



Convocation Address
Dr. Delvin Dinkins, Head of School

September 3, 2025

Good morning, students, parents, faculty and staff, and members of our Board of Trustees, chaired by Rajiv DeSilva. Welcome to the 2025–2026 school year. Today we celebrate the Class of 2026 as they begin their senior year, and we welcome new trustees into their important role as stewards of our school. Convocation is our formal declaration of a new school year—a moment to set intention, to recognize possibility, and to step forward together as a community. I begin with gratitude for our faculty and staff, who bring GSB’s mission to life each day by modeling our values—courage, integrity, respect, compassion, and excellence—and by helping students grow into thoughtful, capable, and ethical young people. And to our families, thank you for trusting us as partners in your children’s journey.

Thank you, Ms. Chatterji, for your thoughtful words and leadership. You reminded us of the power of voice, the courage it takes to speak into a community, and the responsibility we all share to listen more deeply. And thank you, Maurice, for bringing Kobi Yamada’s *What Do You Do With a Chance?* to life for us. Together, you’ve set the tone for this moment: a gift and a challenge, to notice when a chance comes our way and to step into it with courage rather than let it pass. Convocation itself is one of those chances. This is not just another gathering; it is an invitation.

Last week, I held my first faculty and staff meeting here at GSB in Evans Hall, in the Cox Lower School Building. Much smaller and less familiar than the PACC, which is where it is usually held. At first, I wasn’t sure we’d all fit in Evans, or if people would enjoy the change or be irritated by it. I wanted a more intimate space, something less cavernous. Moving into a new environment can feel uncomfortable, but I decided to take the chance. And I’m so glad I did. The butterfly murals, the sunlight spilling across the windows, the spirited energy of the room; it created exactly the atmosphere I was hoping for, the effect Parker writes about in *The Art of Gathering*: a space that sparks connection, invites engagement, and makes the gathering matter. That’s the kind of chance I hope we all take this year: noticing opportunity, embracing uncertainty, and creating something meaningful together.

Chances come in many forms. Sometimes bold: raising your hand or auditioning for the play. Sometimes quiet: sitting with someone unfamiliar or telling the truth when silence is easier. Chances don’t come labeled. They often arrive disguised as interruptions or risks. But as Yamada’s story reminds us, when you take them, when you dare, you grow. And when you grow, the community grows with you.

Here’s a little homework for you: remember a time you took a chance, big or small. How did it feel? What did you learn? Ask a teacher, friend, or parent about a chance they took. Go “chance hunting.” Notice the small and big moments this year that stretch you and spark meaning. Chancing is a choice.

What kind of community do we want to build together? I envision a place where every student has the courage to explore their full potential, the integrity to live truthfully, and the respect to honor one another’s journey. A place

where you thrive as curious, committed thinkers who lead with compassion, striving for excellence not just for yourselves but for the good of the world. A place where you feel a deep sense of belonging and emerge as leaders determined to leave the world better than you found it. Each vision comes back to the same heartbeat: you discovering who you really are and daring to live from that truth.

You'll hear plenty this year about artificial intelligence. But the deeper challenge isn't technological; it's human. It's the pull to live in ways that are scripted or hollow, to mistake the hallucination for the real thing. Here, on this campus with its open fields, crisp air, and wide horizons, I invite you to carry your true light, the light of integrity, courage, compassion, and respect. It is steady, ethical, and enduring, ready to guide your steps and strengthen our community.

Courage often arrives quietly. It's practicing fairness when it's inconvenient. It's rolling up your sleeves to build the world you dream of, instead of just imagining it. Living this way means stepping off the script. And when the fog of expectation or distraction settles in, look to each other's light. Even the smallest spark, your own or someone else's, can illuminate the path and ignite new possibilities.

This year, our chance is not just personal; it's communal. The chance to rethink how we gather. To show up for each other with more purpose. To make celebrations more joyful, meetings more meaningful, and classrooms more alive. In *The Art of Gathering*, Priya Parker reminds us that every convening is a chance, not just to meet, but to change how people feel, think, and connect. Gatherings, she says, can heal, ignite, repair, and transform, if we design them with intention. The only question is: will we take it?

We already have the ingredients for that kind of community in our secret sauce: belonging, adventure, accomplishment, curiosity, creativity, leadership, and confidence. Together, they give us the courage to leap, the resilience to grow, and the imagination to shape a brighter future. These are not just values; they are the tools we'll need for the leap ahead.

As you step into this year, remember: the world doesn't need more copies or code. It needs your humanity; your curiosity, your questions, your awe. So be real. Choose substance over image, connection over performance, presence over polish. Let your light be visible in the wide-open spaces of these fields, along these trails, in these classrooms. And know this: when your flame meets another's, it grows brighter, and together we light the community.

To the Class of 2026: this is your senior year: your chance, your leap. Take your chances boldly. Lead with integrity. Lift up those around you.

As you walk these halls, paths, and fields, today and every day, listen for a chance. It may arrive quietly, like a whisper, its outcome unknown. Balance risk and reward, find the ledge, and lean into it. Leap. Every time we gather, whether in a classroom, around a table, or under an open sky, we have a choice: gather out of habit, or gather with intention.

Welcome back to Gill St. Bernard's. This year, let's carry our light, rise to our chances, and make every gathering, every lesson, every moment matter. Let's set our colors burning boldly, illuminating this community together and leaving it wiser, stronger, and brighter than we found it. (GSB is the school the world needs, shaping the humans the world deserves.)