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July 8, 2026

Dear St. Stephen's Community,

It is a pleasure to write to you as Head of School. After many months of looking forward to this moment, I am delighted to have arrived in Rome and begun this next chapter with St. Stephen's.

Over the past several months, I have had the opportunity to spend time on campus, meet many members of the community, visit classrooms, and begin learning about the school you have built together. Each visit left me with a deeper appreciation for the people who make St. Stephen's such a distinctive place. I saw students deeply engaged in their learning, faculty who clearly cared about their work, and a community that welcomed me with warmth and generosity.

Before looking ahead, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Jill Swisher Muti. Jill has been a thoughtful partner throughout this transition, sharing her knowledge of the school with generosity and care while ensuring that important work continues uninterrupted this summer. I am grateful for everything she has done to help position me and the school for a successful start to the new academic year.

Over the past few days, I have enjoyed walking through the campus. Even amid the activity of summer construction, I have been struck by the natural light and beauty of the school. And yet, what I have found myself anticipating most is the return of the people who bring it to life each September.

A school comes to life through its people: the students who fill its classrooms, the faculty and staff who guide and support them, the families who entrust us with their children, and the alumni and friends whose continued connection strengthens the community. Over the coming months, I look forward to getting to know many of you through formal events, informal conversations, and the everyday moments that define the life of our school.

Whenever I join a new community, I begin by learning. I spend time with people, ask questions, listen carefully, and seek to understand what makes a place distinctive before considering what might come next. Over the years, I've learned that the strongest communities are those that continue learning together, and I look forward to beginning that journey with you.

Throughout the summer, I will be settling into the school and working with colleagues to prepare for the year ahead. When everyone returns in late August, there will be many opportunities for us to get to know one another, both formally and informally. Those conversations will help me understand what matters most to this community and how we can build on the strong foundation already in place.

Thank you for the warm welcome so many of you have already extended to me. I am excited for all that lies ahead and, most of all, I look forward to learning alongside you.

With warm regards,

Maria Nunes