

FROM THE

# Head of School

Dear Members of the Pingry Community,



Our celebration of the 100th anniversary of the Honor Code would be incomplete without paying tribute to a Pingry legend: the late John Hanly, who served as Head of School during my days as a student. An Oxford-educated scholar with a commanding presence, Mr. Hanly was the living embodi-

ment of the Honor Code. He placed the highest value on character, integrity, community, and respect for others. He challenged students to be morally conscious, and as a supremely gifted writer and storyteller he captivated us with lessons and anecdotes relating to the Honor Code. Upon his retirement, the yearbook dedication described him as “the central light of our school” who could “find a clear solution for everything and anything.” Mr. Hanly’s 13-year tenure as Head of School (1987–2000) appropriately made him the adult equivalent of a Pingry lifer, and he remains so highly respected within our community that his name continues to be spoken in revered, almost mythical tones.

Mr. Hanly taught us the importance of accepting responsibility for our actions. Yet because he believed the Honor Code should guide our behavior both before and after making mistakes, he made it clear that failure was not final. Instead, we have the capacity to move past our lapses in judgment. Doing so requires effort and humility, but conducting ourselves in a “moral and decent manner” is how we build character as well as community. Mr. Hanly placed a premium on elevating the importance of character, and as he often said, “one of our most important goals at Pingry is to produce students who can make wise, ethical, and informed decisions...But equally important is the second half of that goal: that we must help them develop the strength of character to stand by those decisions. And that is the difficult part.”

During the recent John Hanly Lecture on Ethics and Morality, Mark Chen ’96 reminded students that most ethical decisions of right vs. wrong are not outright situations of legal vs. illegal, an

ambiguity only heightened in the age of AI. For that reason, he believes it’s crucial for each of us to discern, define, and document the personal values which serve as the basis for our opinions. The process of literally writing down our values — an analog approach we can’t outsource or automate — ensures we’ll be better prepared to handle difficult ethical decisions. As Mark told our students, the goal is to “look back on your life knowing that you knew what you stood for, and lived accordingly.”

Dr. Robert Fullilove ’62 has certainly lived up to that standard — and the one set by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., who believed “intelligence plus character, that is the goal of a true education.” Speaking at our annual MLK Day assembly about his lifelong dedication to public health, justice, education, and service, Dr. Fullilove was another powerful example of working for the common good. And like Mark Chen, he told students that it is indeed possible to pursue careers that are values-aligned. Ones which increase our sense of purpose while also reinforcing the principles of family, community, and friends that give our lives meaning.

Mr. Hanly would have enjoyed those assemblies and the many smaller, community-wide conversations about character we’re having this year. And he would be proud that the “Learning and Living with Honor” component of our Strategic Plan exists because the Honor Code remains the soul of Pingry. It’s an enduring symbol of the values we’ve embraced since 1861 and are re-emphasizing in 2026: the development of character, the pursuit of excellence, and the importance of working for the common good. In this issue of the magazine and in the coming months, Pingry is deliberately looking back — to our proud history, our time-tested Honor Code, and our shared commitment to others — as we chart our way forward. David Brooks has written that “life is a series of daring explorations from a secure base.” And as we each reflect upon (and write down) what our own list of values might look like, my hope is that the Honor Code will forever anchor our secure base, inspiring us to be and become our best selves.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Tim Lear". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Tim Lear