St. Albans School

February 4, 2019

Dear St. Albans Community:

I write today, joined by Governing Board Chair Robert Musslewhite, to share some important information.

In August, I sent a letter to the community in response to an article in *The Washington Post* that described a pattern of alleged sexual misconduct between faculty and students at Key School in Annapolis, Maryland, during the 1970s. One of the teachers implicated in these allegations was Vaughn Keith, who subsequently taught at St. Albans in the 1980s before his death at age 40 in 1990. An independent investigation conducted by Key School, the results of which were recently released to the public on January 28, 2019, found credible evidence that Mr. Keith had engaged in sexual misconduct with two female Key students during the 1970s.

When I first learned of the allegations against Mr. Keith in August, I felt compelled to reach out proactively to the community with the assurance that we would examine this matter thoroughly and unsparingly, guided as always by the safety and well-being of all St. Albans students, past and present, and by the faith our families place in us when they entrust their children to our care. We have spent the months since August doing so. While the information in the recent Key School report raises serious concerns — and while our hearts go out to those affected — nothing has yet come to our attention suggesting that Mr. Keith was engaged in any improper behavior with students during his years at St. Albans in the 1980s.

I promised in my August letter that throughout this process I would keep the community appropriately informed if and when any additional relevant information came to light. And I encouraged anyone with thoughts or concerns about these issues to reach out to me.

Some of you did so. I appreciated the trust that those who came forward placed in me, even though I had just arrived in Washington as the school's new Headmaster. My conversations with alumni over the weeks and months that followed were moving and thoughtful. The stories you shared have taught me a great deal about our school. Like many institutions of our longevity, we have a complex history with noble but imperfectly realized ideals. At our best, we have given our students an experience that reflects the highest principles of our mission. But in the months since August, I have also heard about past incidents when we seem to have fallen short of the school we aspire to be, including firsthand accounts of inappropriate behavior and sexual misconduct by former St. Albans teachers. I have been humbled by the courage and humanity of those who have come forward and by their enduring faith in the mission and future of our school, even when circumstances have tested that faith.

It is in this spirit that I am writing to you again today with Mr. Musslewhite to announce that the Governing Board of the school has retained experienced investigators from an outside law firm — Debevoise & Plimpton — to assist us with the process we began in my August letter. To be clear: There is no evidence that any current teacher has behaved in ways that fall short of our professional expectations. Rather, as a church school with a moral mission and a commitment to excellence in all that we do, we have an obligation to seek the fullest possible understanding of our past, to reckon honestly with both our successes and shortcomings, and to learn from our history for the benefit of current and future generations of St. Albans students. We believe this process will have the greatest credibility and trust if conducted by an outside law firm with no prior relationship with the school.

We are fortunate to be assisted by Debevoise, a nationally regarded firm that has conducted independent reviews and restorative processes in recent years for a number of leading independent schools and universities. Mary Beth Hogan, an expert in this area and co-chair of Debevoise's Litigation Department, and Bruce E. Yannett, deputy presiding partner of the firm, will lead the investigation. Ms. Hogan and Mr. Yannett are recognized for bringing wisdom, integrity, compassion, and sensitivity to their work. Their mandate is to conduct a comprehensive and impartial review, without influence or interference from school administrators, faculty, or staff. The scope of their review will be to investigate any allegation of past adult-student sexual misconduct.

Although this investigation will focus on alleged adult misconduct from years past, we are keenly aware that the problem of sexual misconduct also compels us to ask important questions about what we expect of our students today — at St. Albans, National Cathedral School, and in the world beyond the Close — when it comes to their relationships with one another. As society continues to reckon with sexual harassment and misconduct, it is clear that we as schools must equip our young men and women with the moral resources to build a better future; to help them model the ideals of respect, civility, empathy, and kindness in their interpersonal relationships; and to hold them accountable when their behavior falls short of these ideals. We must be leaders at this important cultural moment. To this end, we are committed to working with NCS to maintain channels through which students can report misconduct, to hear and support student concerns, and to review thoroughly any information brought forward. Together with NCS, we are also coordinating educational initiatives for our students around healthy relationships, as well as policies to guide how we address future student misconduct within our communities when it arises.

As committed as we are to improving our culture and policies as they relate to student misconduct, the independent review conducted by Debevoise will have a distinct scope and purpose, focused on allegations of past adult-student sexual misconduct. Debevoise will report their findings to the Governing Board, and we will then provide the community with an update. The length of time for the review varies from school to school, but our hope and expectation is that we would be able to provide a substantive update to the community by the end of the academic year.

A fundamental goal of the review is to provide multiple avenues for individuals to come forward if they have questions, concerns, stories, information, or perspectives they wish to share, particularly as they relate to allegations involving past adult-student misconduct. And we want to make sure those who have or do come forward feel supported, empowered, valued, and honored throughout this process. This includes alumni of St. Albans and National Cathedral School.

I as Headmaster want to be available and accessible to anyone who wishes to speak with me. I welcome the opportunity to connect with you and promise you will be treated with dignity and compassion. You may contact me at jrobinson@stalbansschool.org or at 202-537-6430.

We also want to provide other avenues for individuals to come forward. To this end, you may contact the individuals overseeing the independent review directly: Mary Beth Hogan (mbhogan@debevoise.com, 212-909-6996) or Bruce Yannett (beyannett@debevoise.com, 212-909-6495). They will make every effort to protect your privacy and maintain confidentiality of information shared.

Our chaplains, the Rev. Brooks Hundley (bfhundley@stalbansschool.org, 202-537-5795), and the Rev. Leslie Chadwick (lchadwick@stalbansschool.org, 202-537-6463), and psychologists, Dr. Joseph Viola (jviola@stalbansschool.org, 202-537-6404) and Dr. Carrie Friend (cfriend@stalbansschool.org, 202-537-5590), are always available to speak as well.

As a community of learning, we work each day to teach our students that wisdom begins with humility, with the courage to acknowledge how much we have yet to learn, and with a faith that the pursuit of truth and the quest for greater self-knowledge will make us better people and a better community. Guided by these principles, we believe the way to honor what is best in our school's history is to address our history proactively: to support those whose experience fell short of our ideals, to learn from past mistakes, and to use these lessons to continue to build a future school culture of integrity, humanity, trust, and respect. We thank you for your support during this important process and for your enduring faith in the promise of our school.

Sincerely,

Robert Musslewhite
Governing Board Chair

Jason Robinson
Headmaster