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Prep – 2 class of 1973
Welcome to MECS ReConnect.

Producing a publication aimed at past students, staff and Association members has been an idea that has, finally, after a number of years of thinking and talking about, turned into a reality.

MECS is blessed with a strong community made up of our current members but also founders, past board members, past staff members and past students. To celebrate our community a number of times each year, we would like to invite the wider community to join with the current community in different ways. There is our annual production, a MECS community carols night, concerts, musical recitals and more. These are great ways to keep in touch with what is going on at MECS, to see what our students have been doing and to see the changes on our beautiful grounds.

This publication is another way to ReConnect, where you can see past student profiles, enjoy a walk down memory lane, and review what is happening at MECS today.

I have enjoyed being part of putting this together and I really hope you enjoy this journey with us.

Nicole Class of '90
Community Relations Officer

Welcome to this first edition of ReConnect. I am delighted that we’ve been able to get this wonderful idea happening. I’m hoping that these special editions of our newsletter will become collectors’ pieces. You might be thinking how unusual that the normal newsletter is a ReConnect. When we thought about the issue of connecting the present community with the past community, we thought what better way than to have both groups seeing what the other has done/does.

It is so important that school communities are not just seen as delivery places where an educational product is served up for those who need it at the time. It is so much more than that. Christian education can only occur where a committed community seeks to serve the Lord with all its might. Such community is built on the shoulders of those who have gone before. Here we are acknowledging those shoulders and sharing some of the stories that accompany.

This first edition of ReConnect seeks to connect with those who have gone on before and, it seeks to honour the heritage out of which MECS was born. This is why the by-line says ‘Connecting the Community’.

Initially, we intend ReConnect to be published twice per year. We’ve recently been blessed with a high powered colour copier and what better use could we put it to, than to do a coloured special edition. ReConnect will be a ‘work in progress’. You are most welcome to feed in ideas and contributions and they’ll find a place in the next edition, which will come out around the beginning of Term 2 next year.

Please make yourself a cuppa and enjoy this trip down memory lane. May God be honoured as we seek to serve Him in developing Christian education across the generations.

Martin
Current Principal

You are most welcome to feed in ideas and contributions and they’ll find a place in the next edition which will come out around the beginning of Term 2 next year.

What’s Happening at MECS?

Here’s a summary of some interesting things you might like to know about the school.

Parent Seminars

For some time, we’ve been chatting about ways in which we can assist parents in their understanding of what MECS is about. A few years ago, we decided that all new parents would be required to attend two compulsory parent seminars on Christian education within their first two years of partnership with MECS. Even while it’s quite difficult getting parents out to mid week meetings, these seminars have been very successful.

Year 12 Assembly

Each year one of the very special events on our calendar is the Year 12 Farewell Assembly. This year’s is coming up next week. We squeeze into the SS Theatre (not easy for 570 students).

Working Bees

One of MECS’ great successes is parent working bees. They have changed over the years. We can’t simply let children go loose anymore, climbing any tree or roof that they find. Parents either attend a WB each year or they receive a bill. Most parents are happy to attend because Property Manager Peter, ensures that it’s well organised and there’s lots of food. Parents love it when they feel they can make a worthwhile and appreciated contribution.

Master Plan

Back in 2003, the school adopted an Infrastructure Master Plan with a list of 23 projects. 22 of those 23 have been completed. When past students come back for a look, they are stunned by or how much things have changed. The Master Plan has been upgraded and things like a synthetic Primary Oval, revamped MS playcourts and Gymnasium have all been added.

Gymnasium – to be completed soon

The deadline for our newest big project is the end of this year. The official opening is planned for the middle of February. Come along for this big celebration. This one has been 25 years since the first time a gym was first planned for.

Middle School Loos

Another proof that some promises do come good, is the renovation to the MS toilets. The guidelines are ‘don’t make the loos too comfy or they’ll spend too much time there preening but comfy enough so they’ll go’. We’ve tried to find that balance.

Association Meetings

Every year we hold two of these for the members of the Association. These members are the moral owners of the school. They elect the Board who govern the school and appoint the Principal, who in turn manages the day to day running of the school. These meetings are not dry affairs. At the next one coming up on Oct 21 Andrew will be sharing some of his doctoral studies on the impact Aboriginal studies has had with our Year 10 students.
1a Joanne (class of ’79) Supply Officer & 1b Rob, 1c Trevor (class of ’99) & 1d Ange. Children – 1e Jasmine & 1f Dusty, 1g Marella (Class of 05) & 1h Amber (class of ’08).

2a Jude (class of ‘80) Clinical Nurse Educator for Western Health/University of Melbourne & 2b Martin (Class of ’79) Department Manager in the Community Services Department at Swinburne University (TAFE), Children – 2c Aydan, 2d Jordan & 2e Jared.

3a Calvin (class of ’82) School Principal & 3b Sue, Children – 3c Natasha & 3d Soren.

4a Sonia (class of ’84) Midwife & 4b Michael, Children – 4c Lauren, 4d Jack, 4e Lachlan, 4f Sophia.

5a Gerald (class of ’86) Earthmoving/Excavation & 5b Michelle, Children – 5c Liam, 5d Abbey and 5e Ella.

6a Brendan (class of ’89) Earthmoving/Excavation.

7a Marita (class of ’90) Speech Therapist/Accounts Manager & 7b Mathew, – Children – 7c Reuben, 7d Jairus, 7e Sian & 7f Micah.
MECS - The Beginning

It is tempting to view the official Opening of MECS on Saturday 3 Feb 1973 as MECS beginning.

On reflection it would surely become clear that a great deal of effort would have been required to arrive at this historical and exciting event. It was some 22 years after the earlier Dutch migrants arrived with the ideal of establishing a Parent Controlled Christian School in the Mt Evelyn District. Saving for this “high priority” cause commenced in the early fifties and was driven by the Ladies Guild of the then Mt Evelyn Reformed Church. An Association of Parents for Christian Education was established in 1964 and things got really serious when the York Road property was purchased in 1969/70. What a blessing! That – in some ways - was the easy part. How do you go from there – get a Principal, design and build the facilities, capital funding, Teachers, Christian curriculum etc etc. How did it all happen in 2 years? Looking back it was a matter of one prayerful step at the time towards our firm goal – a School where our children would be nurtured to experience and view all of life as service to the Lord and to encourage a personal relationship with Him. It involved many hours of prayerful planning, building, discussions, working bees, interviews, fundraising Fetes, sacrificing, fun and fellowship involving many people. Believe me we had a fantastic and rewarding time.

Can you imagine our excitement when THE Saturday arrived. The Honourable Bill - Minister for Conservation in the Victorian Parliament - had been invited to officially open the School and also to be present at the Dedication presided over by our Inspirational Association Chairman - Keith. It was a sunny and warm afternoon – last minute preparations having been made in the morning. Around 150 people were part of the festivities including the unveiling of the Plaque which included the words that are basic to MECS ‘s existence:

“This School is established to acknowledge the Kingship of Christ in Education”

As our children and grandchildren have been blessed by attending MECS it is encouraging to see new generations taking over the oversight in the Lord’s strength. What a fantastic school MECS is today! It’s not the end of the story: please continue to pray for the people involved in establishing the new and exciting Trade Training Centre on behalf of MECS and 2 local Christian schools. Praise the Lord for His faithfulness.

Jerry
Foundation Board Member
MECS BOARD AND ASSOCIATION

Welcome to the first edition of ReConnect. It is our hope that you read and enjoy many trips down memory lane as you receive each edition.

Currently, the MECS Board is 7 devoted parents who have a desire to maintain our schools vision to glorify our Heavenly Father through education. It is our firm belief that God gave parents the responsibility to educate their children and therefore, we take our role seriously as we govern the school.

Our Board is elected by the Association who are the moral owners of the school. The Board meet monthly to set and maintain the direction of the school. Our Executive Team which consists of the Principal, Martin, the Deputy Principal, Allan and the Administration Manager, Gerry keep the Board informed of the day-to-day running of the school.

There are 3 past students on the Board, you may remember them when they were young and beautiful – Louise – Parents & Community, Natasha – Vice Board Chair & Secretary and Sue – Association & Board Chair. Our other treasured members are Annamarie (Mother and Grandmother of MECS students) – Teaching and Learning, Ian (Father) – Treasurer & Students, Craig (Father) – Finance and Ken (Father) – Infrastructure.

Our Association meet twice per year for informative meetings and to ensure the school maintains its unique ethos. You are most welcome to join any meeting as an observer and to get a full update of MECS happenings. This magazine will keep you posted of the dates.

We invite you to come and see your school. It is wonderful to witness the many ways in which God has blessed this community. You remain a special part of the school’s history and we would love to see you back (some of your teachers are still here and would love the opportunity to reconnect with you).

Sue
On Behalf of the Board

Reconnect!

We would love to hear from any past students wanting to reconnect.

If you would like to be on the mailing list and receive ReConnect either by post or e-mail please let us know.

Please forward us your contact details and e-mail address, what you are doing now and perhaps a current photo of you (and your family if you like).

You can contact the school by going to the ‘Past Student’ page on the MECS website: www.mecs.vic.edu.au

Or e-mail us

Association AGM
12th May 2011
Association EGM
20th October 2011.

Although 1973 is many years ago there are some moments a mother never forgets. The first day of school at MECS was the first day at school for my first little girl. How my heart trembled as we stopped in the car park preparing to drop my four and a half year old baby at a brand new school, with a brand new classroom and a brand new teacher.

As Melissa stepped out of the car, she looked at me calmly and said “you can go now Mum”. I think the first day of school was harder for Mum than for her little girl. Melissa was the youngest student at MECS that day and she journeyed through her school years until the end of Year 12 to head for Teachers College. And now, after all this time, she is back returning the blessings she received from MECS.

Margaret

1973 Prep-Year 2 class

First School Day at MECS

Although 1973 is many years ago there are some moments a mother never forgets. The first day of school at MECS was the first day at school for my first little girl. How my heart trembled as we stopped in the car park preparing to drop my four and a half year old baby at a brand new school, with a brand new classroom and a brand new teacher.

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Undoubtedly 1973 was a magnificent year for the Association of Parents for Christian Education Mount Evelyn, as it was then known. That was the year that they opened Mount Evelyn Christian School. We now live at a time when Christian schools are a well known part of the Australian educational landscape. It was not always so. In 1973 everyone knew what a Catholic school was and there were many church schools but the idea of calling schools ‘Christian’ was entirely novel. Mount Evelyn was only the fifth school in Australia to be described generically that way. This novelty created both opportunities and challenges.

It does not make sense to speak about 1973 in isolation. Prayer, planning and work toward a Christian school had been the task of the Association since before its official formation in 1964. Hard work and prayer enabled an old orchard in York Road to be bought in 1970 – the story of that purchase at auction is another marvellous tale of God’s grace. Some of the land was able to be subdivided to provide cash for the school’s early growth.

Association members elected a Board of Directors to give direction to the Association’s dream for a Christian school. Talents of Association members were brought to bear and through careful and prayerful planning the site was developed, three classrooms, an office and staffroom and a toilet block were erected ready for the first day of school in 1973.

Mount Evelyn had always done things in its own distinctive way and with staff from a Methodist, Baptist and Brethren background, it was clear that the Board was serious about the non-denominational nature of the school – it would be the educational creed that determined the shape and direction of the school. When the appointment of myself, Jack as founding principal was made in August 1972, there were about fifty enrolments. In faith, the Board appointed two more staff members, Elisabeth and Beth. The 1973 school year started with seventy-five students. This enabled us to have three classes – a Prep/1/2, 3/4 and 5/6 each with about 25 students.

Certainly 1973 was a good year to start a new school. In December 1972, Australia elected a Labor government with Gough Whitlam as Prime Minister. This proved to be crucial to Mount Evelyn Christian School and others. Unlike as it may have seemed, this new government introduced on-going recurrent government funding for non-government schools. God is faithful on so many fronts.

In January 1973, before the school opened, the first ‘Education in Focus’ conference was held. All newly appointed Mount Evelyn staff participated, together with one or two board members and virtually all staff of the four other Christian schools which then existed in Australia. About forty-five of us were at Belgrave Heights to work with the truth that God is sovereign in every nook and cranny of His cosmos and over everyone and everything in it. Jesus Christ created and sustains all there is. We came to see that it would not be good enough to add some bible stories and Christian songs to an otherwise secular curriculum but that God’s ownership means that learning (and life) can make no ultimate sense without acknowledging and responding to its Creator. This was a formidable task for us novices in 1973. And it remains formidable now. Serving God faithfully in every aspect of life and learning remains an ongoing task and privilege for everyone.

The three teachers prepared for a week or so before school began. ‘We are a Christian school – what now?’ we said to each other. So began the work of developing distinctively Christian education in our community setting. I am encouraged that this work continues now. It might be interesting to current staff to note that in 1973, teachers were full time – that is, staff were ‘on deck’ for the whole of the school day, school week and school year. The principal also taught full time. But we were not on our own; there was active, enthusiastic support and involvement from parents. It was an exciting, demanding and remarkable time.

Founding students enjoyed being the pioneers in their new school. This may be a bit of romantic historic revision on my part – but I think not. The first students were a diverse group with many strong points, great delights and not a few challenges. My clear recollection is that each one played his/her part in laying a strong foundation for the future. Much interest was generated in this new Christian school. We blinked once or twice and the next thing you knew it was September. By this time, the parents of the six students in Year 6 decided that they would like their children to continue into Secondary years at Mount Evelyn Christian School. The students also thought that would be a good idea. The Board agreed but, with the sums carefully done, decided that there would need to be 30 Year 7 students in 1974 to make it work.

While the school was finding its educational feet, new classrooms were being built on a third level and maintaining the beauty of our stunning bush site. Planning continued apace for entering into a High School phase so early in our history. This was a 1973 decision of great foresight, made, as it was, at a time when the Board, the staff, parents and students were blessed with naivity and were unwilling to be shaped by prevailing thinking about Secondary schooling.

Certainly there was enthusiasm, experimenting, faith, confidence and a good deal of youthful exuberance. Yet, despite what sounds like frenetic effort, there was remarkable stability. That amazing first year of Mount Evelyn Christian School laid a foundation for significant expansion into the future as a Christian educational community. This was God’s grace hard at work by grounding our educational community into the truth that we always need to first seek His kingdom in all things.

Jack Mechielsen
MECS Principal 1973 - 1982
Dear Member,

On Saturday 24th October 1970, you are invited to attend the bi-annual General Meeting of our Association.

Over the past years, we have experienced the Lord's blessings on our efforts to establish a Christian School. It is wonderful how He made it possible for us to buy the land. It is encouraging to find so many people willing to support this worthy cause.

Now there is a strong possibility that we will be able to sell part of our land as building blocks, the proceeds of which will go a long way towards building our school.

The Board feels that the Lord is clearly encouraging us to go right ahead with our plans. We have therefore carefully worked out a scheme which, if fully supported, will result in the opening of our School in February 1973 D.V.

The time has never been more favorable and delaying the opening date will not improve the situation - rising building costs etc. Our proposal provides for 3 classrooms, a toilet block and school yard to accommodate approximately 50 children.

Board Secretary 1970

Check out the finances of the past (left). Things have certainly changed in nearly 40 years!
The board members in early 1973 were as follows:
Keith (president)
Jerry (secretary)
Eddy (minutes secretary)
Joan (treasurer)
Ria (Assistant treasurer)
John (property officer)
Keith (convenor Building sub-committee)
The Honourable Bill (MP, Minister for Conservation) unfurls the flags to officially open MECS on 3 February 1973, watched by a young Jack – the first Principal.
1970s

Gerry (HSC 1979)
I was really a ring in. I’d spent some time away at Mooroolbark Tech and then came to MECS to join the first Form 6 group with 4 others in 1979. After school I went to Melb Uni completing an Ag Science degree. Whilst at uni I became interested in Bible translation and after a stint working for pay, I went to BCV studying to be a Bible translator. Marriage to Melinda had occurred and 4 daughters followed in quick succession. 10 years in the Solomons and a number of years back in Melbourne saw the completion of the Solomon Islands Pijin Bible in 2008. My girls attended MECS and at first I landed on the Board and then I had to lose that job because they decided to employ me. They pay me to have fun.

1980s

Sharon (Year 10, 1985)
I left MECS in 85 and went on to do a teaching degree. My dream was always to come back to MECS as a Yr 7 home teacher. That dream was realised in 1993 when I became the Yr 7 home teacher. My first ambition was to be a famous actress but my Careers Teacher said I needed a fallback option. Hence I combined my love of drama with my love of MECS. My greatest achievement in life is having the upgraded MS multi-purpose room labelled the ‘Sharon Performing Arts Centre’, even if it’s only me that uses that label and any students who want to pass drama. My love of kids has seen me write books that hopefully help them navigate the treacherous adolescent waters. Just about to enter my 23rd year at MECS if you include my four student years. To continue the MECS theme I went onto marry Andrew Witt, who incidentally was a MECS Yr 11 student when I was in Yr 7, and have two adorable kids who’ve also continued the MECS tradition. It’s sad that I can’t leave the place even though I do threaten to resign often when people steal my mugs which they do all the time.

1990s

Richard (VCE 1990)
I came across in Year 11 from Mountain District Christian School. I loved the way the teachers treated you and the great social atmosphere. Roger roped me into his soccer squads. History and Chemistry were the favourites. I wrestled with the question of uni or work and soon found my niche as a dance teacher. I’m married with two boys who are 8 and 5 and I run a dance studio in Richmond. I was interested in putting back into the school after the positive impact it had for me, so for the past five years I’ve been the dance instructor for the Year 11s preparing for their Formal, which occurs this week. My nieces and nephews still attend the school.

2000s

Amy (graduated VCE 2005)
I started in Prep at MECS back in 1993. My dad was teaching there. Between Grades 3 – 8 we lived in Sydney but came back to the school we loved. I just loved Science and Chemistry and Drama. I’ve completed Nursing & Midwifery degrees and am presently doing my graduate year at Maroondah Hospital. I married Chad last year and we live in Lilydale. My love of science led to me to nursing and my love for drama has led to my involvement with an amateur theatre company where I act and construct costumes. My time at MECS instilled within me a deep understanding of Christ and what it means to be a Christian. This has significantly shaped the way I live my life now.

2010s

Melinda (VCE 2010)
I’ve been at MECS since Prep and will be receiving that special card from a new Prep student at next week’s Farewell Assembly. Since Year 10 I’ve wanted to do something in Engineering and I thought I’d go to uni but then I changed my mind because I was going stir crazy studying at a desk. I needed to start something a little more ‘hands on’ and so I started working at a local Engineering workshop. I’ve got an apprenticeship in Metal Machining lined up as soon as exams are finished. My favourite subjects are Maths and Chemistry.
Past Student News

My Life Since MECS

• 1988 Year 10 left at the end of the year
• 1989 attended Box Hill Technical School
• 1990 started an apprenticeship as a fitter and machinist
• 1994 completed apprenticeship
• 1994-1995 worked for various companies
• 1995-2007 worked for Integrated Machinery and travelled all over the world
• Went to Tafe and got my Advanced Diploma of Engineering Technology
• 1998-2000 lived and worked in China for Integrated Machinery
• 2001-2007 worked for Visy Automation as an automation engineer
• Feb 2007 – present – set up my own business Mattech Engineering Services specialising in packaging machines and factory automation
• Will be married in October 2010. Have 1 daughter aged 6, a step daughter aged 8 and a step-son aged 9. Living in Warburton

Matt (Class of 1990)

My Life At MECS

On page 5 in this Reconnect newsletter, my mum recounts my first day of school at MECS, starting as a confident Preppie. I'm sorry to say I can't recall it, but I can recall my own experience in 2000 of dropping off my first child to start Preps at MECS. I can also remember, quite vividly, the day that I dropped my third, and youngest, child off for her first day of Prep at MECS because not only was it the end of my children full time at home era, it was also my first day at MECS in a new capacity – as a teacher. I’ve been teaching at MECS for five years and am now a Senior Primary teacher and the Assistant Coordinator of the Primary school.

As I look out of the window of my beautiful classroom (situated just above where the caretaker’s house used to be), I look out on a playground that is the same as when I ran around in it, yet different. The log swing bridge is gone (a shame really, I loved it!), but there is lots of new equipment and a fantastic new Primary Oval. Just outside my window are the old monkey bars that have been there since the school began. I used to love swinging on these monkey bars and find great pleasure in watching the students of today do the same. The view from my classroom window reminds me of the changes, but also the ‘sameness’ of MECS.

We now have many more students, amazing facilities (including a nearly finished gym), many new staff and have sharpened our focus on many different things. We no longer can build cubbies in the bush (a shame again), get away with wearing mini skirts to school or have 33 students in each class. My students love hearing stories about ‘the old MECS’. Just the other day I told them about the old ‘get wet, get whacked’ rule we used to have (not sure anyone ever did, but we sure believed we would!) and the way we used to be allowed to play in the old hut (now certified by national trust, I think). I have reminisced about being bell monitor and the beautiful old heavy school bell we used to have. (We now have a far less pleasant electronic one.) Many of the walls at the front of the room are now adorned with Interactive whiteboards instead of blackboards and the old radios on which we used to listen to ‘ABC Sing’. Now there’s only a few Dutch surnames in each class instead of most of the class! The canteen now has a far wider selection than Nutchews or Jupiter Bars and pies for 35 cents.

But some things, apart from the monkey bars, have not changed. The heart of MECS remains the same. Why do so many ex-students send their children here or even, as in my case, come back to teach here? I think it’s because we felt a sense of belonging and connection with MECS that we still want to be part of. Not just for history’s sake, but because the things we connected to at MECS still exist. The sense of community, the way each child is loved, valued and encouraged as an individual, the way students are taught about God’s world and their place in it. The passion of MECS is still alive and strong and hasn’t changed. The soul of MECS is still there. What’s different about MECS than most other schools? I think it’s the fact that rather than just thinking that MECS is a great school, you can actually believe in MECS. The very things that it is built on are good things to believe in. It’s more than just liking the grounds or the facilities or the programs or the teachers – though all those things at the current MECS are outstanding. It’s a school with soul. That’s why my parents sent me to MECS on my first day as a Preppie. That’s why I sent my kids to MECS. And that’s why, like the old monkey bars, I’m still here.

Melissa (Class of 1985)

Life at Gapuwiyak Dhawu

Since finishing school, I studied a Bachelor of Arts/Education at Monash University. During the course of my degree, I undertook 2 placements in the Northern Territory in Indigenous communities. I have begun teaching this year at Gapuwiyak School in North East Arnhem Land.

MECS was the first place I learnt about Aboriginal people and their history. Centre Trip was a pivotal moment for me, and allowed me the opportunity to see and experience an Indigenous community for the first time. I feel blessed by this experience, as this sparked my interest in Indigenous culture, history and education. Throughout my degree I studied Indigenous history further and began to consider working in a community.

Since living and working in Gapuwiyak this year I have learnt so much about Yolngu culture and met many beautiful people. My Mukul (Aunty) Linda is teaching me to weave, how to collect the panadus and the different dyes. I enjoy learning with my students, as we grapple with English and I, with Yolngu Matha (the language). I realise regularly what a privilege it is to live in such a special place, where we are only ever visitors. Living here has opened my eyes to a new part of Australia, away from the hustle and bustle of the city; to a world where few visit, where many know nothing of and that can at times seem very far away from my home at Lilydale. Yet how special it is to live and learn from this world and what a beautiful world it is!!

Rebekah (Class of 2003)
Pre-1900s
Kids are seen and not heard. The wealthy have tutors. Churches shape the coming education revolution by commencing Sunday Schools but governments soon take over. Parents happy to receive freebees.

1900s
No schools labelled ‘Christian’ in their title, but Catholic and Grammar schools are an option. Every other man and his dog go to the local school down the road.

1951
Station Pier keeps unloading Dutch (and many other) immigrants full of zeal to forge a new post-war life. Upon landing on new shores and smelling the tulips, these 10 Guilder Poms realise that things are not quite like they were back home.

1952
Mr and Mrs Van Der are not happy with handing over their ‘preciouses’ to unknowns because no self respecting Dutch Christian would allow a young impressionable mind to be at the mercy of a rank humanist. They remember the ‘Battle for the Minds’ that were fought with secular liberals behind the windmills.

1954
As soon as a good Reformed Church is established, the next job is building a Christian school. A newly married Dutch woman says, “We should have a School with the Bible.” Everyone’s got to give a shilling a week. We’re coming door knocking.

1960s
More door knocking. Send the kids to a state school for the moment but as soon as we have enough shillings, we are going to start a school that really knows that ‘Jesus is Lord’.

1968
Dutchies in Perth, Hobart, Sydney and Melbourne racing to see who could set up the first Christian School. Maranatha and Donvale beat MECS to opening day but visionary and bold leadership sees MECS as the first Senior Secondary.

1970
Still $2000 short of the $19,000 needed to buy a school block of land. Would Australians want to buy droppies as a fundraiser? How do we get other Christians to see that they have to be involved? Can’t they see God commands this? What’s wrong with them? If you eat vegemite, surely Dutch liquorice would be a treat?

1971
Old Mt Evelyn orchard with homestead up for sale. Two Dutchmen keep waving back at the Auctioneer when he waves at them, thinking it’s a normal Australian greeting. End up with 18 acres of land and their houses mortgaged against the debt. A visit to council finds they can shave off the Hawkins Road blocks for cash to build classrooms.

1972
Gough becomes PM much to the chagrin of many conservative Christians but they readily accept the open wallet of funding for non-government schools.

Jack flashes a smile and next minute he’s the new Principal.

1973
The first roll call sees 75 play lunches unpacked that first recess.

Parents loved coming to policy development meetings. If God didn’t dress Adam and Eve in blazers why should we? No uniform policy passed. School photos see every brand of fashion possible.
1974
Grade Sixes refuse to leave nice cosy little school arguing with their parents that if God-centred education was good enough for Primary, why isn’t it for Secondary? Parents stumped for answer, like every other generation of parents faced with classic adolescent logic. Secondary begins and grows a year at a time.

1975
Jack leads staff devotion on the ‘first will be last’ and the anti-competition policy is born.

1976
Cheap portables found at a Dutch auction. They’d do well as classrooms.

1977
Christian education doesn’t just happen because a teacher attends church. It needs its own distinctive schoolish character. How will that be achieved? Board rules that all teachers will undertake post graduate study with the Institute of Christian Education. Teachers switch roles to become students on Monday evenings.

1978
Senior Secondary starts up the hill away from the silliness of younger children. This was serious education and good HSC results requires serious teachers and a lecture theatre.

1979
Great phrase is born when MECS publishes Christian Education classic book, ‘No Icing on the Cake’. Adding tacky ‘Christian’ bits to sanctify stuff, gets the gong.

1980
Oval has two week ‘good use’ changeover from winter mud to summer dust. Plan to do drainage at some stage gets devised.

1981
A decent Australian education requires an understanding of things indigenous. Let’s take school on the road and see how far Principal Jack can drive our very own bus. Natural air conditioning as windows open automatically due to vibration. Pull off the road north of Alice and land at Yuendumu. Surely Warlpiri’s as good a language as French to learn. A relationship and a tradition gets struck and Centre Trip emerges on every Year 10 horizon.

1982
New Principal Stewart attempts to introduce tartan tablecloths but cops it in the bagpipes. Sets about building on what the pioneers had established and convincing all and sundry that the art of teaching was in the telling of stories.

1983
In great egalitarian gesture of its era, early teacher pay packages were determined on the basis of the average parent declared income.
In great reversal of egalitarian gesture, a new realisation of the effects of ‘the fall’ when declared parent income appeared to be less than it should be.
Learning should not be restricted by four walls. Camps are developed to all the major vistas – the mountains, the sea, the rivers, the city, the political heart - Canberra, the outback, the forest, the goldrush and many more.

1984
Despite Orwell’s prediction, the cosmic life continues even at MECS. Hawkins Hut, the secondary student smoking hide-out, nearly gets bumped before history buff Ken comes to its rescue.
When you don’t have money, you’re committed to giving students actual concrete experiences and they have a ‘we can do it’ attitude, remarkable things happen. Students build the Transition Education Centre from the ground up and return years later to find it’s been morphed into a staffroom.

1985
School nearly goes belly up because of money troubles and uniform wars. Packed general meetings collecting proxies from far and wide. World War III averted but many leave to find blazers and ‘real education’.

1986
Developing school based curriculum because we’re not going to be dictated to by some secular education department, becomes ‘par for the teacher course’. Illumined-one Doug convinces everyone this is the way because all great academics smoke a pipe.

1987
Year 10s move upstairs as the VCE takes over from the HSC and a new Middle School emerges. And guess what? Years 7, 8 and 9 actually do know how to talk with each other. Multi-ageing is more than a primary and small school success story.

1988
State schools switch from three terms to four. MECS goes from six to four.

1989
Old library floods as hidden sauerkraut sandwiches block pipes. Students enlisted in book drying exercises but to no avail as most end up being junked.

1990
Change in society view and the strap gets placed on the asbestos list. Teachers needing retraining in discipline techniques get sent to Siberia.

1991
Like the coming kingdom, Board Chair promises a gym and the P&F go into fundraising overdrive. Good intentions come to naught so some asphalt is laid as a compromise.

1992
Planning team says we really should do something about the Oval.
1993
The annual MECS footy game loses 3 students below the mud line during the course of the match.

1994
Big stand-up stoush between Principal Stewart and errant constable when the man in blue takes reckless course of action in genuine fire evacuation. Lesson: don’t get in the way of Father Miller looking after his little charges.

1995
Bethany returns on one of these visits to find that ‘Bethany loves Rick’ is still etched in the back of her corral, that still lives in the Study Centre.

1996
Competing technologies engage in vicious war with whiteboard markers eventually seeing off the classic chalk stick. Only diehard Roger vows never to give in.

1997
Building regs change and a steep site needs a myriad of gentler sloping paths in order to get building approval. New subject called zig-zag studies is developed.

1998
PE teacher heard saying “Hell will freeze over before MECS gets a gym”. There is a feeling that sports was getting the rough end of the ruler. Occasional forays by MECS students at inter-school sports meets gets greeting of, ‘Who are those motley strays from up the hills?’

1999
Yuendumu visitors bring happy times and leave MECS with some marvellous Warlpiri artworks, still hanging in the office and staffroom.

2000
New library finds pride of place in the middle of the school with panoramic views of bush and playground. Students caught gazing into the beautiful hills. Canteen shifts to new facilities and managed by P&F volunteers.

2001
The bushland on the beautiful property continues to flower and fruit, regardless of us, reminding us of God’s unconditional love.

2002
After nearly three decades of operation, MECS decides it needs two Principals as newbee Martin tag teams with old hand Stewart. Principal Martin sets up committee to address newly noticed problem of oval drainage.

2003
The pressure on class sizes sees overall shift from double multi-age class clusters to triples. Tired buildings and more space desperately needed. Big Master Plan emerges and the sound of construction becomes constant. Science rooms, senior school, staffroom, music centre, primary school, manual arts – all get made over.

2004
Logo review team think that ‘average teaching, average care’ might be a non-pretentious update to ‘good teaching, good care’.

I think we should say “cheap fees, mediocre school”.
I like “My kids are happy, I’m happy”.

2005
Old students return to see MECS institutions Roger and Colin are still firmly camped in the same retirement village. However they don’t recognise their old senior school. A chorus line of ‘that’s where we used to …’ and ‘I can’t get over how much it’s changed’ echo forth. Roger and Colin a bit startled when they teach the children of their ex-students from long ago … soon get used to it.

2006
MECS hosts the Victorian 40th anniversary of CPCS in Australia in revamped SS theatrette.

Whole school assemblies can no longer fit in Understorey or Theatre. Solution found by stacking MS boys on top of each other.

2007
Tribal sports organised. Can’t have ‘houses’ that would be too competitive. Tribal names a bit hard to remember but colours are quite clear.

2008
Staff photo needs extra bench as number of Teacher Aides swells the staff number to 93.

2009
The GFC pandemic gives Education Minister Julia a good idea. Why not write blank cheques for schools and let them all have gymnasia, even if they’ve already got one. Manna from Kevin well received. Old Slim Gym plans shredded and Taj Mahal emerges.

Trade Training Centre gets the Canberra nod and planning for a Christian Tech in Lilydale begins in earnest. At the other end of the age spectrum, an Early Years Centre finally gets a decent hearing.

2010
School realises it’s entering middle age and could easily become another independent school dancing to a ‘money-strings’ tune. Wants to remain true to its calling of serving God in all things. Launches Re-Connect as a means of keeping in touch with its heritage and pioneers.

Oval unusable after winter rains return for the first time in years. Maybe a committee might look at the problem of drainage on the oval?
Facebook
Yes! We have a Facebook group. Just search for Mount Evelyn Christian School. 400 current and past students and staff have joined!

Re-Connect Data Base list
Community Relations Officer Nicole is heading up this area and is keen to build the database. If you’re aware of other students not on the list please help us get connected.

Newsletter
We regularly are told that the MECS newsletter is right up there with the best school newsletters. Each week a school leader writes an editorial on a topic relevant to our core vision of developing Christian education. A decent overview of what’s been happening in the life of the community fills most of the rest, coupled with the vital information parents need in fulfilling their role. If you don’t presently receive our newsletter and would like to, please email Nicole.

Praying
It’s great to remember our school community in your prayers. The newsletter informs you of what’s happening and reminds you that the school’s mission of guiding and shaping young minds and hearts is a critical one.

Visiting – a trip down memory lane
Do you find yourself driving down York Road and saying to your children, “that's where I went to school”. We love it when ex-students pop back in for a visit. If that might feel awkward then why not keep your eyes peeled for an event, like a reunion or an anniversary or an open day.

Connecting
You know the song '50 ways to leave your lover' well this column is the opposite … 50 ways to stay connected.

Website
How things have changed in the ways schools operate. We don’t print off loads of paper brochures to advertise anymore. People visit your website. It won’t be too far away where parents and students will receive a log in for our website and that’s how they’ll access what we need to send out.

Open Days
Each year we hold one or two Open Days where the school is on display to anyone who wants to come past for a look. Most of those who visit are prospective parents checking out whether or not they’d like to have their children attend the school. We also hold ‘School at Work’ Days where visitors can see the school in actual operation.

Who’s still here
If you popped in who might you bump into some of these current staff? Here’s the long term staff list and the year they started. This is a combined time of service of 254 years.

- Geoff – the class of 1977
- Colin – the class of 1979
- Roger – the class of 1982
- Allan – the class of 1984
- Alison – the class of 1989
- Christine – the class of 1990
- Liesje – the class of 1991
- Rosalie – the class of 1992
- Sharon – the class of 1993
- Marie – the class of 1994
- Sharon – the class of 1994
- Wilma – the class of 1995

Grandparents & Special Friends Day
On this particular day each year we can’t find enough carpark spots to fit everyone. This event is the biggest ‘catch up’ event held in the life of the community. For our primary school children it’s a marvellous opportunity for them to ‘show off’ to their grandparents or special friends what they’ve been doing. This event is held in March each year.
Helpers needed for Primary Athletics

Urgent notice for more helpers for the Primary Athletics, 2nd week back on Friday 22 Oct. We need parents to help with scoring, ribbon distribution, and refreshments for staff. It is great day to be involved. The more people who can help share the load, the better.

If you can help please leave your name with the office or email me. Thanks in anticipation, Anne-Maree

Canteen Helpers Urgently Needed

It is fairly urgent that the canteen gets some help especially on a Monday or Friday. If you are able to help please contact Sheryl or the main office.

Paving and Landscaping Apprenticeship

(Certificate III in Horticulture Landscaping). Full Time Position 4 year Apprenticeship. Must be reliable and have a willingness to work Non Smoking Environment. Call James.

AASC Term 4

MECS is once again participating in the AASC program in Term 4, 2010. Activities to be offered are:

• Monday 3:45pm – 4:45pm: Netball
• Thursday 3:45pm – 4:45pm: T-Ball, Rounders & Bat Tennis

The program will run for 7 weeks beginning 18 Oct 2010. If you would like your child to participate in this program, please complete a parental form (available from the office) and return this to the office by: Friday 23 July. This is a free program and places are limited.

Dress Guidelines

It was a lengthy line of students that appeared outside the Dress Coordinator’s room (First Aid Room) early this week. The warm weather brought out items of clothing that breached the guidelines, either as a result of forgetfulness, personal growth in height, or, sadly, further testing of the boundaries with accompanying ‘attitude’.

Please note the following:-

SHORTS (regardless of being over leggings) must reach AT LEAST halfway between the crotch and top of the knee. It is important that shorts are measured when they are pulled up to fit, rather than the baggy ‘dropped crotch’ style that some students prefer.

SHORTS, the hipster-style, must be covered by a longer top, not short tops. Mid-riff is to be covered.

SKIRTS over leggings are also to reach half-way to the knee, or to the top of the knee if worn without leggings.

TOPS are to have sleeves covering the shoulders. Sleeveless tops, even when worn underneath a cardigan, are OUTSIDE the guidelines.

FOOTWEAR is to have the toe enclosed and a supported heel, i.e. no slip-ons.

NOSE-STUDS may only be worn in the Senior School. Plastic (clear) nose studs are not acceptable in the Middle or Primary Schools.

MAKE-UP is not to be worn in Middle or Primary School. To clarify the ‘tinted moisturiser’ discussion – there is discretion around covering blemishes, but in many cases the ‘tinted moisturiser’ is of a darker colour than is natural, and is heavily applied.

I understand the emotions that these issues can generate, and often spend much time talking through them with our students. Mostly our students are respectful. Thank you very much to the students who demonstrate maturity and maintain a gracious outlook in their compliance, even though they disagree with the guidelines.

Jo

NOTICES SENT HOME THIS WEEK

• October Working Bee Letter
• Yr 7 Term 4 Camp Information Notice

MECS COMMUNITY NOTICES

Helpers needed for Primary Athletics

Are you in a position to help in any way for the Primary Athletics, 2nd week back on Friday 22 Oct. We need parents to help.

Canteen Helpers Urgently Needed

As the school continues to grow and the Canteen is becoming busier, it is becoming more difficult to get sufficient help for the Canteen. It is really important that we continue to get people to help.

Paving and Landscaping Apprenticeship

The Landscape Gardening program at MECS is looking for a Level III Certificate III in Horticulture Landscaping. If you are interested in finding out more information, please contact Quinton.