

End of Year Service & Graduation Ceremony – 14th December 2018

Principal's Address



53-57 Plymouth Road, Croydon Hills, Victoria 3136
Phone: (03) 9725 8255 | Fax: (03) 9725 8256
goodshep@gslps.vic.edu.au
www.gslps.vic.edu.au

Special guests, staff, students, parents and friends of The Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School.

Thank you for your attendance tonight and for joining me in celebrating another successful year in the life of Good Shepherd.

Our End of Year Service and Graduation Ceremony is a highlight in the School Year. It is a culmination of another year of learning and growing and developing in so many ways. It is a time to reflect on the year passed, and to come together as a community to celebrate, to farewell, to give thanks and to worship.

Thank you very much to all students and staff for your presentation of our Christmas message tonight. It was a beautiful presentation. God comes to us in so many ways, and you have again presented to us God's wonderful message of love for all people through the gift of His Son Jesus.

2019 has been a year filled with many highlights. Our students have applied themselves to their learning and to all aspects of school life. We have celebrated and recognised not only outstanding achievements (and there have been many), but also celebrated and applauded tremendous effort and endeavour. I regularly remind all students that the expectation of Good Shepherd students is for them to try their hardest and to do their best. We cannot expect any more than that.

Thank you to all students of Good Shepherd for making our school a vibrant, enthusiastic and happy place. Thank you for the love and care you show for each other. Thank you for working cooperatively and respectfully with your teachers. Thank you for making your love of learning so evident as you approach each day with excitement.

Congratulations to our Graduating Class of 2018. You have come to the end of your Primary schooling. Tonight's graduation is but one of many that you will experience in life, as you graduate from one major stage to the next. We are confident in your readiness for secondary school. You have experienced the joys and sometimes the challenges that life brings. We have laughed and celebrated with you; we have cared and comforted you; we have not shielded you from some of the disappointments of school life, but have worked with you to build courage and resilience.

On behalf of all your teachers and other staff members; on behalf of all your fellow students; on behalf of your parents, congratulations on your Graduation from Good Shepherd. May you take with you many happy memories of your years as a Good Shepherd student. We pray you have lives filled with many blessings and wonderful futures ahead of you. And maybe one day, you will return to enrol your own children in Good Shepherd. (And for those who are wondering – no, it is unlikely that I will still be Principal!)

To my staff – does that sound a little presumptuous to refer to you as “my” staff? It is not intended to be, but rather a reflection of how I feel about each one of you (teaching and non-teaching staff). I feel a sense of protectiveness, of care and concern for each one of you. You give so much to the life of

Good Shepherd. You are all so different in so many ways, with so many gifts and talents, yet you are united in your commitment to Good Shepherd and to your students.

Thank you all of you, for the work you do to make Good Shepherd a special place for students to live, learn and grow. Thank you for all you do to show your care and love for each other. Thank you for your support of me in my role as Principal of Good Shepherd.

To the parents of Good Shepherd; thank you for choosing Good Shepherd as the school for your children. Thank you for entrusting them to us. Thank you for working in partnership with us. Thank you for sharing with us the joys and the challenges that go with being parents in today's world. You know, there is no sign out the front of Good Shepherd that says this is a perfect place – perfect students, perfect teachers, perfect parents; but there are many visual and verbal reminders that you are, we are, valued and loved children of God.

To those students, staff members and parents who are departing the Good Shepherd community at the end of this year; thank you for all that you have done to make our school a special place. May God go with you as you embark upon a new stage in your lives. I pray that you look upon your Good Shepherd days with fondness.

Many of you have heard me speak on many occasions, or read articles I have written on the Learning That Matters at Good Shepherd. The Learning That Matters has driven, has energised, has given perspective to all learning that takes place at Good Shepherd. The Learning That Matters has been liberating for our school, for it has challenged us to identify what it is that is truly important in a young person's education.

Tonight, I wish to share with you a story. A story, a satirical commentary, written by Harold Benjamin under the pseudonym of J. Abner Peddiwell. The story is too long for me to read it in its entirety, so let me share with you the general gist of the story.

The key character is a man called "New-Fist Hammer Maker"; it is an unusual name I know. Let's call him "New Fist". The time is set in early pre-history tribal times.

New Fist was a thinker and a doer. His tools and weapons were generally superior to others. He knew how to do things well. In tribal society, he was an "educated man".

New Fist looked upon the children of the tribe and thought, "If only I could educate these children to do things well that will allow them to thrive; to give them skills that will give them better food, better shelter, better clothing and security – I would be helping them, and the tribe to have a better life".

New Fist proceeded to establish a curriculum, and he taught his children and many of the children of the tribe in such important skills of the day, such as fish grabbing with bare hands, woolly horse clubbing and scaring saber-tooth tigers with fire. The children took very well to their studies; they liked to learn, and as they grew older, they had an advantage over children who had not been educated in these pursuits. More and more children attended New Fist's educational program and as the children grew older and became adults themselves, they passed on these important skills and knowledge. The tribe thrived and prospered!

It can be imagined then, that everything went well forever and the community remained forever the same.

However, times change; the environment changed. With the approach of climate change and a new ice age, the environment in which the tribe lived, changed. The old skills for fish grabbing, woolly horse clubbing and saber-tooth tiger scaring became less important. The stream water muddied and the fish became difficult to see; the woolly horses left the increasingly marshy grounds for the dry open plains; the saber-tooth tigers died out due to pneumonia and were replaced by ferocious glacial bears which were not at all fearful of fire.

The tribe and the community was in dreadful decline. The skills that the children were learning; the knowledge that they were acquiring, that had served the tribe so well for generations, were no longer relevant. The curriculum was no longer relevant. Children were no longer being educated to thrive in their new world.

So what did the leaders of the tribe do? There were those, like their ancestor, New Fist, who were prepared to be bold, who dared to question the existing school curriculum. They were innovative and were prepared to think creatively. They came up with new ways to catch the elusive fish, to hunt for the antelopes which had replaced the woolly horses, and to build camouflaged pits to trap the ferocious bears.

But there were those wise men within the tribe who said, “but it is not right that our children are not learning to catch fish with their bare hands, it is not right that they are not learning the skills to club woolly horses and to scare saber-tooth tigers. These new skills are just fads. The old skills are timeless; they are important in themselves; it is our tradition; it is the way we have always done it. The old curriculum was good enough for us, it will be good enough for our children.”

It is an enlightening story, and as mentioned earlier, I have very much abbreviated it for tonight’s address. You may be interested to know that the story was written as a satirical essay in 1939. However, it is much more than a simple story. There is a strong message that speaks clearly to the education of today’s students, for today’s world. More than that, it speaks clearly to the education of today’s students for tomorrow’s world.

Good Shepherd is very committed to educating today’s students for tomorrow’s world. Good Shepherd is committed to providing our students with the foundations, the skills, the learning that enables them to thrive and prosper. This has meant critically reviewing what students learn and how they learn it; what teachers teach and how they teach it.

It can be challenging trying to determine what is the Learning That Matters for a world that is so uncertain. Next year’s Prep students will graduate from university in the year 2035 (if that is the path they choose). They will enter a workforce that is incredibly different to what we experience now. They will be using technologies we have not dreamed of. They will be challenged by complexities we can only speculate about. Whereas we might consider the future with some misgivings or even fearfulness; they will look to the future with the excitement of endless possibilities. It will be the only world they know.

So what is the Learning That Matters most for these young people? Clearly, in a Googlable world, the Learning That Matters most is much more about skills than it is about content. It is much more about learning how to learn, than it is about remembering.

Good Shepherd is committed to developing the learning skills and attitudes that will give our students the best opportunities to thrive. That is why developing critical thinking skills, growing creative capacity, learning how to collaborate effectively, and confidently and effectively communicating thoughts, ideas and understandings, are so important for students in today's and tomorrow's world, regardless of what that world will look like.

We may be "just a primary school", but I believe so strongly in laying these foundations for our students. I believe so strongly in equipping our students for success in their future learning. And it is with excitement that I see secondary schools such as our campus partners, Luther College, engaging with and embracing the Learning That Matters journey.

There may be those who say, "But it is not like when I was at school. My education served me well". And that may be so. But we, like "New Fist", are prepared to be bold and to be innovative; to look beyond what was once relevant, and to equip our students with the skills, the attitudes, the understandings, that allow them to truly thrive and to prosper.

In a world that is changing at a fast pace, there is one reliable constant. The constancy of Christ. Our Lord lived on an earth and at a time, very different to that of today. Yet His message of love and forgiveness is as relevant today as it ever was. And it will continue to be relevant as we step forward in faith into the future. It is this message that is truly timeless, and it is this message that will continue to be proclaimed and taught and lived at Good Shepherd.

A large company of angels proclaimed the Good News of Christ's birth for all people.

When talking about the Learning That Matters, let us also remember that this message of love, of hope, of promise; of salvation; is truly what matters most.

Thank you for your support of Good Shepherd during the past year. May you have a very blessed Christmas, safe and enjoyable holidays, and look forward with excitement to all that the New Year brings.

Thank you.

Reference

The Saber-Tooth Curriculum, J. Abner Peddiwell, 1939