



Some Grade 0 girls on their first day of school

## FROM THE JUNIOR SCHOOL HEAD'S DESK

We are so glad to be back on campus, the challenges of social distancing, mask-wearing and persistent wet weather notwithstanding. Parents worry about the warmth and comfort of their children at times like these, which is understandable, especially in classrooms and venues that are well ventilated to meet present Covid-19 health and safety standards – but I think you would be surprised by what we observe of your daughters at school.

For some reason – scientists have their theories – the rain and unseasonably cold temperatures bring with them a sense of camaraderie and heightened playfulness, or what one blogger refers to less euphemistically as “kids going a bit feral in the rain.” And the category of “kids” is best understood in its broadest sense: earlier this week, a meeting I attended in Deanne King’s office was interrupted by raucous giggling and the sound of footsteps clattering around the corner – some matric students were unself-consciously absorbed in chasing one another along the corridors.

Walking past groups of girls working, playing or eating outside in the Junior School, I am struck by how animated they are, especially the younger ones, as they greet their teachers and each other across the Junior School Close. (Appetite, incidentally, is also stimulated by overcast skies and rain: a decrease in the hormone serotonin can increase carbohydrate cravings and make you hungry.) We adults might seem muted by contrast, but there is little evidence, thankfully, among

our staff of the irritability or dissatisfaction documented in a 2012 study on the effect of inclement weather on human behaviour. The same report found that women’s sense of psychological well-being declined more than men’s when it rained – if that is the case, our teachers are doing a consummate job of masking their true feelings.

I am aware not only of the teachers’ immense gratification at teaching onsite again, but also of the remarkable tenderness and patience they have shown the children this week as they ease them back into a routine. A message received from a Grade 000 parent testifies to the genuine companionship the teachers enjoy with the children, and their commitment to looking after them:

*I watched a teacher yesterday in the pouring rain having stood outside in the cold for 45 minutes already. She held the umbrella over one of our kids and at the child’s walking pace, without hurrying her, she walked alongside her, listening to the early morning greeting. Such a beautiful and simple kindness.*

And such a beautiful and simple pleasure: to be back on campus, walking alongside your children, and doing the work we love.

SARAH WARNER  
JUNIOR SCHOOL HEADMISTRESS



## FROM THE CHAPLAIN

*Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want. But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law [...] [The] fruit of the Spirit is **love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control**. There is no law against such things.*

- Galatians 5:16-18; 22-23 (NRSV)

It is particularly the emboldened words in the passage above upon which our school values of **love, community and integrity** are based. The Fruits of the Spirit are evidenced in community and, therefore, the author of the letter to the Galatian people, assumes community as a value. Love is that greatest value (1 Corinthians 13), which underpins all. The message of the author of the Galatians passage is to the effect that the Fruits of the Spirit will emanate from being led by God's Spirit. This is integrity: the Fruits of the Spirit are consistent with the character of the person filled with God's Spirit.

REVD CLAUDIA COUSTAS  
CHAPLAIN



Grade 1 girls proudly wearing their summer uniform for the first time!



## LITTLE SAINTS

The children at Little Saints walk through the doors in the morning with their minds ready to learn. It is heartwarming to see how they have settled, made new friends, and have thoroughly enjoyed exploring the environment and discovering interesting spaces in which to play.

This week the children have been looking at the identity of an orange. They have had the opportunity to explore the fruit in detail through thinking routines and observational drawings. In the atelier, the children explored colour mixing using a variety of media to make different shades of orange. In Music, they enjoyed experimenting to make different sounds by throwing, rolling, and bouncing an orange. This led to their incorporating these sounds into musical pieces using body percussion.

CELIA DIANA  
HoD: LITTLE SAINTS



## ATKV AFRIKAANS OLYMPIAD

During the second term of 2020, 22 St Mary's girls from Form III to Form V wrote the ATKV Olympiad (Senior Afrikaans First Additional Language), along with more than 1500 students from all over South Africa. Annika Gertenbach (FV) achieved a distinction of 90% - an exceptional result. She was one of the Top 20 achievers in Gauteng. Well done, Annika!

The following students achieved results of 70% and above:

Form III

Mia van Heerden

Danielle Grobbelaar

Mira Kathawaroo

Jessica Lansdown

Form IV

Yvonne Dippenaar

Tessa Dröge

Mia van der Westhuizen

Form V

Kaitlyn Why

Well done to all students who wrote the Olympiad in 2020. Senior students are encouraged to participate in the 2021 Olympiad. This year's Olympiad will take place online on Tuesday 18 May. Entries will close on Wednesday 17 February. Please contact your Afrikaans teacher to enter.



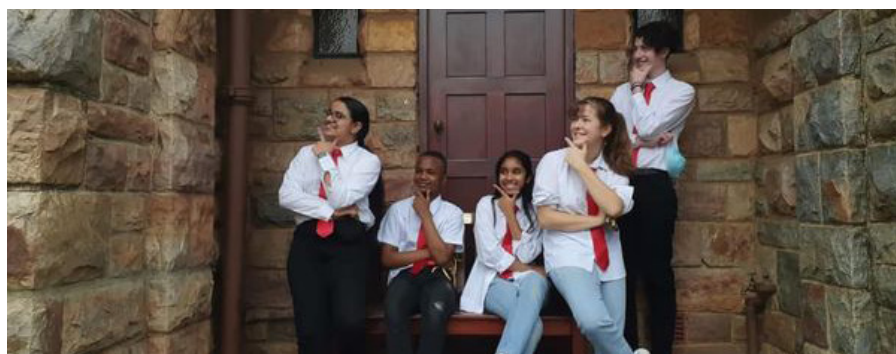
AFRIKAANS DEPARTMENT

## DEBATING

The St Mary's debaters participated in a plethora of online debate competitions during last year. The most notable being the South African National Schools' Debating Championships over the December holidays. The St Mary's girls in the junior division included Hayley Laithwaite, Danika Neuhoof, Franscesca Lewitton and Dalila Spinazze. Nyasha Mazarura competed in the senior division. It was their first time competing at a national level for all the girls and, despite the difficulties that came with competing online, they did exceptionally well. Danika and Nyasha both won Nationals within their respective Gauteng teams, with Nyasha being selected as a reserve for the national senior A team.

Hailey, Franscesca and Dalila all made the Open Break into the final rounds with their teams which is an astounding achievement. Regarding the junior debaters, Franscesca ranked 4<sup>th</sup> as the best junior debater in South Africa and ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> as the new junior speaker. Additionally, she attained the national runner-up position with her team. Danika was ranked as the 6<sup>th</sup> best junior debater overall. Dalila ranked as the 5<sup>th</sup> best junior debater and ranked as the 3<sup>rd</sup> best new junior speaker. Overall, her team was the runner up in the junior division.

The girls grappled with motions surrounding gender, politics, Black Lives Matter, and numerous other topical issues. With support from their debating coach, Itumeleng Mohanoe, and the Gauteng delegation, the girls represented St Mary's exceptionally well. With all the St Mary's speakers being selected to trial for the national team, it was clear the St Mary's debaters showed high levels of promise in their craft in 2020.



NYASHA MAZARURA  
FORM IV

Dalila Spinazze (Form III) and her Gauteng team mates



## DIVING

Kerry-Leigh Morrison, Tannah Proudfoot and Zalika Methula took part in the National Age Groups and RSA Cup diving competitions from the Friday 11 to Tuesday 15 December.

RSA Cup is a senior event which is comprised of the girls competing their best five dives on the 3m board. There are knock out rounds starting with prelims, and going onto quarter-finals, semi-finals and finals. The top eight divers in the prelims go into the cup finals and the next eight go into the plate final.

All three St Mary's girls, Kerry-Leigh, Tannah and Zalika made it into the cup final.

In the prelims the results were as follows:

Tannah Proudfoot 3<sup>rd</sup>

Kerry-Leigh Morrison 4<sup>th</sup>

Zalika Methula 5<sup>th</sup>

After competing in the knock out rounds, Zalika competed for third and fourth place. Zalika ended the competition in 4<sup>th</sup> place, ranking her as the 4<sup>th</sup> best senior diver in the country.

Kerry-Leigh, Tannah and Zalika then went on to compete in their age groups. Kerry-Leigh and Tannah competed in U18 and Zalika in U16 groups.

The results are as follows:

U18:

1m

Kerry-Leigh Morrison 3<sup>rd</sup>

Tannah Proudfoot 5<sup>th</sup>

3m

Kerry-Leigh Morrison 3<sup>rd</sup>

Tannah Proudfoot 6<sup>th</sup>

5m

Tannah Proudfoot 3<sup>rd</sup>

U16:

1m

Zalika Methula 1<sup>st</sup>

3m

Zalika Methula 1<sup>st</sup>

5m

Zalika Methula 2<sup>nd</sup>

Highlights from the awards ceremony are:

Zalika Methula won the trophy for best B group diver, ranking her Number 1 in South Africa at U16 level.

All three divers, Kerry-Leigh, Tannah and Zalika qualified for the South African National Youth Squad.

I wish the girls all the best for the World Junior Championships trial happening in April.

KATE SHEPHERD  
HEAD OF DIVING

## TENNIS

Some of the St Mary's tennis players have been extremely busy on the courts during the holidays.

Our tennis captain, Sarah Millard, participated in a Grade 5 ITF U18 tournament and reached the quarterfinals. Sarah also reached the semi-finals of the singles in the U18 GN Grand Prix. Sarah won the U18 doubles title in the GC Super 8 tournament and her current South African U18 singles ranking is no.7.

Lilitha Ndungane, a Form III pupil, is congratulated on her excellent results over the past few weeks. Lilitha placed fifth in the U18 singles in both the GC and GN Super 8 tournaments. Lilitha went one step further and placed 4<sup>th</sup> in the GN U18 Super 8 tournament. Lilitha also participated in the GN Grand Prix and achieved 3<sup>rd</sup> place in the U18 girls' singles. These results are extremely impressive as Lilitha still qualifies to play in the U16 age group.

Moroesi Tuoane, a Form I pupil, did extremely well in the tournaments in which she participated. Moroesi was the runner up in the U18 singles of the ProKennex Italian Junior Open. She played in the U14 age group and placed 8<sup>th</sup> in the singles of both the GC and GE Super 8 tournaments. Moroesi also placed 5<sup>th</sup> in the U14 singles in the Wilson Gauteng North Grand Prix.

Two pupils from the Junior School participated in the same tournaments in the holidays. Congratulations to Botshelo Diseko who played outstanding tennis in the U12 age group to reach the finals in one Growthpoint Super 8 tournament and take second place in the other two Growthpoint Super 8 tournaments.

Bailey Selvam, a new Grade 7 pupil at St Mary's, participated in the GN Growthpoint Super 8 tournament and placed 14<sup>th</sup> in the U14 singles. We welcome Bailey to the St Mary's tennis family and look forward to tracking her progress on the tennis courts.

Congratulations to all these players on their excellent results, commitment and dedication. Keep up the hard work and thank you for keeping St Mary's flag flying high.

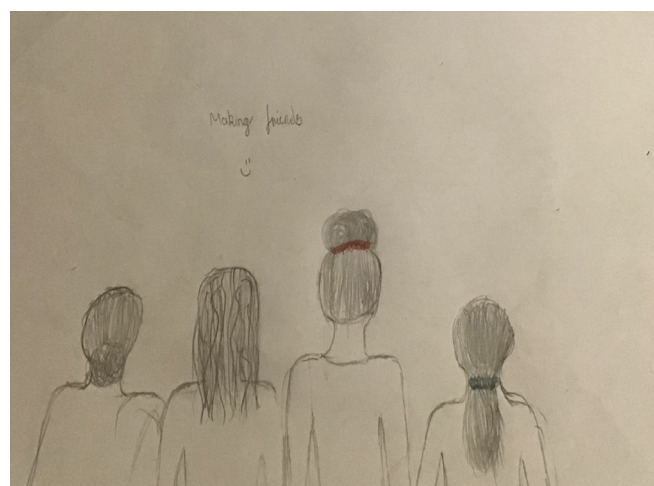
RENÉ PLANT  
HEAD OF TENNIS

## ROWING

The rowing season is in full swing. Unfortunately, most of our official regattas have been cancelled owing to Covid-19, however, in true rowing spirit, the girls have continued to strive for excellence in all spheres. The club girls have competed in several challenges throughout the last month. This past Saturday, the girls had a relaxed rowing session where they listened to a podcast on New Zealand's super sculler, Emma Twigg, while they drew some motivational artwork.

If you want to sign up for rowing, contact Caitlin.dace@stmary.co.za for more information.

CAITLIN DACE  
HEAD OF ROWING



## PTA CLUB 100

CONGRATULATIONS TO THE FOLLOWING WINNERS FOR TERM I 2021

100% WINNER: KEALEBOGA RAMANTSI - FORM I

20% WINNER : GEMMA SCARCELLA - FORM IV

10% WINNER : SIPHESIHLE KUBHEKA - GRADE 6

## COMMUNITY SERVICE

The Baragwanath Hospital Comforts Committee facilitated the handover of Christmas gifts sent by St Mary's girls last year.

Our girls and their families brought such joy to these patients by donating Christmas gifts.

"The eldest girl is from a child-headed teenager family who was assisting at the 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue Clinic. We gathered a few children just before Christmas to give out presents. All the other gifts were given out at the three clinics in Alexandra. We gathered at the park. They were given hot dogs and juice."

#thankyou #smiles #jhbpublichealth #joburghealth #christmas2020

LINDA MAISHMAN  
JUNIOR SCHOOL COMMUNITY SERVICE CO-ORDINATOR



## FROM THE PTA

What a way to start a new year.

Even with 2020 challenges rolling into 2021, we have the fundamental belief that it can only get better.

We have learnt from the lessons of last year. We have adapted to distance learning when required and masks are now a prominent feature which our children often remind us to carry.

Hope is what has pulled us through and allowed us to continue to move forward.

The St Mary's Parent Teacher Association would like to welcome everyone back on campus. We are looking forward to working together in finding new ways of connecting and bringing the community together.

We would also like to take this opportunity to welcome new families who have joined the St Mary's community. We are here to support you. Please feel free to reach out to us if you want to know more and get involved with the St Mary's Parent Teacher Association. After all, "St Mary's and its girls thrive when parents are involved".

REFILOE ZEPHYRINE  
CHAIRPERSON: PARENT TEACHER ASSOCIATION



## **The Oxford-AstraZeneca Covid 19 Vaccine – a simple overview**

Dr Lauren Wise

#VoicesThatCare

The vaccine that is said to be the first to arrive in SA is the so called 'Oxford vaccine'. The research for this vaccine was done at Oxford University with the pharmaceutical company called AstraZeneca (well-known company and good reputation) and with financial backing by both the UK and US governments. One of the key objectives of Oxford-AstraZeneca is that the vaccine should, in principal, not be for profit, but rather for global, affordable distribution.

This vaccine has been developed by doctors and scientists and has been tested thoroughly in humans. It has passed the necessary clinical trials and regulatory reviews that are required of human medications. Although this process happened in a shorter time than usual for vaccine development, no shortcuts were taken in the process. (At one point, the trials were halted because some patients seemed to acquire bad side effects. However, each of these cases was thoroughly studied and in every one, the patient's condition was found not to be linked to the vaccine, and so the trials continued)

This vaccine is relatively easy to produce. It is being produced in India, where 60% of the world's vaccines are already produced and where they already have the special facilities required to safely manufacture this vaccine. It is called Covishield.

### **HOW DOES THIS VACCINE WORK?**

Viruses are non-living organisms. They cannot multiply on their own. They have to get themselves INSIDE a host cell where they hi-jack the host's protein-making devices to make more of their own protein building blocks to make new viruses.

The AstraZeneca vaccine is a Vector Vaccine. In this type of vaccine, another virus (one that cannot cause illness in humans) is used as a carrier or "vector". The vector transports the vaccine components into our cells.

Only the gene of the Spike Protein (a part of the Covid virus's outer coat that is easy for our immune cells to 'see') of the SARS-CoV2 virus is put inside the carrier



virus. This single gene of the SARS CoV2 virus cannot cause illness in us because it is only one tiny part of the outer shell of the Covid virus.

At this point, the Spike Protein gene is well hidden inside the carriers. These are injected into a person and the carrier virus goes into our bodies and attaches to our cells. They then push the Spike Protein gene into our cell. Our cells' protein-making parts then make hundreds of copies of these Spike Proteins. These hundreds of Spike Proteins are released into our body. They are recognised as foreign or "not self" and are destroyed by our immune system. The immune system remembers the viral protein so it can defend against it far faster if it is in our body again.

## IMMUNITY

Immunity is very complicated but in essence there are 3 steps:

1. Recognize the invading "germ" - in this case the SARS CoV-2 virus,
2. Make specific antibodies that destroy the invading germ and
3. Make memory cells so it can recognise the invader quickly if it comes into the body again.

If it's the first time your immune system has ever seen a foreign "germ", steps 1 and 2 take time and use lots of your body's energy. During this time the germ makes you sick. How sick depends on the type of germ & how strong your immune system is in making new antibodies. Your immune system then goes on to make memory cells as you get better.

The point of a vaccine, is to stimulate ALL THREE steps of the immune response WITHOUT the person getting sick. In the case of the Covishield vaccine, by only giving an outer coat Spike Protein of the SARS CoV2 to the patient and not the whole virus, it is impossible to get Covid illness. However, your immune system learns to recognise the Spike Protein as bad and creates antibodies to kill them.

A vaccine should, most importantly stimulate your immune system to memorise and be able to instantly recognise these specific Spike Proteins (which would then be on the invading virus) if they enter the body in the future. Steps 1 and 2 can then kill the now known virus, almost before it makes you sick. If you do get symptoms, they're likely to be mild.

The medical trials show that the vaccine produces 74 – 90 % immunity against future SARS CoV2 virus invasion in an immunised person. Trials are continuing to establish this vaccine's effectiveness against the new variants of the virus. At this point it seems there is at least some immunity to variants.

If you have had Covid illness before, having the vaccine ensures even better memory in your immune system.

A person needs 2 doses of the vaccine, 4 to 12 weeks apart to ensure production of memory immunity. The injection is stored at normal fridge temperature of 2<sup>o</sup> – 8<sup>o</sup> C. (an advantage over the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines that need specialised storage facilities) The injection is given in the upper arm. A patient may experience localized pain & redness and some may get some mild Covid-like symptoms as their immune system works to recognise and kill the invader (this is the same with any vaccine).

The vaccine is approved for adults (over the age of 18). At this stage, it cannot be used in pregnant or breastfeeding women or in children as the clinical trials have not yet been done in these groups. If you are allergic to a component of the vaccine, you also cannot have it. Fortunately this is rare and easily managed medically.

It is safe to give to immunocompromised & immunosuppressed patients, on advice by their doctor, although they may have a weaker overall immune response.

### IN CONCLUSION

Ongoing trials are being conducted on this and other vaccines around the world to get more detailed information on all aspects of the vaccines.

But think about this: currently, the **Covid mortality rate is about 2%**, (i.e. 2 or 3 people per 100 infected are dying) and many more are being permanently disabled by the Covid infection. On the other hand, of the 11500 odd people in the Oxford-AstraZeneca vaccine trials, **not one person has died** and side effects have been minor.

(written 27 January 2021)



Dr Lauren Wise is General Practitioner with a passion for Family Medicine.

She is part of the GGPC (Gauteng General Practitioners Consortium)