NCS is committed to the notion that each and every student here can grow into her greatest capacity, both as a student and as a person of the highest possible integrity. Our school is guided by our mission, We believe in the power of young women and educate them to embrace our core values of excellence, service, courage, and conscience. We use these four core values to inform and guide our way to become great students and human beings.

Our spiritual identity is a key avenue through which these values are expressed. After all, we're an Episcopal school. We gather regularly for worship as a whole school in the Cathedral and by divisions in chapel settings. When we're together, we have great respect for our Episcopal heritage, so we hold to those traditions: We carry banners up and down this aisle, we sing hymns, we offer formal-sounding prayers, and we read scripture from the Bible. Yet, we're just as likely in this Cathedral to hear sacred readings from a variety of different faith traditions, popular songs that we all sing together, the voices of adults and students sharing stories, insights, and observations that reflect on what they find meaningful and what gives them hope.

You may wonder, why such a collection of sacred and secular, Christian and non-Christian, popular and obscure? These contradictions, we believe, serve as a mirror to reveal our varied interests and values. We can each grow from this variety of wisdom.

I've heard people say to newcomers or visitors about NCS: We're really not that religious, or we're not really Christian, because we hear readings from many different faith traditions and we have services that focus on holidays from non-Christian religions. And I smile and think, yes, I can see how one might come to that conclusion. But what people are seeing is the expression of our school’s Episcopal identity in action.

Bishop Mariann Budde, who leads the Episcopal Diocese of Washington, recently told the employees of the Close schools and the Cathedral:

“One of my favorite experiences as a leader here is when a Jewish or Muslim parent comes to me and says that their children's experience here has helped them grow deeper in their own faith tradition. I just want to say to you that, as a Christian leader, I believe that is the essence of what it means to be a Christian in an educational setting. Our task is to welcome children from where they come, allow them to grow, and equip them for the unique path to which God calls them. To do so is not a watering down of our faith; it is the fullest expression of it.”

One of the core values of the Episcopal tradition is that every single person is seen as a beloved child of God. If you're not sure what that exactly means, let me translate into non-religious language: You are extraordinarily valuable. Not because you've done anything special or have a certain social status or because you're good at math. Rather, it’s because you are human. All human life is valuable and sacred, and we should treat each other that way.
Bishop Budde’s joy in hearing of students from non-Christian faith traditions growing more deeply in their own tradition, and *not* converting to this one, is a signal to her of how we recognize each person in our school community for that individual’s own inherent value. There is no need to change to be like us. Rather, we would much rather you grow into the greatest and most authentic expression of yourself. God wants every person to feel accepted and valued for who they are and the unique gifts they have to share with others.

So if you feel like you need to be like someone or something else that is not true to you, stop. Stop and breathe. And remember that you are a beloved child of God. You were chosen to be here for a reason. And your teachers and other adults in the community—we all believe in you.

We can create a community where each of us feels that we can risk being authentic, where we can bring that version of ourselves that feels like we can be our best selves and others can, too. These seemingly simple goals will take a lot of effort, commitment and dedication on all our parts. But it’s good work. Let’s join in it, together.