

From the desk of **Shane Kidwell**



9 January 2022

Ladies and gentlemen, and New Boys of 2022, welcome to St Alban's College. We have to be grateful for small mercies as this time last year I had to do a recorded message for our New Boys function. I do not take for granted that we can get together, in person, to welcome you to our community, and I am extremely grateful.

You join us at an unprecedented time in the history of the College and the world. We have experienced two years of disruption, disappointment and dreams which have been shattered. Our Matrics left us at the end of last year, and some of them were exasperated and disillusioned. My own feeling and advice to them has always been that we have to face what is in front of us and accept that we cannot change the past or predict the future. Like with everything, we have to have **the serenity to accept the things** we cannot change, **courage to change** the things we can, and **wisdom to know** the difference.

This group of Form 1 boys and their families join us at a time which is filled with difficulty. Abraham Lincoln said to congress in 1862 during the American civil war: *The dogmas of the quiet past, are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.*

You join us at a time when we need to *disenthrall ourselves* from the polarisation and divisiveness caused by this pandemic. You join us at a time when *the occasion is piled high with difficulty*. You join us at a time when we must *think and act anew*. You join us at a time when you will need to be active and important role-players as we rediscover our normal rhythms and rites of passage as we recalibrate the school we want to become. So, welcome to what will be the most exciting time of your life as you embark on this journey with us. I cannot promise you smooth sailing, I cannot promise you certainty, I cannot promise you easy passage and I cannot promise you success but what I can guarantee is, that if you are prepared to show resilience, determination and develop the self-discipline that you need to catapult you forward significantly, you will grow and develop here into a young man who takes responsibility for his actions, who is honest, first and foremost with himself, and who wants to change the world for good.

At St Alban's we pride ourselves on our manners, our honesty, our camaraderie and our determination to allow every young man to find a place where he feels like he belongs and where he feels like he can navigate the uncertainty and stormy present.

I am sure you cannot believe that you are finally sitting here at the New Boys luncheon on the St Alban's campus. Time continues to fly and after speaking to many of you during 2021, I know that you were keen to put your preparatory careers behind you and move on to the final phase of your school career. The problem with this is that not too long from now, you will most probably be in the same situation as our Matrics from last year, who are considering a university career this morning. It all rushes by very quickly, so savour the moments!





As I have indicated, this pandemic has changed our lives and the way we interact and the way we engage with others and I would like to encourage you as New Boys to:

Firstly, get involved in as much as you possibly can. Try things you have never tried before. Stretch yourself and allow yourself to grow and learn. This will allow you to engage with others, it will allow you to make new friends and it will allow you to find a rhythm to all you do here.

Secondly, don't take things for granted. As the pandemic has taught us, we do not know what tomorrow holds. Take responsibility for every moment. Be grateful for the opportunities afforded to you and allow yourself to be open to new things.

Thirdly, learn and understand that your arrival today is the beginning of a journey and part of your greater journey through life. A journey of discovery of yourself and your abilities, your dreams and aspirations and the exploration of the fact that you have within you far more potential than you could ever imagine.

Parents, your son is growing up; don't fight it, support it, live it with him and allow him to fly. Your expectations of him are high and so they should be. But remember, sometimes he will scale the icy peaks of your expectation and sometimes he will disappoint. You will have one fleeting moment to show your emotion and reaction in situations like these – and the image of that reaction can last a lifetime. There are seconds to tune in. Your first words will go straight to your son's heart.

He will trip and fall. Don't be a lawnmower parent and try to smooth the path ahead of him. In doing so, you are disempowering him. In doing so you are emasculating him. In doing so you are protecting him from the inevitable. He has to trip to learn, he has to fall to grow, he has to fail to succeed.

Don't be a helicopter parent and hover around and smother him and don't be a bulldozer parent and try to bully staff and sport coaches into getting his or your way.

Our Academic staff were privileged enough to have a live session with Dr Shimi Kang recently:

Drawing on the latest neuroscience and behavioural research, Dr Kang transcends cultural limits and shows why authoritarian "tiger parents" and permissive "jellyfish parents" actually hinder self-motivation. She proposes a powerful new and universal parenting model: the intelligent, strong, joyful, and highly social dolphin. Dolphin parents focus on maintaining balance in their children's lives to compassionately, yet authoritatively, guide them toward the key 21st century skills of "CQ" - creativity, communication, collaboration, and critical thinking. Dr Kang argues that by trusting our deepest natural intuition about what is best for our kids, we will allow them to develop key traits of adaptability, community-mindedness, and CQ to empower them to thrive in our increasingly competitive and complex world.

We have young men from 40 different preparatory schools here this morning – don't just gravitate to those you know. Make connections, learn to network, make friends outside your normal friendship group and, most importantly, find the things you love, explore, investigate and be curious. Our boys talk about the brotherhood and being part of this brotherhood has more to do with belonging than fitting in. Fitting in means you have to conform to a stereotypical mould but St Alban's is not like that. Someone who refused to be forced into a mold was Bishop Desmond Tutu, Nobel laureate, global icon and courageous evangelist of human rights, justice, love and tolerance for others.

Bishop Michael Nuttall, in his eulogy of Archbishop Tutu, used this verse from Micah ch 6: v8. It says: "What does the Lord require of you but to pursue justice, to love kindness and to walk humbly with your God?" Young men of the Class of 2026 - we will be disappointed if you are not determined to be yourself but, more importantly, the best version of yourself you possibly could be. I would encourage you as you join us to be like Bishop Tutu, to pursue justice, stand up for what is right, love kindness, particularly in a world which is unkind, and to walk humbly as you find your place of belonging here.

Parents, thank you for entrusting St Alban's to care for your sons on this important journey. We understand that as you sit together as a family today, you have hopes and dreams for your young man who joins us. He is your unique gift and your hopes and his dreams about the future are real and precious. At St Alban's we understand and treasure this and although we (and you) will not always get it right, we endeavor to partner with you as your son becomes more independent on his journey to adulthood. Together we will hold up his dreams and encourage him to follow them, to believe in them and ultimately to live them.





We would like to remind you that this journey is not a finite one. It is not one which is only defined by winning or Matric results. This journey (of learning) is a game which never ends – it is infinite, and you will need to remind yourself of this as we progress. There will be happy times and sad times, achievements, and disappointments, but one thing is certain – every young man who engages in the rich tapestry of life at St Alban's College, will be changed forever.

You see, St Alban's is a school which is happy yet rigorous, it is a school which is modern yet grounded in traditional values, it is a school which is real yet compassionate, it is a school which lives in the present yet prepares for the world of tomorrow, it is a school which values individuality yet understands the importance of the team and the brotherhood, it is a school where we value listening, it is a school where diversity, respect and tolerance live, it is a school where thinking is encouraged, it is a school where dreams are fulfilled, it is a school of brothers who stand by each other and mentor each other, it is a school which exposes you to the possibilities hidden within yourself and encourages you to uncover them, and it is a school which allows you to fly!

I look forward to the journey with you over the next five years. Thank you for joining us this morning and God bless as we travel this road together.

