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## **Letter from CEO ABESA, Rev Roger Cameron, to Heads of Anglican Schools**

3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015

Dear Colleagues

I have taken the liberty to write a letter to you sharing some of my thoughts about leading Anglican schools. If it is of value to you then I will be pleased. If not there is always the delete button! I do hope however that it might generate some thinking and even debate about what it means to be an Anglican church school in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. This letter is intended to be the first of a series of letters in which I will highlight what I believe are five hallmarks of an Anglican school.

### **A set aside time for daily worship and prayer**

I have been reading a book by Richard Rohr called “Immortal Diamond”. Fr Richard Rohr is a Franciscan monk. He lives in New Mexico and is the author of several books, the best known of which is called “Falling Upward: A Spirituality for the Two Halves of Life”. In this book he argues that during the first half of life our efforts are spent in building “a container” to hold ourselves: our identity, security, position and status in society. Then he says through some form of suffering or tragedy you realize that these identities reflect your ego – your false self and that your true self needs to be discovered. In a sense you need to discover what the container holds, which he describes as “the immortal diamond”.

Much of our lives as educators is involved in giving children the capacity to build that first container which allows them to be successful in the world. We are delighted with their success and we celebrate it. I have celebrated matric results over many years and boys and girls with seven, eight or even more distinctions which are broadcast in the media as products of a wonderful successful school. We are rightly proud of them and bask in their glory. I know that when we have a superb athlete, springbok rugby player or Tour de France winner we like to claim to be their inspiration and source of their success. And indeed the school environment is an important shaper of success.

In your role as head of an Anglican school I encourage you to continue to ensure your children achieve success. But I would also like to encourage that through the very fabric of your school you ensure that they become aware of the immortal diamond that is their true self. As Richard Rohr says “we are made for transcendence and endless horizons. I would like to suggest that through the daily worship of the school – chapel, assemblies, house meetings – all the times when the school or a section of the school assembles that there is an acknowledgement of the Creator God who is the sustainer of all. I believe that one of the hallmarks of an Anglican school is that your school worships and prays together on a daily basis. I also believe that there should be a formal acknowledgement of the Almighty who is the source of all wisdom before you start your executive meetings and council/board meetings.

As heads it is important to engage with each other and with the chaplains to debate effective ways to ensure appropriate daily worship and prayer in your school. Without doubt the context of each school is different and what works in one school might need to be different in another. But the principle

remains that a school - pupils and staff, need to worship and pray together on a daily basis. Often the pressure to achieve excellence in all spheres all the time drives an agenda that puts huge pressure on time set aside for quietness, prayer and contemplation. Schools need to protect these sacred spaces in their lives so that the children and staff have the opportunity to recognize and discover the “immortal diamond” which is their true self. As much as this is true for a school it is also true for ourselves.

I end this thought (for those of you who still find time for poetry) with a portion of the poem by Gerard Manley Hopkins from which Richard Rohr took the title of his book “Immortal Diamond: The Search for Our True Self”

That Nature is a Heraclitian Fire and of the Comfort of the Resurrection

Flesh fade, and mortal trash,  
Fall to the residuary worm; world's  
wildfire leave but ash;  
In a flash, at a trumpet crash,  
I am all at once what Christ is, since he  
was what I am, and  
This Jack, joke, poor potsherd, patch,  
Matchwood, immortal diamond,  
Is immortal diamond.

Gerard Manley Hopkins, S.J.

I pray that the Lord will strengthen, encourage and guide you as you make decisions and continue create an environment that serves to shape and form the boys and girls of your school.

Kind regards,  
Roger Cameron  
CEO of the Anglican Board of Education



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