspired to follow.

That's how real change begins – not with a crowd, but with one person who chooses to care.

Leadership is not always about fancy words and great public speeches.

A famous Christian monk St Francis of Assisi once said: "Preach the Gospel at all times and when necessary, use words".

This quote reminds us all that our leadership and relationships will be judged by our actions – what we do and how we do it.

Our actions so often speak louder than our words.

The thought of our actions making change could be overwhelming.

But learn from this quote from Nelson Mandela.



Nelson Mandela once said: "*It always seems impossible until it's done.*"

Great leaders don't wait for someone else to start; they take that first step.

They surround themselves with good people.

They complete the challenge and journey together, one step at a time.

Leadership also means holding firm to your values, even when it's hard.

It means standing up for what's right, not what's popular.

It means being bold enough to make decisions that help others, even when those decisions might not make you the most liked person in the room.

John Quincy Adams, the sixth president of the United States (1825 to 1829), captured this beautifully when he said:

"If your actions inspire others to dream more, learn more, do more and become more, you are a leader."

To our new prefects – you are stepping into roles that ask for integrity, empathy, and resilience.

You'll be role models, problem-solvers, and ambassadors for the spirit of our College. You'll sometimes face challenges or criticism.

But remember – even when it feels like your actions are small, they can create ripples that spread far beyond what you can see.

As Mother Teresa once said: "Not all of us can do great things. But we can do small things with great love."

That is the essence of leadership – to serve, to care, and to lift others up.

Modern leadership is not about trying to force or persuade others to do your will or follow your commands.

It's about knowing your own values, acting on these, and leading by your own authentic example.

Being humble and seeking to serve first - then others will follow through your influence and inspiration.

So, as you begin this new year and step forward into leadership, think of the child on the beach.

Be that person who acts with heart.

Be the one who picks up the first starfish.

Be the one who inspires others to join you.

Because one person can make a difference.

And together – just like on that beach – we can collectively make an even greater difference.

Thank you, and congratulations to our new prefects.

May you lead with courage, compassion, and purpose.

And now let us celebrate our incoming Prefect group, and the presentation of our various leadership roles for senior students.

No reira, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou, Tēnā koutou Katoa.