

2014 Report to the Diocesan Council

Good morning, it's a pleasure and a privilege to be with you all again – especially when I have so much good news to share with you about TMI. As the flagship school of the diocese and its only high school, it's up to us to set the standard for all 27 of our schools. Given their reputation for academic excellence and upholding the core values of Episcopal schools, I recognize that leadership in this field is a special responsibility...one I approach with humility and for which I ask God's help daily.

As a relatively new Episcopalian, received last year, I'm still learning about our church, and in my second year as headmaster, I'm still learning about TMI. Both give me great joy, and the ideas and people I have met through my involvement with both institutions continue to complement each other.

While browsing Anglican and Episcopal sites, I came upon a checklist for ministry that some of you will be familiar with: The Five Marks of Mission. These are goals for ministry against which we can test our mission on every level – parish, diocesan, church or school.

Let's take a look at them together. To serve God and God's people we are asked to do the following:

To proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom

To teach, baptize and nurture new believers

To respond to human need by loving service

To seek to transform unjust structures of society

To safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth

These five points are just some of the ways in which we can represent Christ in the world, but they are a fine starting place, with their source in his Word. When I went through this checklist, I questioned myself about how TMI lives out each Mark of Mission – not only in what we do as teachers and administrators but in the way our students respond. This morning, I'll share my answers with you, with reference to some of our most representative seniors.

What does TMI do “to proclaim the Good News of the Kingdom”?

As you may know, TMI is celebrating its 120th anniversary this year. Our founder was the first bishop of the independent diocese of West Texas, James Steptoe Johnston. Originally named “West Texas Military Academy” after the diocese, the school's colors were purple and gold, honoring its founding bishop. In every catalog,

the Academy proclaimed itself “A Christian school,” and you will still find that phrase in our literature today.

Through my contacts with the Southwest Association of Episcopal Schools and the National Association of Episcopal Schools, I’ve learned that there are many ways to “do church” at school. We’ve found that what works best for us is daily chapel in our beautiful All Saints Chapel, completed just five years ago with the support of Bishop Folts and the contributions of many TMI alumni, parents and Episcopal lay leaders. Led by our chaplain, Father Nathan Bostian, all our students gather each day for a worship service that incorporates Morning Prayer, readings by student lectors and a homily. To this we sometimes add sacred music performed by our choirs, band and individual musicians. At least twice weekly, there are chapel talks by each member of the TMI senior class. This is their chance to tell the younger students – ages 11 and up – about a lesson they’ve learned, a person who has inspired them or an experience that tested them and left them wiser and more mature.

Recently, JAC Clark gave a talk about how much he looked forward to his first time at Camp Capers. “I remember every single day and every detail of my week at Camp Capers,” JAC told us. “But for the life of me, I can’t recall what happened during the week before or the few days after. I was too absorbed in what was coming or what I had just experienced that I could not enjoy what was happening in the moment. “Don’t get me wrong,” JAC said. “I LOVE Camp Capers. But I would advise against gliding through your days in anticipation. Although the everyday things don’t necessarily provoke drastic change, they add to our character slowly but gradually. I urge you to notice every detail, no matter how seemingly insignificant.”

JAC is an active youth member of St. George, San Antonio. He has been to many Happenings and H.I.S. Love reunions. He’s a fine example of many of TMI’s Core Values, especially well-roundedness. JAC was named a National Hispanic Scholar, he’s a company commander in the TMI Corps of Cadets, runs track, broke a school swimming record and made all-district in the lacrosse team. As the recipient of a flight scholarship awarded each year to cadets, he completed the training to make his first solo flight.

A successful veteran of many of TMI’s toughest honors and AP classes, he’s thinking about majoring in engineering, finance or biology in college. As well-prepared as JAC is, when asked what he valued most about TMI, he said, “It gave me a safe place to exercise and grow in my faith, with other students who are just as strong in their

faith. You can be as vocal as you want about it. We get to stand up in front of the whole school and talk about our beliefs.”

How does TMI “teach and nurture new believers?”

As with most Episcopal schools, the majority of TMI students are not Episcopalians. They may be members of other Christian denominations, they may be Jewish, Muslim, Hindu or unchurched. While we respect the beliefs of all our students and their families, we make it clear that we are a Christian school. We start our sixth graders with a required Introduction to Christianity course, and seventh graders take World Religions. In Upper School, we offer five Religious Studies courses, including Old and New Testament, and require students to take two of the five for graduation.

Father Nate teaches some of these courses, plus one titled “The God Debate” on God’s existence and role in culture. I’m currently teaching one of our Upper School World Religions classes, and Dr. Derek Neve teaches Old and New Testament and other Religious Studies courses.

Claudia Clark teaches seventh-grade World Religions, and took her fall classes on a field trip to visit several non-Christian houses of worship in San Antonio.

Mrs. Clark also was parish coordinator last August when TMI hosted Happening for the first time, with Patrick Wickham, TMI class of 2013, as student rector as 54 Happeners and staff were guests on our campus for a high-energy weekend. TMI is a natural match for this teen-led, Christ-centered spiritual retreat, and we are proud that senior Susannah Wright was chosen as rector for the next Happening, held last November.

Susannah is another student TMI is very proud of. She’s a graduate of St. Luke’s and a member of Christ Church, San Antonio, where she has been a Vacation Bible School helper and an acolyte. She has also been a camper and a counselor at Camp Capers.

Susannah came to TMI as a ninth grader through our annual Alkek Scholarship competition, as one of two recipients of a four-year, full-tuition scholarship for students outstanding academic ability and extracurricular leadership. Since then, she has fulfilled her promise in those areas and then some. Susannah is a National Merit Scholarship finalist and has taken a very ambitious menu of honors and AP courses. This year, Susannah has designed two independent studies, one in Latin

and one in Christian Theology. She is working on improving her Latin so that she can read the works of early Christian theologians as they were originally written.

Like JAC, Susannah is another well-rounded student. Besides her intellectual pursuits, she's a positive presence on the basketball court and on the track team. She has served on Student Council, the Student Leadership Committee and in TMI's Peer Mentorship Program, providing support and guidance to younger students. One of her teachers praises "her outstanding ease in clearly explaining concepts to her peers, all of whom like and respect her."

We feel blessed to have Susannah as part of our community. Of TMI, she says: "Attending TMI has nurtured my faith in many ways, especially through daily chapel and religion classes. The group of friends I've made at TMI also introduced me to two of my greatest sources of spiritual joy: Camp Capers and the Bishop's Happening Movement. My involvement in these ministries and in Christ Episcopal's youth program has greatly blessed my life and strengthened my commitment to share God's word with others."

How does TMI "respond to human need by loving service"?

All TMI Upper School students are required to perform four hours of community service each semester, and Middle School students work up from four to eight hours a year. It's up to them to choose their projects, through school, church, Scouts or some other approved organization. Members of the National Honor Society or National Junior Honor Society are asked to complete 12 hours during the school year. Currently, we are close to our 120th-anniversary community goal of performing 120 Acts of Service before the end of the school year.

Since 2007, TMI has had an active and growing chapter of Interact, the Rotary-sponsored youth community service organization through which all students are invited to take part in several community service projects a year. Our Corps of Cadets also does an annual community service project, according to JROTC requirements. In the past year, TMI students have helped such organizations as the Alzheimer's Association, Hill Country Daily Bread, the Ronald McDonald House, the San Antonio Food Bank and Wounded Warriors. They have contributed to cancer research and Haitian relief efforts. Our seventh and eighth graders are regular "reading buddies" to younger students at two elementary schools.

For the second year, we continued our annual Adopt a Family Drive, in which we partnered with a public elementary school to gather and deliver Christmas gifts and

household necessities to 47 needy families, many of them refugees from Africa and Latin America. When a team of TMI students, families and faculty arrived at one household bringing such everyday items as laundry detergent, toothbrushes and paper towels, the grandmother said, “Angels have come to see my family today.” I believe our students gain as much in insight from this experience as the needy families do in comfort and caring.

For the third year, TMI students are volunteering in a fashion show to benefit Morgan’s Wonderland, an inclusive theme park in San Antonio. They’re paired as “runway buddies” with special-needs students from Monarch Academy, and they start getting to know each other with lunch and playing basketball in the gym at TMI, weeks before our students accompany the Monarch models at the show.

Our goal is to guide our students onto a lifelong path of servant leadership. One outstanding example of a student who is already well on his way is senior Chris Perez, president of our Interact chapter. Chris is “an amazing young man who does it all,” says his college counselor. Another top student, ranked Number 6 in his class and recognized as a National Hispanic Scholar, he’s also a company commander in the Corps, a fiercely competitive soccer player, a peer mentor and president of the Honor Council. One of his teachers says “Chris embodies the combination of scholastic and moral excellence we hope to see in all our students.”

While Chris excels at all his activities, community service may be closest to his heart. Outside of school, he earned his Eagle Scout rank leading a crew of 40 people in repainting and refurbishing the children’s recreation room at a homeless shelter. He’s part of a group at Trinity Baptist Church that serves breakfast to the guests at another homeless shelter and as class president last year, he organized the entire TMI eleventh grade to visit that shelter to clean and make improvements to its common areas.

Chris often makes announcements in chapel, and he always concludes them by saying, “I love you all.” Through his actions, he shows he means it. His Spanish teacher praises his “sincere kindness and ability to make everyone feel at home and special.” We are grateful to have him at TMI, which Chris calls “a family that will always watch out for one another, be there for one another and love one another.” It is my sincerest hope that we will always live up to his example.

How does TMI seek to transform unjust structures of society?

Our students are ages 11 through 18. Their effect on the wider world will be felt a

generation or more from now. Our greatest task is to equip them intellectually and morally for the next stage in their journey...for college, where they will prepare themselves further for careers in which they can make a difference. We continue to add courses to our curriculum and technology to our classrooms to help our students meet the challenges of a new economy. This year, we added Corporate and Investment Finance, AP Environmental Science and AP Macroeconomics. We teach Digital Animation and Digital Graphics and have reinstated Astronomy and Meteorology as full-year courses, thanks to our new observatory. Next year, we'll add courses in Political Philosophy, The Evolution of War and Peace, Leading People and Organizations, Videography, Three-Dimensional Design and Advanced Digital and Film Photography. TMI teachers are also inaugurating new uses of technology in the classroom. An audience-response system uses wireless devices that allow students to answer questions presented and scored on slides; teachers are thus able to determine how well each student is mastering the material. Other classes are building blogs that teach them how to create essays that incorporate images, videos and links.

It is our intent to prepare our students to become confident leaders in the future, with a solid academic grounding in language, math, science, language and social studies, as well as familiarity with current technology. With this background, they'll be ready to excel in college and on their way to tackle the challenges of a changing world – leaving it a better place for their caring, skill and passion. At present, we have graduates attending Duke, Northwestern, Notre Dame, Penn State, Princeton, Rensselaer Polytechnic, SMU and the University of Southern California, three of the federal service academies and UT-Austin, A&M, Baylor, Trinity and many other fine universities. Their academic interests include various types of engineering, pre-law, theology and many other disciplines through which they may make their mark on the world.

TMI senior Taylor Devlin is almost certain to be on the cutting edge of biological or medical research when she completes her education. Taylor is first in her class at TMI with a GPA of 100, serves as president of TMI's National Honor Society, took eight AP courses before senior year, designed an independent study in Number Theory and earned the highest possible score on the ACT college-readiness test. Outside of school, she was one of an elite group of students chosen citywide for a research program at UTHSC that pairs promising science students with faculty mentors. For two summers, Taylor worked with DNA and how it diffuses in a solvent – research that has cancer treatment applications. Her mentor has included

her as a coauthor of a paper to be published about their work. Not surprisingly, Taylor plans to major in biology or some branch of the biological sciences in college. Like the other TMI students you've met today, Taylor has interests beyond the academic. She's a varsity athlete in volleyball, basketball and softball; she has also won art awards. Looking back on her four years at TMI, Taylor said, "TMI is not just a place of learning. It is a community that supports its members in every endeavor, be it athletic, artistic, academic, or spiritual. I love TMI because it is a place to explore and develop many aspects of life."

How does TMI safeguard the integrity of creation and sustain and renew the life of the Earth?

Our school is blessed with an 83-acre campus on the edge of the Texas Hill Country, including much that is still wooded and a natural water feature in Leon Creek. In recent years, we have started a new annual tradition we call Green Day. We take one day each fall to get out of our classrooms and use the whole campus for instruction, as students and faculty work together to learn about the environment and to make improvements to our campus.

Last November, TMI students planted peach and plum trees in the school orchard, started a few years ago on Green Day. They carved a new nature trail to Leon Creek, identified the many different varieties of trees on campus, built bird and bat houses and a shed and an arched gateway for the school garden. They seeded winter rye grass and cleaned the trail within our school labyrinth – also built during a previous Green Day. Some of our students volunteered at neighboring parks and nature centers, and others participated in outdoor photography and painting workshops, geocaching and mapmaking. They did team-building exercises on a low-ropes course, discussed “green” ethics and covered everything that happened for a special Green Day edition of the student newspaper. Whether our students stay on campus or do community outreach, Green Day is a service day, when we are focused on giving back to our school, our community and our planet. It's a way to initiate them in thinking about what their responsibilities are for the environment, starting by taking more ownership of our own campus – including the most naturally beautiful areas they don't often see.

So how is TMI living up to its mission?

While I am proud of our students and faculty for striving so impressively to fulfill each one of these Marks of Mission, I know that to be human is to be less than perfect. As a school, we have room for improvement in every area, and we welcome

that challenge and are full of plans and ideas to make TMI an even better place over the years to come. To all of you who have trusted us with your children or blessed us with your support, I thank you on behalf of our students, teachers, alumni and families – the entire community that is TMI and makes all the wonderful accomplishments of our students possible.

Green Day, a seven-year-old tradition

Creating a new nature trail trailblazing, access to a wooded area in back of the campus spruce up outdoor furniture, care for the TMI garden, planting shrubs Junior Lily Morris was asked if she liked Green Day, she responded that she did. She said that she “liked the opportunity to do service with friends

Sophomore Aidan Read One of the new things this year is team building, led by Dr. Stark. Dr. Stark led his group of middle schoolers and high schoolers down to the southwest corner of campus near the nature center and the softball field. Together, they constructed a trail through the trees. They used Slackers, which are ropes used for making temporary low-ropes courses.

These exercises help people work together, encourage each other, and have fun. mark the exact location of trees in our campus, as well as identify their species and then post them to Google Maps; a similar, if not identical to project is often done by college students who are studying to major in the field of biology. Friedrich explained to us that by being able to identify the type and age of a tree, we are exposed to a world of knowledge about the surrounding area. The species and age of a tree can tell us the climate of the area, the animals that inhabit it, as well as the type of land. Students split up into groups and headed off to begin identifying and locating trees using GPS trackers and a handbook of trees. Students used color chalk (biodegradable of course), to mark which trees they had already identified. Once the location and species had been identified and recorded, students headed back to the classroom to post the results to Google Maps. As Friedrich explained, this is a long term project that we will get to see progress over the next few Green Days. It’s a great advantage for the middle schoolers, who are getting to participate in a project that they will be able to see the progression of as well as completion of the project throughout their high school career. As for the seniors, they will be remembered as the initial participants of such an innovative project.