

THE MINISTRY OF ENCOURAGEMENT

Our school family recently experienced a sad loss with the passing of a well loved and respected teacher, Mrs Suzanne Yeo. In response, many ACSians, both past and present, and colleagues wrote heartfelt tributes in remembrance and in celebration of this educator's life. The school has put together all these messages in an album – and presented it to Mrs Yeo's family. I am certain they will be much comforted by the kind words said about this special lady.

Reflecting on this experience, I've asked myself how many of the positive and affirming messages were shared with Suzanne herself – when she was hearty and well. People generally have a tendency to be shy about affirming others.

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We wonder if our motives will be questioned or whether we will be perceived as flatterers. We fear the person being affirmed and recognized may become arrogant or self-centred. We are uncertain how the person or others may respond when we say positive things about him or her.

In his cheekily titled book, *Practicing Affirmation: God-centred praise for those who are not God*, Sam Crabtree says that good affirmation is God-centred, pointing to the image of God in a person. Referring to 1 Peter 4:10: *As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God's varied*

grace...in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, Crabtree writes:

We are stewards of grace. Those who steward it well should be commended for it, and God should be praised for giving them the grace to steward the grace given. God is not given the praise he deserves when we ignore or deny the work he is doing in people.

Among other benefits, proper affirmation lifts morale, energises and motivates people and helps us look at the positive traits of others, rather than constantly focus on what is wrong and needs improving.

For us to continue to build strong and enduring bonds among the members of our school family and community, we must not lose sight of the power and place of affirmation in our relationships. Every student, teacher, parent, alumni and benefactor has a role in this important ministry of encouragement. Don't wait or hesitate – affirm when someone rightly deserves it.

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