

# 2022 End-of-Year Service and Graduation Ceremony

## Principal's Address



53-57 Plymouth Road, Croydon Hills, Victoria 3136

Phone: (03) 9726 2900

[goodshep@gsmps.vic.edu.au](mailto:goodshep@gsmps.vic.edu.au)

[www.gsmps.vic.edu.au](http://www.gsmps.vic.edu.au)

Special guests, students, staff, parents and friends of Good Shepherd,

Thank you for your attendance at tonight's End-of-Year Service and Graduation Ceremony. What a pleasure it is to be able to come together as a community, to celebrate the 2022 School year, to thank all who have contributed to another successful year in the life of our school, to farewell those who are departing the Good Shepherd community, to celebrate the graduation of our Class of 2022, and to thank God for His many blessings during this past year.

These last few years have taught us how important it is not to take things for granted. The privilege of work and education, the freedom to travel and to socialise, the opportunity to worship together as a community, the comfort of a hug, a handshake or even a smile.

Thankfully, we have had a School year that has returned to something approaching "normal". I thank God that we have had a relatively uninterrupted year of learning and living during this past year.

My congratulations to students, staff and parents for your endurance, your resilience and your patience during what has been a challenging time.

How pleasing it has been this year to see teachers and students enthusiastically engaging in learning; together, face-to-face.

How wonderful it has been to see staff members providing care and comfort for their students, and for each other; together, face-to-face.

How rewarding it has been to see people planning and organising events and activities, with some confidence that they will go ahead.

And how thankful I am to not have to write another daily COVID communication, or regularly update the COVIDSafe Plan.

In tonight's Principal's Address, this is my final opportunity to say thank you. Thank you to all who have helped make Good Shepherd the very special place that it is; the

parent community, the staff and the students. As Principal, I have been very blessed to work with you and serve you. In these last months, people have asked me, "How is it that you have been able to be Principal of Good Shepherd for so long?" I say, "Look around you; I can give you hundreds of good reasons!"

To the staff of Good Shepherd, my colleagues and my friends, thank you for your great dedication to your work. Thank you for your commitment to and care for your students and for each other. Thank you for your support of me in my role as Principal.

To the students, thank you for making Good Shepherd a special place to learn. You bring your wonderful diversity in talents and abilities and personalities. Regardless of the ups and downs of school life, your teachers care for you and want the best for you.

To the parents, thank you for choosing Good Shepherd to be your school, and the school for your children. I have come to know many of you so well over the years. You have trusted us with your children; and you have trusted me with your own personal journeys and challenges as you endeavour to be the best parents you can be.

Year 6 students; the Graduating Class of 2022. Tonight is very special for you as you take your step from the comfort and security of Good Shepherd, to something that is new. New experiences, new challenges, new relationships and new learning awaits. The famous American author, Helen Keller, who lost both her sight and hearing at the age of 19 months old said, "Life is either a daring adventure or nothing at all." Be bold, be daring, be courageous, look to the future with confidence and assurance. Know that you are well-prepared and ready to tackle the challenges of secondary school and life beyond. Do not be anxious or doubt your readiness. You are ready for this new and exciting step in your lives. And know that our love and prayers go with you. We have every confidence in you.

Year 6 graduating students; there are so many people who care greatly about you. Special people in your lives – parents, siblings, grandparents and friends. People who love you and support you. Many of them are here tonight to watch you graduate.

Do you know that this is a sort of graduation for me too? After all these years I have finally graduated from Primary School. And my mum and daughter are here to see me graduate too.

Why don't you join me in facing our families and friends and saying thank you for all that they have done for us. Let us show how much we appreciate and love them.

It was only a few days ago that one of our staff members, at our daily staff devotion, introduced us to some words attributed to Mother Teresa; words that I had not read before. Now those on staff know well that I find the words of Mother Teresa to be very inspiring and I greatly admire her life of service to others. So this particular devotion really resonated with me. Mother Teresa was writing about what it means to live a "full and complete life". The focus was not on the trappings of financial success, or the glory of prestige, or acknowledgement of some great achievement. No, the focus was on "Joy". "The Joy of Living, The Joy of Loving and The Joy of Serving".

The Joy of Living – to live life to its fullest, taking advantage of all the wonderful skills and talents and opportunities God has blessed us with. To quote Mother Teresa, "Life is an opportunity, benefit from it. Life is beauty, admire it. Life is a dream, realise it." The Joy of Living – what an exciting future you have ahead of you.

The Joy of Loving – to love ourselves as a wonderful creation in God's image; and to love others, with our whole heart, with compassion and with action. To again quote Mother Teresa, "Not all of us can do great things. But we can all do small things with great love."

Of all God's gifts to us, the greatest is love. God's relationship with us is founded on love. And our response is to love others... in what we say and in what we do. The Joy of Loving – let your life be an expression of God's love.

The Joy of Serving – to make a difference in the hearts and lives of others through what we do for them. Again from Mother Teresa, "I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples."

You have all heard me talk many times about "The Learning That Matters" approach to learning at Good Shepherd. You have all heard me talk about what it is to thrive in

today's world and tomorrow's. Maybe it can be expressed quite simply; "To live joyfully, to love joyfully and to serve joyfully."

Listen to Mother Teresa's beautiful words, "I'm a little pencil in the hand of a writing God, who is sending a love letter to the world".

What a wonderful metaphor for us at Good Shepherd. God's hand holding us tight and using us to write his love into the world.

Dear friends, this Principal's Address is my 26<sup>th</sup> and last I deliver to you. My life is so much fuller and richer because I have been blessed to work with you and serve you. The Good Shepherd community has been incredibly generous in their acknowledgement of my service as Principal. I have been overwhelmed by your kindness.

Jane and I thank you dearly and will miss you dreadfully. Our years at Good Shepherd, the dear friends that we have made; the amazing colleagues we have worked with, the wonderful children we have taught; you will always be in our hearts. We will miss you.

But life goes on... and what an exciting future you have ahead of you. And so, to finish in Mother Teresa's own words, "Yesterday is gone. Tomorrow has not yet come. We only have today. So let us begin."

Thank you and God bless!

Greg Schneider

**Principal**

9/12/2022