



St Mary's School  
Waverley  
Founded 1888

# ST MARY'S NEWS



Tel: 011 531 1800 | smsenior@stmary.co.za | www.stmaryschool.co.za

10 July 2020



Over the past few weeks, we have loved welcoming more Grades and Forms back on to campus!

## FROM THE JUNIOR SCHOOL HEADMISTRESS' DESK

This week, St Mary's welcomed more grades back onto campus: in the Senior School, we have been joined by the Form III's; in the Junior School, we have opened the campus to the Grades 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6 girls on selected days. We have maintained and assessed our health and safety protocols, and watched our girls tenderly rekindle relationships with each other and their school against a stark backdrop of climbing Covid-19 infection rates in Johannesburg. With a total of over 63 000 positive cases reported in Gauteng, and recoveries recorded at about one in three, the media tell of a public health system buckling under the pressure of overwhelming demand.

Where does this leave us? In the fortunate position of recognising the value of having the children back in their classrooms with their teachers and of committing, wholeheartedly, to keeping the school open as long as we can operate in an environment of mitigated risk and reasonable safety. We appeal to the St Mary's community to support the school's health and safety measures by intentionally practising social distancing, wearing masks, and washing your hands as part of your daily routines at home with your families. Our efforts on campus are worth nothing without your co-operation.

You will see, from this newsletter, that we have been busy with

some of the ordinary stuff of school: participating in public speaking competitions, engaging with service activities, painting, reading, researching, discussing, creating. (I think Tarumbidzwa Chirume's starring in the movie *Shaina* is extraordinary under any circumstances, so I won't include her news in my list.) There is a startling and wonderful tension between what one poet has called "the renewals and catastrophes" of the world, understood in broad socio-political terms, and the continuity and dailiness of smaller worlds, like school. Of course, these worlds reflect each other, and resonate with each other, but they also offer us some contrast which, at times of great adversity, is nothing short of life affirming.

Seeing the girls back on campus relating to each other and their teachers, and spending time with them in some classes and at Grade 7 teas with the headmistress has brought me such joy. I am grateful to my colleagues for their enthusiastic response to our return, as well as the care they continue to show those girls who are learning remotely.

I have been reflecting this week with the teachers in the Junior School about the limitations our health and safety protocols have imposed on our relations not only with the children and each other on campus, but also with our community of parents and other caregivers.

The result, of course, is that the more incidental aspects of our communication have been suspended: the conversations around the school at drop-off and fetching times, the discussions in The Close before and after co-curricular activities, the chance meetings all around the campus.

We feel the lack of this contact, especially in the Junior School; in an attempt to compensate for it, the management team and I will be looking at ways for us to re-establish connections with our parent body, to renew the spirit of some of those spontaneous encounters, before we embark on our August holiday – a holiday, I hope, that will give you, your children and our teachers the opportunity to restore some balance in your lives, to spend uninterrupted time in each other's company, and to avert your eyes from those ever-present, importunate screens.

SARAH WARNER  
HEADMISTRESS: JUNIOR SCHOOL

## FROM THE CHAPLAIN

God is our refuge and strength,  
a very present help in trouble.  
Therefore we will not fear, though the earth should change,  
though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea;  
though its waters roar and foam,  
though the mountains tremble with its tumult. Selah  
There is a river whose streams make glad the city of God,  
the holy habitation of the Most High.  
God is in the midst of the city; it shall not be moved;  
God will help it when the morning dawns.  
The nations are in an uproar, the kingdoms totter;  
he utters his voice, the earth melts.  
The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah  
Come, behold the works of the LORD;  
see what desolations he has brought on the earth.  
He makes wars cease to the end of the earth;  
he breaks the bow, and shatters the spear;  
he burns the shields with fire.  
"Be still, and know that I am God!  
I am exalted among the nations,  
I am exalted in the earth."  
The LORD of hosts is with us;  
the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah  
Psalm 46 (NRSV)

Psalm 46 is one of my favourite psalms. The image presented is of a city that is an oasis of God's presence – of peace, gladness, holiness, immovability, and beauty. It is this precisely because of God. Outside the city, the nations of the world and all creation are in "tumult" and "uproar". God has only to utter his voice – not to raise his voice or to shout or send out his armies – and the effect is... silence, and a cessation to all possibility of war, violence or destruction. Into that silence, God speaks one, simple yet profound, instruction: "Be still, and know that I am God!"

In various ways, mountains trembling, kingdoms tottering, and nations being in uproar describe both our reality and our experience of the impact of that reality on our lives. The importance of our quiet time spent with God creates and maintains that oasis in our own lives, and helps us to hear the voice with its instruction: "Be still, and know that I am God!"

Sadly, two members of our St Mary's community have died recently. Thando Dingaan, father to Azola (Grade 3) passed away on Tuesday 16 June. He was remembered at a funeral service on Friday 19 June. Also, David H. Mitchell, Chairman of the St Mary's Board from 2003-2006 and father and grandfather to St Mary's Old Girls, passed away on Friday 19 June.

*Rest eternal grant unto Thando and David, oh Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.*

REVD CLAUDIA COUSTAS  
CHAPLAIN

We thank the St Mary's community for their donation of secondhand uniform items. The clothes were delivered to those in dire need in the Dundee area during the lockdown period.

They have made a considerable difference in the lives of many.

Ma Ngobese, Mrs Northmore and Ma Sithebe

## PUBLIC SPEAKING

When one recalls the names of great orators from Ancient Greece to politicians and modern podcast hosts, names such as Socrates, Plato, Martin Luther King Jr and Joe Rogan may come to mind. Unfortunately, the names and great speeches that are overwhelmingly recollected consist of only or mainly male voices. It is a little-known fact that Aspasia of Miletus (469 BC) was the “mother of rhetoric” and is thought to have taught Socrates the art of persuasive language. Therefore, the public-speaking platform offered by the College of Speech and Drama SA is one of utmost necessity in allowing the women of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, our St Mary’s girls, the opportunity to express themselves confidently and with flair, so that their voices will also be remembered one day.

St Mary’s School has participated annually in the High Schools’ Public Speaking Festival, across the open prepared and impromptu sections as well as the Trophy Team event and the Best Individual Speaker event for many years. The school is regularly ranked in the top three of the one hundred Johannesburg based schools which compete in the festival. This year has been no exception, as Catherine Roberg (Form V) was the runner-up in the Best Individual Speaker event, held virtually, for the first time ever, on 18 June. Her prepared speech was inspired by legendary South African playwright, Athol Fugard’s words “all art comes from fire.” In her speech, just as Fugard used his writing as a platform to ask uncomfortable questions, so does Catherine probe into the question of using another’s suffering as impetus for art. This is a wonderful achievement for the school and for public speaking.

The other St Mary’s teams from Form I to matric amassed excellent results which could not have been achieved without the diligence and dedication of the speakers who spend many hours editing and practising their speeches. The speakers are expertly trained by teachers from the English department who equip them to have authentic and persuasive voices. Well done to the 2020 speakers and their coaches.

In the third term, St Mary’s hosts an internal public speaking competition for both the Junior and Senior girls. I encourage everyone with a passion for public speaking to sign-up to hone this critical communication skill. Michelle Obama once said, “If there’s one thing I’ve learned in life, it’s the power of using your voice.”

**JESSICA BUCHER**  
ENGLISH TEACHER



Catherine Roberg

## NATURE ON CAMPUS



Female Amethyst sunbird feeding on the red hot poker (Photo: Quix)

# SHAINA



Tarumbidzwa Chirume (matric) is one of the lead characters in the movie, *Shaina*, due to be released in September. She filmed for a month in Gauteng and the North West.

*Shaina* tells the story of a group of Zimbabwean friends facing life-changing obstacles. As they fight to overcome their circumstances, they discover that by believing in themselves they can forge the futures of their dreams. Tarumbidzwa plays the role of Busi, one of *Shaina*'s best friends. The film is produced by "VisiblyHeard" and Quizzical Pictures.

Congratulations, Tarumbidzwa, we look forward to watching you!



Tarumbidzwa Chirume

# SWIMMING

Our congratulations are extended to Emma Franck (Form III) and Kiera Cloete (Form I) on their selection for the 2020 national swimming squad in their respective age-groups. Well done, girls!



Emma Franck



Kiera Cloete

# MANDELA DAY

For Mandela Day this year, our girls in the Senior School have been very busy in their Houses doing service activities. Some of the activities have included collecting food to distribute as parcels, sewing masks and making toys for dogs.

LYNN NORTHMORE  
HEAD OF PASTORAL CARE



Catherine and Christine Phillips are joined by Steve Green. Photo: Chante' Ho Hip

## The power in One Cup of Pap

Chante' Ho Hip  
chanteh@cxton.co.za

There were smiles all around as the One Cup of Pap initiative spent an afternoon feeding just over 500 vulnerable people from Clay Oven informal settlement at Clay Oven Junction in Paulshof on 15 May.

What initially began as an idea of distributing one cup of maize meal by former Sharks and Stormers rugby player, Wayne Boardman, has grown into a fully-fledged operation that feeds hundreds of vulnerable people in various communities on a weekly basis.

From a starting budget of R250, the initiative has grown exponentially, averaging at almost R80 000 a week. In order to widen its reach and get more people involved, Boardman called on some of his rugby friends to join in and hopefully get more people

involved. "This operation now feeds between 1 500 to 2 100 people so we hope that by bringing on a few familiar faces, people may want to get involved," he said.

He credits the involvement of Sandton Police Station for allowing and assisting the group to feed a large number of people. "The Sandton police officers have been phenomenal! I can sometimes talk to them the day before or even the day of the food distribution, just like today, and they will be here being polite and helping out with the crowds," he explained.

He noted that he has noticed a trend in the community during this time whereby everyone would like to give back but they just don't know where to give and who to trust. The group now provides weekly updates to show the community just how powerful their donations are.

To date, drops have been made at the following places:

- The community on the corner of Witkoppen and Main roads in Paulshof – the Clay Oven community
- Feed Thy Kids Creche (Old Roodepoort Rugby Club)
- Community members in need and waste pickers in Sunninghill
- Braamfontein Spruit in Paulshof (under the bridge)
- Ivory Park
- Parkmore (behind the Field and Study Centre).

Springbok legends and former Rugby World Cup winners Joel Stransky, Trevor Nyakane and John Smit have also joined the initiative on a weekly basis. "I have the opportunity to lend a hand and help those who really need it help," Nyakane said. Details: Wayne Boardman 084 545 1717.

### How can yo

The advent of Covid-19 and lockdown has seen a rise in need for food and hygiene in communities.

The Inner-City Community Action Network (Can) facilitates the creation of food parcels in the suburbs surrounding inner city, to address its needs.

According to Inner-City Action Network marketing manager, Aimee Henderson, these networks empower, support and strengthen communities.

to see to their own needs and identify needs for food and hygiene in their immediate vicinity.

"The suburbs are needed in limited to, Riebeeck, Dunkeld, Helderberg, Parkhurst, Park and can be an existing want to Hendrik Shovel and an e

Catherine Phillips (Form IV)

# LITTLE SAINTS - GRADE 00 STUDYING WASSILY KANDINSKY

The Grade 00 pupils have been studying Russian painter and art theorist Wassily Kandinsky - they painted their own concentric circles using metallic paint and black card.



## GRADE 0 - BACK TO SCHOOL



## GRADE 4

The Grade 4 girls are using the space on campus to reflect on the leaf inquiry they enjoyed at home during remote learning!



## RHYTHMIC GYMNASTICS



Zeinab Kone, our budding Grade 7 rhythmic gymnast, reading her class reader, *The Giver* while stretching. We are so impressed with your multitasking, Zeinab!

## GRADE 5

The Grade 5 girls were given the task of creating a mobile of each planet; one side of the mobile is decorated, and the other side features facts about the planet. Soon the library will be full of astronomical art!



# DISCUSSIONS FOR CHANGE

*If you don't understand, ask questions. If you're uncomfortable about asking questions, say you are uncomfortable about asking questions and then ask anyway. It's easy to tell when a question is coming from a good place. Then listen some more. Sometimes people just want to feel heard. Here's to possibilities of friendship and connection and understanding."*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, *Americanah*

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie is a role model for both men and women alike. She is especially instructive when seeking guidance on how to initiate difficult conversations with young girls.

Conversations about race, gender and black identity are enlivened by her refreshing candour: "Racism should never have happened and so you don't get a cookie for reducing it."

In her book *We Should All be Feminists* Adichie writes "We teach girls shame make them feel as though being born female they're already guilty of something. They grow up to be women who silence themselves. They grow up to be women who cannot say what they truly think. And they grow up — and this is the worst thing we do to girls — they grow up to be women who have turned pretence into an art form."

In the last two weeks, Dr Warner and I launched our Discussions for Change with the girls in Grade 4 and 6. We were aware that if we were careless in our approach and in our intentions, we would risk silencing our girls when we most need to hear their voices. We did not want to make assumptions about how or what they were thinking because, as adults, we are not always mindful of the ways in which we impose our thinking upon young children.

Supported by mentor teachers, we facilitated the first in a series of ongoing workshops designed to elicit truthful responses from the girls. Using concrete materials and real-time, interactive software to document their observations and questions, we began to gather the

data that will inform our next steps.

We were encouraged by the constructive attitude and engagement demonstrated by both grades. The Grade 4s quickly generated honest, probing questions in response to the learning provocations we provided. They made connections to their own experiences, shared personal stories and even articulated the direction they would like future lessons to take.

The Grade 6s were analytical in their approach and enjoyed seeing their responses presented anonymously on the white board for interrogation. Their visual literacy skills were evident, and like the Grade 4s, they were truthful in their observations – which was our goal.

Over the next few weeks, we will meet with the Grade 7s and then the Grade 5s – before designing the next discussions. While our framework is inspired by Philosophy for Children, our tools for teaching anti-racism, feminist thought and critical literacy are not Eurocentric. South Africans are familiar with the humanist concept of Ubuntu philosophy, but Africa has both a modern and ancient history of philosophical thought and dialogue, passed down through centuries of oral tradition, art and literature.

Renewed scholarly interest in the philosophical content of Wole Soyinka, Chinua Achebe, Okot p'Bitek and Taban Lo Liyong is a testament to the wisdom that abides on our own continent. Africa has also produced important feminist novelists and poets in addition to Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie who continue to challenge concepts of patriarchy and colonisation.

With such inspiration to weave into our curriculum and into the materials for our enquiries, we have every reason to believe that the possibility of "friendship, connection and understanding" can become a reality.

LAUREN HOWDEN

HOD: CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

## GRADE 6

The Grade 6 girls have been studying the history of medicine. As part of their research into mummification, the girls made their own miniature mummy and sarcophagus.



Amy Morrison



Yuxi Zhang



# GRADE 7 - FESTIVAL DAY

This year, we decided to bring some Children's Art Festival cheer to the Grade 7s who would normally have the opportunity to visit Makhanda for the annual festival. The girls spent Friday 26 June engaged in some activities similar to those they would have experienced in Makhanda.

Tickets in hand, they began the morning with a few giggles while watching a Michael McIntyre comedy. Later the girls studied the structure and rhythm of a Shakespearean sonnet with Dr Warner, and they finished that session with a dramatic performance of a sonnet from Romeo and Juliet. The girls also performed mimes with Mrs Firth

and Mrs Smith, not an easy feat in a mask, and they designed chocolate wrappers with Mrs Richmond.

The bulk of the day was spent completing an art project with Mrs Grawez and Mrs Richmond based on paintings by Blessing Ngobeni, this year's winner of the Standard Bank Young Artist Award for Visual Art. Each girl drew and painted a section of one of his artworks.

