

Principal's Message: Our Hearts, Our Hopes, Our Aims Are One; Thoughts On Our 130th Year...

What was different about our 130th Founder's Day this year for ACS (Independent) was that the joyous occasion was held in the Centre for Performing Arts 2, with our school family separated in different venues – watching the proceedings through a live feed. Ideally, we should all have been together in Audi 2.

What happened?

A leaking roof in Audi 2 made it necessary to move the celebrations while it is being repaired and restored. This unfortunate episode offers us a useful object lesson – one that we must heed both as individuals and, importantly, as a school.

Small personal or institutional compromises – if undetected, if allowed to fester, if not dealt with decisively – can lead to unintended and sometimes serious outcomes.

ACS was established in 1886 by our visionary founder, Bishop Oldham. In 1907, Oldham wrote in *Malaya, Nature's Wonderland*, that in setting up ACS, he had studied the educational landscape in Singapore then and decided that ***“there was considerable opportunity for still another school system in which clear ideas of duty and morals, and right***

relations to God and man shall be consistently taught.”

These key founding principles – of duty, service, values and relationships – established by Oldham make ACS unique and give our school its character and its life.

Oldham's vision for the school never wavered over the years. At his 75th birthday celebrations that were held at the Borad Street Methodist Episcopal Church in Columbus, Ohio on Dec 17, 1929, Oldham reiterated the purpose of service when he shared that the founding of ACS was done ***“under the pressure of necessity and of the eager desire” – and that the 3000 boys in ACS were ‘doing something for God and Humanity.’***

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Over the last 130 years, men and women who have been part of the ACS family – as students, teachers, leaders, alumni, parents – have worked steadfastly to

ensure that as a school, we stay on the course that had been set by our Founder. And we must remain vigilant not to lose sight of these founding principles to ensure an ACS that is vibrant in spirit and clear in vision in order to guide it in good and turbulent times, not just for the current period but for the future too.

How we achieve the vision will, of course, evolve with time. Our programmes and activities for holistic development, both in and out of the classrooms, must move with the times and be guided by new research on learning, the rapid development of technology and media and the ever changing global environment.

But the reason for our existence as a school should not change – to be a school in Oldham’s own words where *“clear ideas of duty and morals and right relations with God and man shall be consistently taught.”*

Or as captured in our core purpose statement – ACS, a school to “nurture catalysts for change with Godly values and robust character – to serve and lead in one’s family, nation and the global community.”

In a world of shifting sands, in a world where the favoured flavour of the season lasts just a fleeting moment, we must safe guard what is precious and time tested in our heritage and stay committed to it. The moment we start to lose sight of these founding principles, the moment

we ignore a spot of corrosion and allow any drift from our school purpose, we can expect the same unfortunate results as in Audi 2.

For the restoration of Audi 2, which is well under way, engaging a skillful contractor will bring it back to its full functional state. But for a school, any recovery from a drift of purpose that changes its character and spirit will be a much more challenging process.

So this 130th anniversary, let’s resolve not to just celebrate our heritage and traditions, let us together make a fresh commitment to the founding vision of Oldham – and to preserve and advance it further.

To God be the Glory.
The Best is Yet to Be.



Winston Hodge
Principal
Anglo-Chinese School (Independent)

This message was adapted from the Principal’s address shared during the Founder’s Day Celebration 2016.