



108th Founders' Day Assembly – Rector's Address

Mark Wilson

Friday 14 March 2025



Tēnā koutou katoa,
Nau mai, haere mai.

A very warm welcome to you all, on this 108th Founders' Day for St Andrew's College. I would like to especially welcome some very special invited guests, whanau 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 1965. David Livesey, a member of this year group, who was in the 1st XI Cricket team in his final year, 1969, will be presenting the cricket caps to our 1st XI later in this assembly.

Other special guests with us this morning include Board Chair, Mrs Felicity Odlin; and Board members, Mr Alan Merry and Ms Stephanie Bain. I also warmly welcome Amiria Rule, an Old Collegian who attended St Andrew's College from 1998 to 2001. She represented New Zealand as a member of the Black Ferns, and was a member of the teams that won in the 2002 and 2006 Rugby World Cups, and represented New Zealand again in the 2014 tournament. She is perhaps best known to our current students as our Head of Learning Support. Amiria we are delighted to have you here as our guest speaker.

It is important we do 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 Thompson – we now celebrate and acknowledge him with the name of Thompson House, and it is his poem that is honoured with The Poet's Walk along our driveway.

108 years ago, back in 1917, Thompson founded this school, with its humble beginnings in the St Andrew's Presbyterian Manse at Hospital Corner near Hagley Park. Our College then moved to this present site at Strowan a year later, in 1918, thanks to a substantial bequest left by Mr Duncan Rutherford, a well-known runholder from North Canterbury. Rev. Thompson had personally canvassed Mr Rutherford for funds in 1916. This bequest along with a bank loan and considerable funds raised by Rev. Thompson enabled the College to purchase Strowan. Dr Robert Erwin was another key supporter of the foundation of our school and was appointed as the Board's first Chairman, a position he held for 14 years, until 1931. Three of our four houses commemorate these men, while the namesake for MacGibbon House was Mr William MacGibbon, who made a generous bequest in 1962 used in the expansion of the school facilities at that time. It is appropriate that I acknowledge our school's Houses, as this year we celebrate 100 years of having our House system.

This year, 2025, is also a significant milestone year for St Andrew's College, as this year marks 70 years since the original Memorial Chapel was first built back in 1955. We now have our stunning Centennial Chapel, which beautifully includes our past with the original features from our first Memorial Chapel – yet provides a large and more modern style that opens out onto Strowan Stream



and looks towards our future. I am sure our Founders would be delighted if they were looking out over St Andrew's College today, 108 years later. They would no doubt be so pleased how their original dream would have grown and developed further into the outstanding school that it is today. Their vision and actions reminded me of the importance of having and acting out on our dreams.

Most of us, I hope, will be familiar with the famous American Civil Rights leader Rev. Martin Luther King Junior's inspiring "I have a dream" speech. Martin Luther King sought to outline his vision for a better American nation, and the importance of having your own dream cannot be underestimated. Dreams can inspire and guide us all. It is important to remember that Martin Luther King did not become famous for saying "I have a complaint." He articulated a dream, and dreams are powerful. They can provide vision and inspire us to get up each day, face adversities and change the world.

Through your own personal dream, you have the potential to change your world. I bet you were all very good at having dreams when you were young children. Our imaginations were strong, as was our excitement for our future. It is only natural that as we grow our dreams can and do change, which is perhaps just as well, or otherwise most of us would end up as pirates and princesses. But I would like to remind you that as we move into adulthood, we should never lose our childlike ability to dream. A good place to start your new life journey, beyond school, is to define your personal dream. It must be personal and real but also consider – how big would you dream if you know you couldn't fail?

When our son was in Years 9 and 10 at school my wife Judi and I felt he was drifting along and needed to find his passion, his dream to help focus and motivate him. So, we prayed this would happen. Sometimes you need to be careful what you pray for, as that prayer was answered. The camaraderie, physical challenges and opportunities when he joined the army cadets, then created a sense of purpose and belonging that gave him a dream. His dream saw him go on to join the New Zealand Army – which has allowed him to travel overseas, including serving in a multinational peace keeping force in the Sinai Peninsula. I would add, this may not exactly have been the dream his parents had in mind for him when those prayers were said. But it was **his**, and it is a dream he continues to enjoy and is thriving in it. You are unlikely to have a precise roadmap towards fulfilling your dream. However, dreams without goals, are just dreams.

On the road to achieving your dreams you must devise a plan, with some goals, remember to apply discipline, and most importantly you must apply consistency. Because without commitment, you'll never start – but without consistency you'll never finish. It can be very scary and daunting taking those first steps in leaving school to start the rest of your life. So, in beginning your great adventure beyond school, once you have your dream take this advice from Rev. Martin Luther King Junior:

"Take the first step in faith. You don't have to see the whole staircase. Just take the first step."

There is also an old saying, that *"in life, God provides the wind, but we must raise the sails."* In other words, it is now up to you to take and use the opportunities that await you in life.

Let us learn from our Founders to have bold and courageous dreams, that we are not afraid to chase and turn into reality, just like the story of our very own school – St Andrew's College.

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