



AN ANNOUNCEMENT FOR THE
SAINT STEPHEN'S
EPISCOPAL SCHOOL COMMUNITY

BRADENTON, FLORIDA



September 13, 2021

Dear Saint Stephen's Community,

When I became Saint Stephen's Lower School Director in 1988 and Head of School in 2003, I had no idea I would be at the school this long. The job is really not a job to me – it never has been. It has been a calling. For me, what began as a hope and a dream in 1988, when the school had only 222 students and was struggling, turned into an amazing journey that afforded me the opportunity to be part of an outstanding educational institution that changed my life and continues to change the lives of children every year. It has been a dream come true.

Today, I'm letting you know that my journey at Saint Stephen's has an ending – but not just yet! As we all know, timing is everything. It's important to me to be planful in leaving Saint Stephen's. In finding a new head of school and doing the process well, it typically takes up to two years to conduct a national search and to transition the new head to be the next leader of the school, especially after a long-term head.

This decision has not been easy for me to make as Saint Stephen's has been a huge part of my life. At the end of the May, I let John Neal and Elizabeth Baran know of my plans so they could begin thinking about the process to search for a new head. For me, with the 2021-22 school year upon us, I will continue doing the work I do every day with the same enthusiasm I've had since I started. During the 2022-23 school year, I will continue in my role as Head of School and assist the Board of Trustees to ensure a smooth transition for the incoming head. My last day will be June 30, 2023. The new head of school will not officially be on campus until July 1, 2023.

For 34 years I have helped grow Saint Stephen's, and over this year and next, I will continue to do everything I can to see that Saint Stephen's is in the forefront of independent school education—working with the faculty, staff and students, expanding the curriculum and raising the monies needed to build the new Arts and Science Center. When I complete my years at Saint Stephen's in June 2023, I will leave knowing that the work I have done over the past three decades has helped set a strong foundation for the school's future.

By sharing this news with you today, but not leaving for 21 months, it will give the school time for a national search to occur and time for a new head to be named. It will also give me the time to complete important goals for the school and prepare for my retirement.

With warmest regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jan". The signature is stylized and fluid.

Dr. Jan Pullen

Head of School



September 14, 2021

Dear Saint Stephen's Community,

While we have always known this time would come, it does not make it easier to hear the news. Dr. Pullen's unwavering commitment to the mission and vision of Saint Stephen's has helped ensure that our school is not only a campus, but a community where every child is known and valued. SSES has thrived under her leadership, and we have become one of the top independent, college preparatory schools in Florida. We're grateful that the next chapter for Saint Stephen's will begin from a position of strength as we strive to find a worthy successor.

For the past seven years, I have had the pleasure to serve on the Board of Trustees. I have observed first-hand Dr. Pullen's innovative approach to strategic planning and the thoughtful way she approaches decision making. Significant advancements have been made because of her guidance and leadership:

- The greatest achievement is the growth and development of our students. Dr. Pullen continues to hire knowledgeable and caring administrators, faculty, staff, and coaches who teach classroom and life lessons that enrich our students' lives.
- Through a series of successful capital campaigns, the campus has grown and improved with the addition of the Middle School, the Moore Athletic Complex, the Marine Science Center and more.
- The Saint Stephen's Endowment has grown from \$275,000 to nearly \$9-million. This impressive growth provides a solid foundation to ensure the school's financial stability well into the future.
- Technology, marine science, global studies, and emotional intelligence initiatives have been added to the curriculum, enabling students to be connected to – and in tune with – the world around them.

We fully understand the significance of finding our next leader and we have partnered with the search firm Educational Directions to help us conduct a national search for a candidate who brings appropriate experience coupled with vision, leadership, and an appreciation of our school traditions.

A search committee has been created to work with Educational Directions, and the collection of input from all of the stakeholders in our community will be an integral part of the search process. We expect that process to culminate with the selection of a candidate by the Board of Trustees in May 2022.

We are all fortunate to have been part of Saint Stephen's during Dr. Pullen's tenure. While our campus, curriculum, and finances are thriving, the positive impact that she has had on so many lives will undoubtedly be her legacy. The future of our school is extremely bright due to her extraordinary leadership. Please join the Board and me in thanking Dr. Pullen for her years of service and for all she has done to make Saint Stephen's such a special place.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Elizabeth Baran". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Elizabeth Baran

Chair, Board of Trustees

Frequently Asked Questions

Regarding the Search for a New Saint Stephen's Headmaster

Q. How will the search for the new Head of School be structured?

A. Board of Trustees President Elizabeth Baran will co-chair the search committee along with Sallie Ivin, who taught in the Lower School for 13 years and served as Intermediate School Director for eight years before retiring in 2018. Including Elizabeth and Sallie, the committee consists of 11 members, chosen with the goal of bringing a diverse collection of perspectives to the search. The committee will help facilitate the search process and ensure that all stakeholders have an opportunity to provide input. The full Saint Stephen's Board of Trustees will ultimately be tasked with selecting the candidate who will continue our beloved Saint Stephen's traditions and possesses the passion, vision, and skill set required to lead us into the future.

Q. What is the timeline for the search?

A. The collection of feedback from the Saint Stephen's community will begin this fall. The search firm Educational Directions will perform the initial vetting and interviewing of candidates throughout the fall and early winter. Final candidates will make comprehensive, multi-day campus visits in the spring of 2022. The Search Committee will make a recommendation to the full Board of Trustees, and the Board will make and announce its hiring decision in May 2022. Throughout the entire process, the Search Committee will provide regular updates.

Q. Why did SSES select Educational Directions as its search firm partner?

A. In May, Dr. Pullen informed Elizabeth Baran (incoming Board Chair at the time) and John Neal (current Board Chair at the time) of her decision to retire. Elizabeth and John brought Board Treasurer Steve Horn into the mix because of the financial implications involved with hiring an outside firm and the cost of the upcoming search. Elizabeth, John and Steve researched approximately 20 search firms and narrowed that list to three finalists. After interviewing the three firms, it was agreed that Educational Directions was the best fit for Saint Stephen's based on its knowledge of the school and its pledge of exclusivity to SSES for the duration of the search.

Q. How will input from the school community be gathered for the search?

A. Input from the Saint Stephen's community (parents, students, alumni, administrators, faculty, and staff) will

be an integral part of our comprehensive search process. Educational Directions will gather input in two key ways:

1. They will interview members of the SSES community to identify the qualities the community wishes to see in a new head of school.
2. They will conduct a survey of the SSES community to probe more specific questions related to the new Head of School.

Q: How do we know that the traditions, rigorous academics, and sense of community that make Saint Stephen's so special will continue?

A: It is a top priority to hire a Head of School who recognizes and understands the importance of the mission, traditions, and programs that have made Saint Stephen's one of the nation's finest independent schools. The job description will be very specific in this regard, and Dr. Pullen will be on hand throughout the 2022-23 school year to help the new leader transition into the role with a solid understanding of all of the things that make Saint Stephen's a special and unique school.

Saint Stephen's Episcopal School Board of Trustees

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