



On Wednesday 3 June, after much preparation, we welcomed the Grade 7 and matric girls back onto the St Mary's campus

FROM THE JUNIOR SCHOOL HEADMISTRESS' DESK

The strange, distancing effect of lockdown makes it possible, if not necessary, to say the following to you: I bring you news of our school – this has been a good week. The Grade 7 and matric girls are safely back on campus, and the school is properly awake.

The campus was not empty in the weeks before the girls returned, but the presence of people is not enough to make a school like St Mary's live. St Mary's takes heart from what the girls and boys bring with them, the tension of their different desires and the seemingly opposite directions they can take – the matrics' request to voice their solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement by wearing black to school on Thursday; the Grade 7s' request to do the Patronal Festival over by celebrating it with a picnic of their own in the school grounds.

These seemingly irreconcilable impulses, what Sarah Cairns identifies in her article for the HOPE committee as the monumental and minor losses of our community's experience of lockdown, are what we ask the school to hold, and to honour.

It is what we see in the daily longing of the girls to be back at school alongside their astounded relief that, in Helen Moore's (Form V) words, their remote learning is "working well"; their recognition of their privilege at a time when for most South African children, not being at school means you cannot eat, let alone learn. The girls' sense, which we share, that, under lockdown they are simultaneously apart from the world and deeply implicated in its grief and grim triumphs too.

Our duty as a place of education with a long, contested history is not to try to make of this experience one thing: our duty is to keep living through the tension, the missteps, and the times of little faith – to encourage the honest expression of feeling in our community, and to feel reassured, not by the sameness of our experience, but by our willingness to catch each other, to look each other in the eye, and to get up again: we know, our Christian ethos teaches us, that we have work to do.

SARAH WARNER
HEADMISTRESS: JUNIOR SCHOOL

FROM THE CHAPLAIN

Immediately [Jesus] made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side, while he dismissed the crowds. And after he had dismissed the crowds, he went up the mountain by himself to pray. When evening came, he was there alone, but by this time the boat, battered by the waves, was far from the land, for the wind was against them. And early in the morning he came walking toward them on the sea. But when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were terrified, saying, "It is a ghost!" And they cried out in fear. But immediately Jesus spoke to them and said, "Take heart, it is I; do not be afraid."

Peter answered him, "Lord, if it is you, command me to come to you on the water." He said, "Come." So Peter got out of the boat, started walking on the water, and came toward Jesus. But when he noticed the strong wind, he became frightened, and beginning to sink, he cried out, "Lord, save me!" Jesus immediately reached out his hand and caught him, saying to him, "You of little faith, why did you doubt?" When they got into the boat, the wind ceased. And those in the boat worshiped him, saying, "Truly you are the Son of God."

- Matthew 14:22-33 (NRSV)

If we read the above passage, slowly, two or three times to ourselves, I wonder where we would each place ourselves at the moment. I wonder, for that matter, where we each placed ourselves yesterday in relation to now, and where we will place ourselves tomorrow. I suspect that for each of us, this time has been characterised by a whirlwind of emotions and thoughts.

In a time of uncertainty, as this time living in a pandemic and in lockdown is, perhaps it feels to some of us that the boat is the safer place to be, and that venturing out into our places of work, school, or other locations is to step into fear. Perhaps instead, for some of us, not returning to the lives we are used to leading and remaining in level 3 lockdown feels like having to stay outside the boat, walking on the water, for even longer – when all we really want to do is get back in to the safety of that to which we were used to, prior to the beginning of the pandemic.

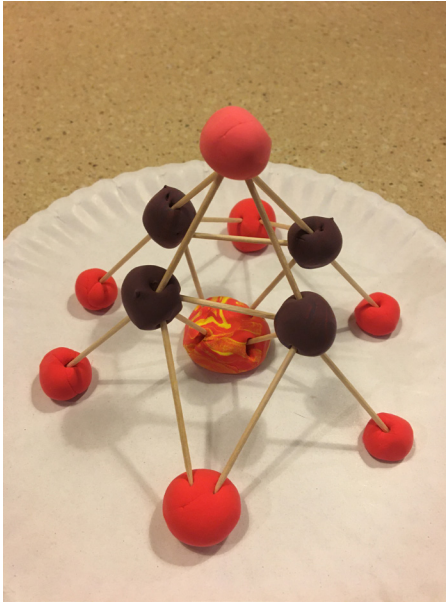
Let us take comfort in the fact that Peter cries out his feelings honestly to God, and therefore regardless of where we place ourselves in this story, we are encouraged to do the same. Furthermore, Christ's response to Peter is immediate: he catches Peter and reassures him. Again, this is Christ's response to us now. Resting in the presence of Christ for even a moment means that the wind ceases and the peace that passes all understanding fills us, too – for truly, Christ is "the Son of God".

REVD CLAUDIA COUSTAS
CHAPLAIN



On Friday 29 May, St Mary's celebrated the school's 132nd birthday, albeit remotely, with an online Patronal Festival service. Many families continued the Patronal tradition with a picnic.

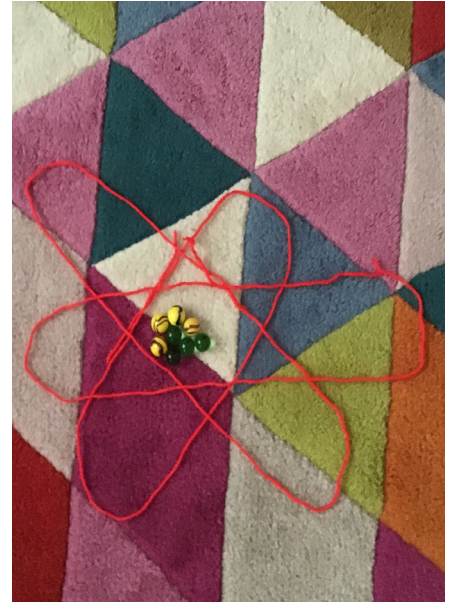
GRADE 5



Lara Teji



Katherine Deacon



Nadia Moosa

The Grade 5 girls have been studying the genre of Science Fiction in English and they had great fun researching information about CERN and the Large Hadron Collider. They could choose to create an atom from items they had at home or to design a futuristic science laboratory out of LEGO.

LITTLE SAINTS



Amani Selamolela

The Grade 00 children continue exploring rainbows this week. They have experimented making their very own rainbows.

GRADE 6 ART

For Art, the Grade 6 girls were asked to imitate a painting using what they could find around their house.



Daniella van der Berg imitating *On a Bench* by Berthe Morisot



Olivia Kirsch imitating *Girl with Balloon* by Banksy

The Form V English students turned to the Facebook group, *A view from my window* as the stimulus for transactional writing pieces. Members of this group post unfiltered photographs of the view from their windows under lockdown and reflect on their contexts during the Covid-19 pandemic. Our Form V girls were tasked with using their views as inspiration for an email, blog post or open letter: transactional genres which are part of the matric curriculum.



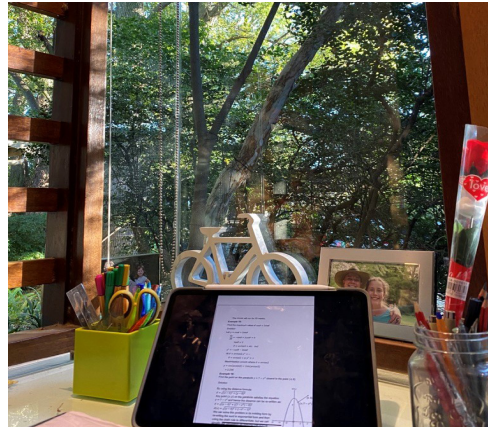
Saint Cloud Street is one of the main roads in Kyalami, but you would never have guessed that based on this picture. This road is usually a buzz with traffic throughout the day as people move to and from work, school, socialising. The park across the street from my house is filled with children playing on the jungle gym, parents and nannies chatting and on weekends the grass is often occupied by families and their picnic blankets or dog owners throwing tennis balls.

But things have changed. Now the road mostly only carries a couple of grocery delivery vans. The park's only human foot traffic is between six and nine every morning; for the rest of the day it belongs to the pigeons and the neighbourhood cats. This park has become a visual representation of some of the effects of the Corona Virus.

All over the world, recreational areas have been left empty whilst people spend their days inside their homes, doing their bit to combat the spread of this pandemic. There is no doubt that lockdown and social distancing are difficult, humans for the most part are social beings after all. But it is in fact our social nature that should persuade us to stay away from each other as much as possible right now. Our love of human contact and by extension, humanity as a whole is the reason why we understand that we must stay apart to protect others and ourselves.

So, while currently parks and streets all over the globe are vacant, humans are still very much together. Together not physically, but in solidarity with one another in our battle to flatten the curve. And if we all just do our bit right now, we'll be back together having picnics in the park in no time.

See you soon
Nicola Watt



Helen Moore
Email

Wednesday, 27 May 2020 at 9:00. View from my desk in my room.
To: lois.fisher2@verizon.net
Subject: Online school
From: 20moohel@stmarysschool.co.za

Dear Ouma,

I write to you today because I know that you would be excited and amazed by the education that I am receiving.

Transport to school now involves stretching my legs for three small steps from my bed to my desk. As I sit in my chair, within my room, at home, I can access information from all around the world. From my new classroom I look up into the trees and can be learning anything from genetics to Shakespeare, chemical equilibrium to the Ujamaa villages in Tanzania.

Ouma, you were the first in our family to graduate from college. While attending your small women's college in Massachusetts with typewriters and textbooks, I wonder if you ever could have imagined that one day your granddaughter would sit in South Africa and learn solely through a screen.

It is incredible what technology and my teachers have brought me. I have been simultaneously astounded by how well it is working and by how much I prefer normal school. This time alone at home has taught me that learning is so much more than understanding content. Learning is about exploring content and using it to understand more about the people and places by which we are surrounded.

You, like me, always relied on human interaction as an integral part of life. I know that you would understand my feelings of frustration and disconnection caused by my inability to be present and learning with people. Through feeling detached I have been taught about the power of education. Learning has provided a balance for me that cannot undo missing people but adds a level of certainty to my daily routine.

Education has been more than a weapon; it has become a release from the turmoil in our current world.

Yours always
Helen

MESSAGE FROM THE HOPE COMMITTEE

Is everything sad going to come untrue?

"Gandalf! I thought you were dead! But then I thought I was dead myself. Is everything sad going to come untrue? What happened to the world?"

~ *Lord of the Rings*, JRR Tolkien.

On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organisation's Dr Tedros Ghebreyesus declared the COVID-19 virus a pandemic and the world's collective reality changed forever. It is now well over two months since South Africa declared a national state of disaster and slowly, slowly we creep out of hibernation into a changed way of being. Our children will make their way back to a different campus and as parents we wish we could tell them that everything sad will become untrue. The lost sports events, missed hugs, missed celebrations, the tuck shop, playdates, cancelled performances, and birthday rings... Can we redo?

The pre-COVID world was described as more polarised than ever. Twenty-nineteen was dubbed the year of the protest. And then there was a glimmer of hope in the midst of the trauma of a national state of disaster: we read and heard and joined the calls for solidarity - a united humanity. We witnessed - across all divides - extraordinary acts of generosity and human kindness. And yet, it seems so short-lived in the backdrop of mass, and increasingly global, demonstrations over racism and policy brutality in the United States. These are especially painful reminders to South Africans who have lived experiences of racism. The sad truth is that racism wasn't killed by COVID-19. It lives on and the outrage across the world has become a much, much louder call for things to be done differently.

Everything sad will not become untrue, will it? We can't pause, rewind and redo.

We can and must mourn with those grievous injustices in the United States and everywhere in the world. We must mourn with our children over what they have lost, however minor these may seem in the larger scheme of things.

What can we do? We have to hang on to the hope for something new and better. We owe that to our children who will inherit this world. The least we can do is give them the tools to navigate change and uncertainty. And we can do that by modelling courage, adaptability and resilience, underpinned by the conviction of the inherent value of every human being. Living in South Africa helps. We've had a rough ride. And we have somehow endured and continue to do so.

We can also count and remember our blessings. St Mary's is still St Mary's - a beacon of excellence. Our school is one of the fortunate few with all the resources and capabilities in our heads, teachers and infrastructure to deal with crises. St Mary's will continue to produce strong, principled global citizens fully equipped with all they need to build a new and beautiful reality.

That is what we have to look forward to.

Sarah Cairns

The HOPE committee - Hearing Other People's Experiences

A sub-committee of the PTA to encourage parent conversations around topics of diversity

Reach out. We'd love to hear from you: hope@stmary.co.za

MESSAGE FROM THE DIVERSITY COMMITTEE

#BLACKLIVESMATTER

The St Mary's ethos is love, community and integrity. St Mary's therefore strives to embrace and respect the different cultural and racial backgrounds of all members in our community. The St Mary's diversity committee would like to voice our solidarity with the Black Lives Matter movement, as we are saddened and horrified by the discrimination and brutality inflicted on black people, both in our country and globally. Black Lives Matter is a powerful statement, but we need to ensure that it becomes a reality. The first step in achieving this is embodying the mindset of the Black Lives Matter Movement in our daily lives. Small moments of solidarity, such as speaking out against friends, colleagues and family often lead to greater changes in mindset. We, as the St Mary's diversity committee 2020, will be making an effort to spread awareness and engage with the St Mary's community concerning the Black Lives Matter movement, as we believe that education and open discussion are the most significant steps in working towards justice and equality for all members of our societies.



A link that will allow you to sign petitions, donate and learn about
#BlackLivesMatter

<https://blacklivesmatter.carrd.co/>