

## Tribute to Christopher Seeley – June 10, 2025

This is always a weekend charged with emotion as people take their leave of our community. Over the past few weeks, we have given our thanks to a number of people: Faculty and staff leaving the Choir School at yesterday's graduation ceremony where our Grade 8 boys also received their diplomas; Dr. Jeremy Filsell, at his last concert with the Friends of Music; Mrs. Rebecca Kellerman-Filsell with the Noble Singers and Children and Family Ministry; but there is one person who has not been thanked publicly who is also leaving us - our Head of School, Christopher Seeley, and it seems to me that, today is the most appropriate day to do that.

When I telephoned Chris, on behalf of the Search Committee and Carney Sandoe Associates, to invite him to leave Church Farm School and lead our Choir School, none of us had any idea that this day would come. In spite of the changed circumstances that we find ourselves in, Chris has continued to live by his own mantra that he so often uses to inspire the boys in his care: *"Be your best self."*

Chris, over these past months, and over the years that you have been with us you have done nothing less than reveal your best self, and it has been a joy and a privilege to have worked with you. You are a walking example of why Episcopal Schools still have a part to play in forming our nation and making it a richer and better place in which to live. When you encourage your staff, you often say *"Thank you not just for what you do, but for who are,"* and that is something that we want to say to you today, Christopher – thank you not just for what you *do* but for *who you are*.

At a gathering with the Board of Trustees the other week, I mentioned to you that I have been involved in schools and as a governor continuously for 40 years now and, yet, I am still learning new things, and learning because of *who you are* and your extraordinary commitment to the nurturing of the whole school community placed in your charge.

I asked Mo. Turner to ask the boys for a **glossary of terms** to describe you as Head of School. Without hesitation, this is what they came up with:

Wise, active, great dog (well, they are boys!), cool, shiny shoes, very funny, kind, hilarious jokes, thoughtful, hospitable, compassionate, caring, welcoming, inclusive, and **joyful**.

One of your faculty said to me, *“I would add, faithful, loyal, passionate, wanting the best for each and every student - putting them first. A great orator but one who listens well.”*

Chris – you and Staci have regularly opened your home not just to students and faculty, but to parents, and siblings, trustees, donors, and parishioners. You have been a bridge between church and school in a way that was not always the case many years ago. And you have done so with grace, fortitude, and kindness. You also do it without thinking - it is second-nature to you. Do you remember early on in your time here when, during a service, someone in church suddenly climbed the chancel steps towards the choir? You left your stall to deal with the person without thinking of what he might say or do, because the boys’ safety came first.

So, here’s a few sentences that the boys have written about you to flesh out their glossary of terms:

He brings joy to the school and is always positive.

He makes us happy.

He is like a father to me.

He’s always so chilled - he’s cool - he doesn’t get cross; he has extreme patience.

He’s a great dresser.

He knows just what to say at the right time.

He’s helped us through the good the bad and the ugly and when things are rough.

He works hard to support us and help us as an advisor.

He’s always admirable and always approachable.

He helps us learn to do what is right and helps us with everything.

He’s got great knowledge about high schools.

He shows great dedication to the school.

*and, my favorite...*

**He’s helped us be better people**

Chris and Staci, thank you for believing in our school and in our church and its mission to worship, love, and serve our Lord Jesus Christ. Let's be honest, other Heads in other places would have thrown the towel in if they learned about the changes to their school that would bring their own role to an end. But that is not the Chris Seeley way. When there is any upset between the boys you often say to them, "*Is it nice? Is it necessary?*" When others would have given less; you have given more; when others would have refused to engage with change; you have turned it into an opportunity. You have helped our transition to a new model become a reality. The next school where you are Head will be truly blessed by your presence. I hope that, like the choristers, you will always feel at home here. We will miss you, but we salute your professionalism, your faithfulness, your dedication, your tact, and above all salute you for simply being *your best self, always*.