

# End of Year Service and Graduation Ceremony – Principal’s Address

Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December 2019



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

Thank you for your attendance at tonight’s special End of Year Service. Tonight is an occasion when we can come together as a community to celebrate the end of another successful year in the life of Good Shepherd. It is also an occasion at which we recognise and thank those who have contributed to that success.

Thank you to all who have worked hard throughout 2019 to make Good Shepherd a great place:

- A great place for our students to learn and grow and develop
- A great place for our staff to work together, to support each other and to do their best to meet the needs of their students
- A great place for families to feel welcome, involved and valued

Tonight is also an opportunity to congratulate our Graduating Class of 2019 and to celebrate with them as they complete their Primary School education at Good Shepherd. We pray that your years with us at Good Shepherd have helped prepare you for your secondary education and have equipped you for a successful future. We pray that you take with you many happy experiences and memories of your years at Good Shepherd.

Tonight is also a night to celebrate what is central to our School’s existence. Good Shepherd is a School that is centred on God’s love, expressed to us through His Son Jesus. Through Jesus, God has created a loving and forgiving relationship with us and in response we endeavour to reflect that love and forgiveness in our relationships with others. This doesn’t make us perfect. Our students, staff and families are not perfect. We make mistakes and strive to learn from them. We strive to work together in partnership, respecting each other for the various roles that we have.

We together try our hardest to make Good Shepherd the very best that it can be. When the partnership is strong, learning and relating flourishes.

Earlier this year we introduced FLOREO, our new School Learning Management System. A learning management system that incorporates Student, Staff and Parent Portals. The name FLOREO (Latin for flourish or to thrive or blossom) was very intentionally selected to represent the three groups (students, staff and parents) working together, cooperating with each other, respecting each other, striving for a common goal – for our students, your children, to flourish, to thrive, to blossom. The FLOREO image of the overlapping three-petalled flower, attempts to represent what we together are aiming for. A highly effective school growing out of a committed, united, positive, dedicated community.

So what do our students need to enable them to flourish, to thrive and to blossom? It is a complex question for schools, for education systems, for governments. And it is a question that everyone seems to have an opinion on. In these past few weeks, we have heard and read about the so called “disaster” of Australia’s performance in the international PISA testing. PISA results are based on the standardised testing of a random selection of 15 year olds from countries all around the world.

The decline in Australia’s position on world rankings has invited commentary from anyone and everyone. And everyone seems to have a solution. “A return to basics!” “A need to narrow the curriculum.” “A complete review of the curriculum.” “A review of teacher training.” “Improving students’ classroom behaviour.” “We need to be more like China or Singapore or Finland or most recently, Estonia.” Or maybe we can ignore the results like one commentator I read who said, “At least we are not as bad as the USA or the UK and we did beat New Zealand”!

For me, when I reflect upon this commentary about the state of education in Australia, it comes back to how we measure success. What am I as Principal, what are we as a School, what are our parents aiming for? What is our vision for our students, your children?

Of course, academic achievement is important, very important, but our lives are not defined by a PISA ranking, or NAPLAN results or an ATAR score. Of course we want to give our students every opportunity and every support for them to be academically successful, but our value, our worth, is much more than that. The

measure of a successful education, an effective education, a great education, surely must be based on much more than that.

Our Learning That Matters goal for our students at Good Shepherd is for them to thrive. Hence our desire to connect our School Learning Management System with the term FLOREO. But schools are much more than a learning management system. Schools are first and foremost about people.

So what is the measure of success at Good Shepherd? What are we striving for as we work together each day for the young people in our care?

Our Learning That Matters Portrait of a Good Shepherd Learner gives us a profile of what we strive for.

### **Portrait of a Good Shepherd Learner**

To thrive in a global community, a Good Shepherd Learner will be:

- A critical thinker
- A problem solver
- A highly effective communicator
- A collaborator
- An innovator
- Globally and environmentally aware
- Civically engaged
- A self-directed learner
- Technology and media literate
- Creative
- Self-aware
- Economically literate
- Committed to a personal Christian spirituality

Year 6 Graduates, did you do a personal inventory as I read out that list of skills, qualities and values? It is a long list... and could be much longer if we attempted to identify all that will help you become successful, help you to thrive and flourish.

You don't often hear educational authorities and governments talking about measuring these qualities for future success. How do we compare with China or

Singapore or Finland or Estonia on these measures? How do you even test these qualities? In addition, how do you measure qualities such as resilience, courage, compassion, adaptability, positivity or a heart for service?

If our goal is for our students to flourish, to thrive, then we need to consciously develop the “growing conditions”. The learning environment, the nutrients, the attributes of a high quality education for life. And this is where I again refer to partnership. Where the School and the home work together and focus on the learning that truly matters most, then young people have the very best opportunity to flourish.

[insert file “We take learning personally”]

I take learning at Good Shepherd very personally. I want the very best for your children. Our staff take learning at Good Shepherd very personally. They want the very best for your children. And I’m confident that you, our parents at Good Shepherd, take learning very personally. You want the very best for your children. And we are smart enough to know that it is so much more than some independent, standardised test score.

So what is the outcome? What is the result of “flourishment”? (Not actually a word, but I will use it). Well when a plant flourishes, it blooms and when it blooms, it gives fruit. And in people we see that being realised in lives of service, of contribution, of making a difference, of success in so many ways, of compassion, of love, of happiness. Year 6 Graduates, staff and parents, if you flourish, if you bloom and produce fruit, you will leave the world in a better place.

It would not be appropriate for me to conclude without making reference to this year’s 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebrations. 2019 has been a big year. A highlight for many will be our special weekend of celebrations in August. My sincere thanks to all who have contributed throughout the year to plan and prepare for our 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. And thank you to all of you for joining in the spirit. It has been a pleasure to see our school community come together, on a number of occasions this year, and to share with each other what unites us; our sense of belonging to the Good Shepherd community.

It has been good to reflect upon our past forty years and thank God for his many blessings. Whilst it is important to respect the past, for Good Shepherd to continue to flourish, we must continue to look to the future and to make plans for the next forty years. And to continue to ask ourselves the question, "What will our students need to flourish and to thrive?"

It may be a complex question, but we owe it to our children and our children's children to attempt to answer it.

Thank you for your support of Good Shepherd during this past year. Thank you for your support of me as Principal and for your support of our staff. I am very blessed to work with such a fine group of committed people.

May you have a very happy and blessed Christmas, safe and enjoyable holidays, and I look forward to working together with you in 2020.

Thank you.