

# From the Headmaster

GARHETT WAGERS



Ava Toubassi, '19, gets a hug from Vero Perryman, '27

It would be easy, and, honestly even somewhat acceptable to describe the first half of the 2017-2018 school year as difficult. This is only natural, as there were events that made it such a significant challenge and an emotionally exhausting experience. Two days after school opened, Harvey hit Houston, leaving this city devastated. Many in the St. Mark's community were impacted, directly and indirectly. The immediate effort required to address urgent needs, and the ongoing challenges people continue to face have worn us out, leaving many to feel in December the level of fatigue that usually comes with May. Our community lost a beloved teacher and friend, Mr. Steve Salley. The suddenness of this loss was like a gut punch in December to a collection of people who were already running on fumes. Additionally, the people of this community still faced the normal challenges of life, work, relationships, money, etc., while feeling exhausted and less equipped to handle them.

That said, I don't want to write about the sadness. It has become my practice to look for places to express gratitude, especially when things are hard. By focusing on the things I am grateful for, and taking the time to share that gratitude with others, I am reminded that we still have so much to celebrate, despite the challenges life throws at us. I am grateful for an incredible community at St. Mark's, where many hands helped care for those who lost so much during the storm. I'm grateful for the generosity of folks who

contributed to the Faculty Harvey Relief Fund, which was a true blessing to those on our team who needed immediate financial support. I'm grateful we saw snow on the ground in Houston, and I loved watching our children try to make mini-snowmen and tiny snowballs. In fact, I'm grateful winter actually came to Houston this year. I'm grateful for an incredible team of faculty and staff at St. Mark's who spend each day nurturing their environment to spark curiosity and passion for discovery in our children. I am grateful we found three incredible new team members to join us in January, ready to celebrate the uniqueness of our children. I'm grateful for my wife, Christine, and my daughter, Isabel, who love me, even when I make it hard. Finally, I'm grateful for our Houston Astros. Of course I love that they won the World Series; what an incredible accomplishment that uplifted this city at just the right time. However, I really appreciate them because they are fun to watch, play the game with integrity, and remind me why I loved baseball as kid.

We wake up each day with a choice: to see what is hard in life and lament it, or to see the joy in the world and be grateful for it. Some days this choice may feel harder than others; for me, choosing a practice of daily gratitude helps me make the right choice for me to be my best self.

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