



7 January 2022

Dear Parents and Caregivers

I certainly hope that you managed to take a break and relax over the past few weeks. I know that a number of you would have been working over this period, but I hope that there was time that you could spend engaging with family and friends (or even just be alone!).

As you may be aware, today the Premier advised that the State Government is considering delaying the start of the school year for up to two weeks. The decision will be based on modelling being undertaken in relation to the peak of the COVID wave with the Premier specifically stating that she would not be sending primary aged school children back to school in the peak of the wave. She also identified a concern about staff shortages due to the virus as a consideration.

At this stage a final decision has not been made, with no further detail available, but a decision is expected in the coming days. I will then be able to inform you of what this would look like for us at Saint Stephen's College. There is a possibility that if the Premier determines a delay to the start of the school year, we may move to Off Campus Learning for some year levels, to ensure that our students are getting the best educational opportunities from the very start of the year. But, to reiterate, there is currently no clear directive or plan.

On another note, I want to make it clear that at Saint Stephen's College, or any other school that I am aware of, it is not compulsory for students to be vaccinated against COVID. There is no Health Directive stating that they should be, and I am unaware of any plans that this would ever be the case.

As soon as a decision is made with regards to the return date for students, I will inform you. I assume this will be early next week. After that, and closer to the start of term, I will share with you our plan for Term One, as due to the surging number of cases, there will certainly be high staff and student absenteeism.

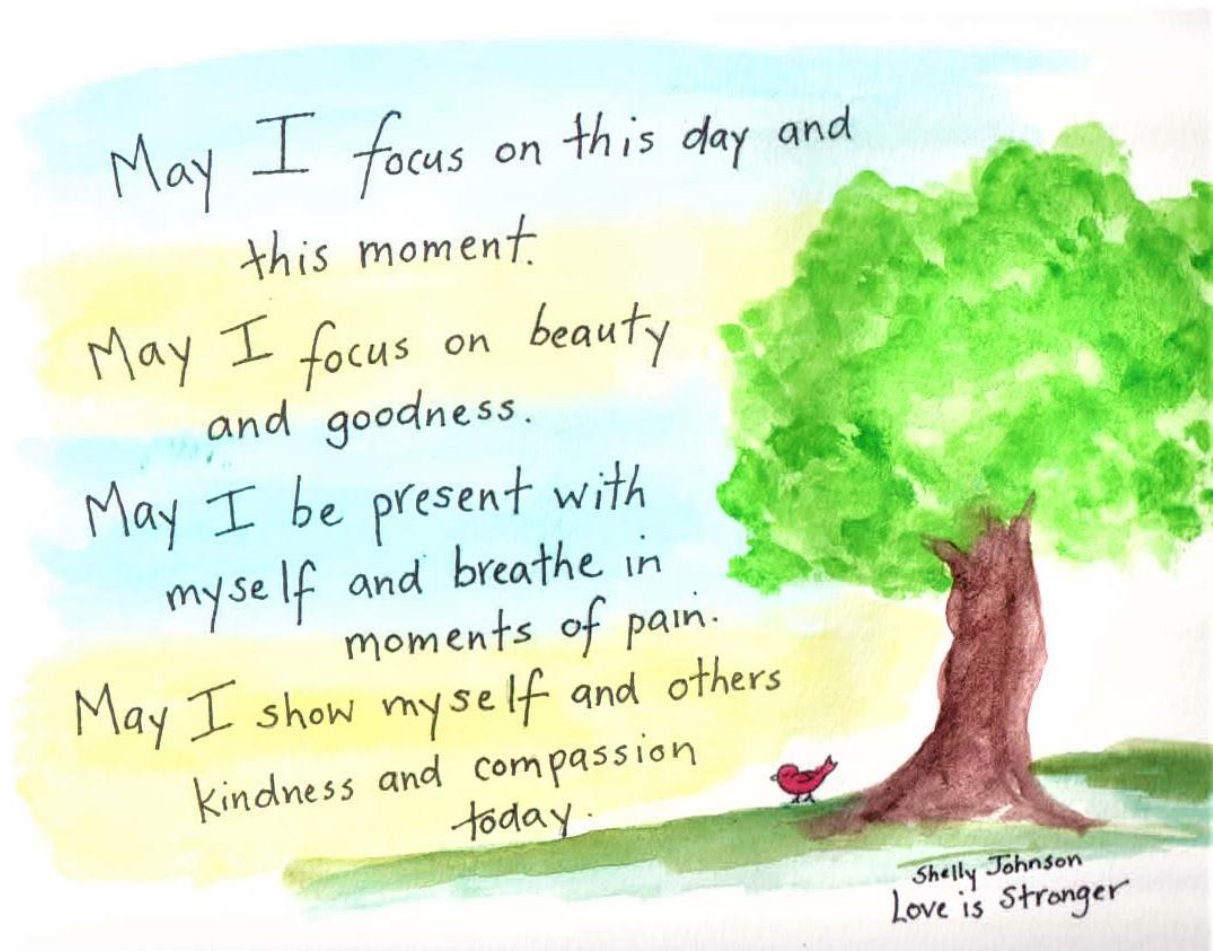
On a positive note, it appears that those who contract Omicron are experiencing far milder symptoms than those who suffered with other strains of COVID around the world in 2020 and 2021.

I wish you everything of the best and hope that this year is a better one than the last couple. I know that currently the outlook may seem bleak, but, if the numbers in South Africa are anything to go by, we should see a big drop in cases after about eight weeks. Let's work together to make Term One a rewarding time for our students. The Saint Stephen's staff, as always, are dedicated to ensuring that your children receive the best education and care, no matter how challenging the situation.



Developing character, inspiring hope

I would like to share with you a prayer that my sister sent me earlier today.



Yours sincerely

Ms Kim Cohen
Principal