HEADMASTER'S PRIZEGIVING SPEECH 2026

Teenaa koutou e te whaanau
Ngaa mihi nui ki a koutou katoa
Ki te Atua – teenaa koe
Ki a Papatuanuku – teenaa koe
Ki te whare karakia – teenaa koe
Te Arikinui Kuini Ngaa-wai Hono I Te Poo, paimaarire
Ki te hunga mate
Ki te hunga ora
Ki a taatou katoa

Chair of the Waikato Anglican College Trust Board, Mr Andrew Johnson, Archbishop Sir David Moxon, trustees, fellows, staff, parents, friends of our School, and most importantly, the tauira, our youth seated here this morning whom we have the pleasure of walking alongside daily in the pursuit of cultivating educated contributors, it is my privilege to present the 67th Headmaster's Report for St Paul's Collegiate School.

I stand before you today tired. Tired. Not sleepy tired, not busy tired, certainly not despondent tired, but simply fed up tired. Tired of the influencers speaking perverse and frightening notions of what it is to be human into the lives of our youth; Tired of the shouting, both online and in person, that our society seems to now accept as if it is the only mechanism available to present ones' views; Tired of the childish political points scoring our politicians use in the absence of visions and strategies to advance the magnificent potential of Aotearoa; Tired of the insecurities that lead our young people to play small, when, as Rev constantly reminds them, they are amazing, enough and most definitely loved; and lastly, Tired of the lack of hope so many position as being an inevitable reality of our times. I am over it.

In 2012, a time when no young person currently enrolled at St Paul's had even commenced primary schooling, HBO released a television series titled 'The Newsroom'. Principally written by Aaron Sorkin, actor Jeff Daniels opens in a well-scripted rant lamenting on the decline of American society. I ask you to consider its relevance to us today. He stated:

[Once] "we stood up for what was right. We fought for moral reasons; we passed and struck down laws for moral reasons. We waged wars on poverty, not poor people. We sacrificed, we cared about our neighbours, we put our money where our mouths were, and we never beat our chest. We built great big things . . . We reached for the stars, and we acted like men. We aspired to intelligence; we didn't belittle it; it didn't make us feel inferior. We didn't identify ourselves by who we voted for in the last election, and we didn't scare so easy."

Whilst I gravitate towards the relatability of that appraisal, albeit of a society found within a somewhat fictional 'television series context', I am constantly struck by and land back at the statement "we didn't scare so easy". Acknowledging that being scared is best defined as an emotional and physical response to a perceived threat, danger, or uncertainty, today I wish to attempt to shape and share an anchor of certainty for our young people as they voyage both within the harbour here, and ultimately beyond the horizon to captivating and challenging landscapes. For simply stating that "I am over it", in reference to our current times, is not good enough. So please connect in, as I seek to reaffirm four basic messages, we need our rangatahi to hear and live by so that they won't scare so easily in this complex world:

1. **Embrace change –** We want our youth to be adaptable, resilient, and excited by possibilities. They should know change doesn't need to be revolutionary; quiet evolutions can be just as powerful. In 2026 our school community grew, not just in numbers and talent, but importantly in heart. We not only welcomed females in Year 9 this year; moreover, we lived out a declaration I made at this very lectern two years ago, almost to the day, when I stated, "We are proud of our people and our programmes; experiencing a St Paul's education should not be determined by gender. We want young girls to have a 5-year St Paul's learning experience . . . We want young girls to know they are worthy of the formative experiences we make available to our young men in Years 9 and 10." To the 72 vibrant, passionate and courageous young women who started as the first Year 9 cohort this year, thank you for paving the way for the many, many more who will follow. To the wider student body, thank you for creating the environment of warmth, mentorship and thoughtfulness that ensured that this successful coming of age for us as a community has been so positive and future focused.

2. **Seek knowledge –** We want our youth to have a thirst for knowing more; to possess an insatiable appetite to be exposed to disciplinary knowledge; to critique literature, to discover the connectedness of concepts, to develop and test shifting hypothesises, to be challenged by and attain skill acquisition across a breath of mediums, to name but a few learning objectives. In 2026, we welcomed and stood alongside further announcements from the Government regarding changes to the national curriculum, which our senior staff are already actively involved in preparing for, ahead of national implementation with Year 12 in 2029, and Year 13 in 2030. We are excited by this nationwide curriculum development, which will bring further rigour and aspiration to the New Zealand education sector and our programmes. Importantly, within our classrooms we know the discovery and retention of knowledge is maximised within single-sex teaching environments in our junior school. Our approach - the effective instruction of junior students via specific content that appeals to their innate dispositions - has been a hugely successful strategy and it is at the centre of a St Paul's education. Thank you to our expert teaching staff members for the delivery and quality of this value.

3. **Live and lead with kindness and grace –** We want our youth to connect, socialise and inspire with character; to possess conviction, ambition and courage, but importantly kindness and grace. Not kindness as a word weaponised as being timid or inactive, but rather kindness in a profound desire to make those around them feel truly seen and valued. And as for living and leading with grace, we aspire to grow graduates who have the humility to recognise they don't have it all together (none of us ever do), to have the vulnerability to seek forgiveness and to forgive, and the strength to lean into the unmerited favour of God and others. In January 2026 we opened The Hive, on time and under budget. This $14 million state-of-the-art facility looks and feels as if it has always been a part of the fabric of St Paul's. Whilst it is our front door, and a wonderful place for our community of Collegians, parents and friends of the School to connect, importantly it's key positioning as a health and wellness space for students has been magnificent to observe in action. For we all need support to navigate life, including the occasion choppy swell, the unwanted interaction of unkindness, and the at-first-glance enormous waves restricting our confidence and contentment. The Student Services complex within The Hive has assisted immeasurably with this kaupapa. I thank our support staff team for bringing these new spaces to life in 2026.

4. **Practise Gratitude –** We want our youth to pause, to sit in stillness, to ground themselves in the simplicity of the moment, to reflect on the blessings and privileges they daily enjoy, and to acknowledge the people, places, and programmes, which are affording them the opportunity to be so thankful. In 2026, gratefulness has been seen in the words and actions

> of Sargood students who no longer live within a construction site; in the eyes of our Harington Boarding students who now have a common room extension that has created a physical environment fitting of a home where everyone can be and belong together; in the busyness of the Future Pathways (Careers Education) Centre, and the additional Harington Day common room spaces, both opened this year where students have subsequently flocked for purposeful and playful pursuits; and in the sentiments of subcontractors who have interacted with countless friendly and obliging students during the construction phase of the new 20-bed dormitory in the Harington Boarding precinct. Importantly, gratitude has been witnessed in a multitude of different settings where a simple thank you or acknowledgement of others has been present and deeply appreciated. When we practise gratitude, we welcome perspective, we drive optimism, and ultimately, we scare away the dark.

So, to practice what I preach, I now wish to express gratitude to the many individuals who have stood up for what was right, who have sacrificed, cared about their neighbours, aspired to intelligence, and haven't scared so easily.

Firstly, to the leaving class of 2026, collectively you have led and contributed with good humour and enthusiasm. I vividly remember a moment with one of your cohort, Deputy Head Boy Gus Weir (whom I have had great pleasure of teasing throughout this year for anything and everything, while, might I add, he has repeatedly questioned how I was ever appointed Headmaster). Gus was asked twelve months ago what he hoped St Paul's would look like when his time finished. He noted, he wanted a school where the youngest members not only felt like they belonged, but furthermore that they considered the place and its purpose to be their own. To our leavers, you have created this environment for your younger peers; thank you for shining so brightly. We pray that The Road will Rise Up to Meet You.

To Head Girl, Olivia Waddell, Head Boy, Aditya Manda, Deputy Head Girl, Emma Fletcher, and Deputy Head Boy, Gus Weir, our weekly meetings have thrived on the premise of ensuring that rarely all five of us are in the same room at one time. Like impactful monarchs, you have been passionate guardians, outrageous characters, sincere and outwardly focused, and downright classy. Thank you for your leadership in 2026.

To the proud staff of St Paul's Collegiate School, thank you for your energy, focus and support. I put the concept and practice of gratitude in the headlights for us all this year; my heartfelt appreciation to each of you for driving its meaning into the hearts and minds of our wonderful students, via both your actions and your words.

To the members of the School's Senior Leadership Team, including our ringmaster Miss Jennifer Purvis, I am so grateful to be enacting this period of change in the company of each of you. The laughter, long hours, clarity, and calmness, each of you bring to your portfolios has allowed our vision, and our style of education to flourish, and with it the contributions and achievements of others.

To the trustees of the Waikato Anglican College Trust Board – thank you for trusting us as Management to advance the strategy we all have so passionately developed and discerned around the Board table. Your generosity of time and skill is greatly appreciated. To the Board Chairman, Mr Andrew Johnson, I marvel at your thirst for challenge, and your propensity to give without expecting anything in return. I deeply value your style and reflective insights in the interests of supporting me and our people. Thank you.

To the directors of the St Paul's Foundation, led by the selfless Mr John Jackson, to our Collegians Association Executive and its personable and passionate President Mr Ryan McCarthy (class of 1997),

and to our Parents' Association, please accept our gratitude for your support throughout another year of relentless progress.

To Hayley, my wife, you are the heartbeat of our home, providing me and our three beautiful children with the love and encouragement we need to reach for the stars. I don't scare easily because you are in my corner. I love you very much.

And to our parents, proud whaanau who support and sacrifice for a St Paul's education, thank you. Thank you for allowing us to be a part of the vessel that your tamariki are sailing through life on; it is a privilege we delight in daily.

Embrace change, seek knowledge, live and lead with kindness and grace, practise gratitude. Four basic messages we need our rangatahi to hear and live by. Sadly, I am certain influencers will continue to promote utter nonsense, individuals will shout, politicians and leaders will attempt to divide us, human insecurities will always exist, and some days each of us will question the presence of hope. But we can always stand up for what is right, always sacrifice, choose never to beat our chests, and consistently and bravely work to scare away the dark as people of faith and action.

As 2026 nears its conclusion, let's not be "over it", but rather "in it"; in the laughter, in the fun, in the places where our feet find us, in our work, in our connections, in the kaupapa of making others be seen and valued.

May the Lord bless you and keep you, may his face shine upon you and be gracious to you.

Teenaa koutou, teenaa koutou, teenaa taatou katoa.