

Chapel Talk
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Over the past few weeks, Mr. Roach has talked a great deal about what it means to be a community. He was very explicit and eloquent in the first School Meeting, although it was hard to think that anyone would differ from his opinion. Tonight I would like to add a few reflections and examples which I believe give an idea of what it means to be part of a community. Some seem relatively minor at first but I think have an important impact in the long run. I ask myself and you this question. "What is it that I want from those with whom I work and teach?"

When you are in a group, treat others as you would if you were by yourself. I marvel at how differently people act when in a large group compared to when they are alone. People yell insults, make racist or sexist remarks, and do violent acts against someone when part of a group, yet would probably not make similar comments or do the same deeds when facing someone by themselves. Somehow we seem to feel more aggressive and tougher when with a group of our friends than if acting alone. One can read of examples in the daily news about such incidents. Why do some of us feel the need to act this way? Is it just to impress our friends? If so, maybe we need to reevaluate our friendships.

Learn to have the courage to act even in the face of peer pressure. One of the problems in the world today is that many people talk about taking a strong, positive stand on issues but when it comes time to take action in the face of opposition, we tend to take the easy way out and back down. Here is a small example. Years ago, St. Andrew's was playing a Conference basketball game losing badly at halftime. With 30 seconds remaining in the half, a parent from the visiting school started to yell 5,4,3,2,1 as one of our inexperienced guards brought the ball up the court. He shot and missed badly at which point all the visiting parents started to laugh making a mockery of the situation. A faculty member

who wasn't in the mood to confront this group of parents hoped that time would run out so he would not have to deal with the matter but unfortunately time was called so something had to be done. He went up to the parents not knowing what to say but collecting himself, said "if that is what you think high school athletics is all about, keep right on yelling. If not, please keep your comments positive." I did not think much about it again until supper when a group of 8-10 students approached the faculty member and thanked him for confronting those parents. I thought afterwards, how important it was for the faculty member to take a stand and confront the problem immediately. By not doing anything, volumes would have been said in a very negative sense.

Remember that everyone at St. Andrew's or in any community has an important and useful role to play, none of which is really more important than another. Here at St. Andrew's, the housekeeping staff, kitchen staff, maintenance staff, and faculty are equals. If I miss a day of classes, the School goes on. But if a maintenance person doesn't repair the electrical system or if the kitchen people decide not to come to work, the School shuts down. Am I more important than the maintenance, kitchen, or housekeeping people? I don't think so. Sometimes we get it into our heads that others are here to serve us and the jobs they do may be beneath our dignity. Do not ever let this happen because as soon as you do, you will find yourself in the position of having to ask one of these very same people to repair something for you or to help you out.

Learn to speak to people whether you know them or not. When passing in the corridor, seeing a stranger in the hallway, or seeing someone who is obviously lost, say hello or ask if you can help. Faculty spouses who do not teach here really appreciate being greeted like anyone else. Strangers are made to feel welcome with a quick hello or an offer to assist them. We sometimes get busy or have something on our mind and brush by each other with our heads down without the slightest hint of recognition. It says we are too preoccupied to notice or care about them. People are the most important aspect of this School. Do not brush them off too quickly. It is interesting that when you get to know someone well, you treat them with greater respect and understanding. To illustrate this, years ago, the umpires and baseball coaches in Delaware were not getting along well

so as President of the Coaches Association, I decided to invite the umpires as well as the coaches to our annual kickoff banquet. Suddenly the two groups were talking and developing friendships and during the season, there were fewer confrontations between the two groups. Why? – Because a new respect had grown between the two groups and they decided to work together for the good of the game rather than treating each other as adversaries.

Learn to look at yourself realistically and if someone makes a suggestion about the way you behave or are acting, accept it while honestly evaluating the way you are. We get so wrapped up in what we believe is our image, that sometimes we do not see what we really are. I was evaluated by some members of the faculty and I was stunned at a couple of the comments that were made about me. At first I was angry and upset until I went back and read the comments a second, third, and fourth time. Then I realized that there was much truth in their observations. I wanted to be perceived in a way which was different from the image I was presenting to others. I was so absorbed in my biased opinion of myself that I was missing the point. Fortunately, someone had the courage to tell me honestly what was bothering them rather than just telling me what I wanted to hear. When I took the time to think it through carefully, I suddenly realized how wrong I had been and that I needed to change some of my ways.

Try to be positive and look at things honestly. There is so much we have to be thankful for. Take time to let others know when they have done something out of the ordinary which you appreciate. Mr. Worrall took time to discuss proofs – not everyone could attend, but we can still appreciate his preparation and efforts to do something for us. We let people know when something goes wrong, so why not let them know when we appreciate something good that they have done. When you learn to recognize the good in others, you begin to concentrate on the good things they do rather than looking for the bad. Some of us received an email from Elizabeth Jordan, the widow of Robert Jordan class of 1986 who died in the World Trade Center attacks a year ago. Robert was a bit of a radical but a fun loving person. He stopped up the drains in the bathrooms on Sherwood corridor so he could surf. But more important to his classmates was the fact

that Robert loved everyone – he was not a super athlete but he supported his teammates completely and every coach wanted him on his team. His class started a new award last June which recognized Robert's free spirit in two students at St. Andrew's. After receiving one of the awards, Julia Donaldson wrote Mrs. Jordan and enclosed a favorite poem of hers. We may never fully understand the good that thank you note and poem did for Mrs. Jordan who has suffered so much. Thank you Julia for doing that.

Athletics and sportsmanship have an important place in a strong community because they teach values which are important. Years ago, we played a baseball game against a Conference School and were losing 1-0 when we should have scored a run on a throwing error. Their shortstop threw the ball past the 1st baseman, it went out of bounds, hit the stands, and bounced back into foul territory. The rules said our runner should have been allowed to score, but when the umpire saw the ball, he thought it never left the playing field and kept our runner at third. We ended up losing the game 1-0. What bothered me most was that the opposing coach and all his players knew the ball had gone out of bounds and that our runner should have scored. That team knew they had not won the game despite being credited with a win. I asked my players the next day, would you feel comfortable winning a game that way? We agreed that we could take no pride in winning that way and there would be only one thing to do if the shoe had been on the other foot, and that would be to tell the truth. Twenty years from then, no one knows or probably cares who won that game, but I know that my players and I could not live with ourselves if we had won that way.

One last point I want to make about community living. As Mr. Roach suggested, I sincerely hope that each one of you will do some kind of volunteer work. I used to dread going to Adaptive PE each week because I was torn between feeling sorry for these disabled children and feeling guilty because I never had to face or overcome such handicaps myself. I also felt so fortunate that our own children were healthy and bright. But after working with these youngsters, I always feel better – their cheerful, carefree manner cannot help but have a positive effect on anyone, even a crusty old nut like me. How can one not be affected by their contagious smiles, their appreciation for one's help

and for providing them with an activity which is not only fun but physically good for them. I had the wonderful opportunity to coach in the Delaware Blue-Gold Football All-Star Game whose proceeds go to the handicapped children in Delaware. Mr. Hyde played in it and will understand my feelings. It is a game with the motto "we play that they may learn." On the first day of practice, the players and coaches meet and play with their handicapped little brothers and sisters. I was tossing a ball with one of these kids and it bounced crazily off his hands, head, and body. He just laughed and wanted to do it again. If I did that with one of you, you would feel embarrassed and uncomfortable. Not these kids. They were happy and having fun. Why can't we laugh at ourselves sometimes instead of being so serious? There are so many ways to volunteer - Tutors here at St. Andrew's know the feeling of helping another student accomplish something academically while overcoming a deficiency. Seeing that success is such a positive feeling. The recycling committee, by saving paper, saving electricity, and helping out the environment gains much reward. You can be a teacher's aid in Middletown, help out with Big Brothers/Big Sisters, work at Tri-State Bird Rescue or take food to the homeless shelter. Do something to help others.

In many ways, the points I have made tonight aren't major ones in the big scheme of things, but they become so important as we interact with each other. It matters that we treat each other with respect and dignity always. What could be more important to the welfare of a community? We correct problems not by showing force but with understanding and compassion. The bottom line is: Treat others as you would like to be treated.

Thank you.