

Holderness School

Holderness, NH

Phillip Peck, Head of School



Project Summary

Holderness School was founded by Bishop Niles in 1879 with nine boys for “children of modest means.” Holderness remains an Episcopal school whose motto is “For God and Humankind.” Today Holderness is a boarding high school of 275 students and that motto still guides us into the 21st century. We continue to have chapel twice a week, a theology requirement, prayer before all formal occasions, a daily work program to serve others, and a formal service requirement keep this coeducational boarding school grounded in our Episcopal heritage.

Phillip Peck is only the second lay headmaster of Holderness School. To insure the primacy of the Episcopal heritage, as well as to keep the spiritual life of Holderness moving forward, Phil led the School through a spiritual life strategic planning process involving board members, students, parents, faculty and administrators. The plan provides a vision with both short and long-term goals.



Project Results

THE SPIRITUAL LIFE OF HOLDERNESS SCHOOL 2007-2010

Vision Statement:

Pro Deo et Genere Humano
(For God and Humankind)

A spirituality of connectedness—to others, to that which is greater than oneself, and to the breadth of God’s creation—is at the core of the Holderness Experience. We embrace our Episcopal heritage. We are respectful of others and appreciate our responsibilities to both the immediate community and the human family. Students play an active leadership role in our spiritual community and in our practices of worship. The chapel is a daily center of community life, drawing together the sacred and the secular, sheltering every member of our community, and fostering an ethos in which spirituality is not only respected, but celebrated.

Objectives in the next three years:

1. Emphasize spirituality not only as a daily, weekly, and yearly priority, but as a powerful way of connecting and integrating the different aspects of the Holderness Experience. Provide that all aspects of school life are informed and united by our spirituality.
2. Continue to embrace our Episcopal heritage in our worship as we honor and respect other spiritual traditions and perspectives.
3. Enlarge and transform the chapel into a multi-purpose facility that accommodates the entire community and a variety of worship experiences, one that serves also as a center for other student activities.
4. Provide not just the opportunity, but the expectation, that students will assume greater leadership and a degree of ownership in the worship practices and spiritual life of the school.
5. Ensure that faculty will support and honor the centrality of the spiritual life at Holderness.



What We Have Learned

- If we desire student leadership and engagement, the commitment must be scheduled as a priority daily, weekly, and seasonally.
- Being deliberate and transparent about the importance of spirituality in every aspect of school life is essential, or our spiritual health will lack vibrancy.
- The chapel must be expanded to bring the whole school together; we are suffering by having only half the faculty present at services. In addition, to be the center of school life, the chapel must be a multi-purpose facility.
- In order to move the school’s spiritual culture forward, the Board of Trustees can’t micro manage change, but they must champion the importance of a vibrant spiritual life.

