A Time to Celebrate!

John with his Prep buddy Christy at the Year 12 Assembly, holding the Card she made for him - a MECS tradition!
Calling our young people to something greater

This week Principal Martin reflects on the challenges that our young people face when their school calls them to something greater than the ‘puffing up’ that a self-obsessed culture can create. What have our Year 12s learnt from us, taken on board, and how do they work that through, when so much of what is around them says something quite different?

It has got to be confusing, when on the one hand you’re told ‘you are the centre of all things’ and then on the other hand, school and parents are saying ‘there’s a bigger picture than you’ – it’s the story that God calls you to love and serve him first and then yourself and others second. These are quite different ways to live our (at times, confused) young people are in the middle, hearing two contradictory messages. I also (dangerously) wonder whether the church and the Christian school is not that convincing because what we call our young people to isn’t that challenging.

There's something bigger

As a youth worker many years ago I was always taken with this quote from R.Osmer in his book, ‘Challenges to Youth Ministry in Mainline Churches’ (p.6, 1989):

“…an effort has focussed on devising strategies for keeping young people in the church because it is a place where they will be ‘safe’ from the terrors of the street or the seductions of the shopping mall. Our hopes for them are modest and reasonable. For the most part, they mirror the expectations we have for ourselves. We ask no more than that they grow up to be ‘good’ people – decent, law abiding, successful in their jobs and happy in their marriages. To this end, we program activities which are certainly wholesome, sometimes edifying, and almost always ‘fun’. Conscientious youth workers (teachers) work hard to find ways to involve young people in worthwhile… projects which yield concrete results to which we can point with pride – are very successful. Of course, some young people do remain in the church, and most of these turn out to be ‘good’ people. But many do not. They leave the church because it is spiritually innocuous.

Ultimately, the spiritual needs of young people transcend the legitimate requirements of wholesome companionship, entertaining events, and even worthwhile service projects. What they ask from the church is not so much something to do as something to be. Their lives are already awash with tasks and activities, all designed to help them succeed in life – a life filled with tasks and activities. Meanwhile, the fundamental need they have to commit themselves body and soul to some One who will ask everything from them and give everything in return goes unrecognised by adults who themselves have been asked to give ‘much’ but not all.

The failure of the church to present its own unique task in the kind of sharply defined and utopian terms that are needed to capture the ardent imaginations of young people is often seen by them as an indication of its abdication to the comfortable standards of secular culture. As long as the churches continue to present the issues of discipleship in a context they find relatively manageable, and unthreatening, young people will fail to find sufficient scope there for their very considerable zeal. We should not be surprised then if they look elsewhere."

Don’t you love the clarity and conviction that’s expressed here? Give young people something that’s worth believing in and they’ll embrace it wholeheartedly.

Understanding the Generations

As a middle aged person reflecting on the generations, I’ll confess to being a tad perplexed. I understand that each generation has its own characteristics and that, as a Baby Boomer, the next two generations, Gen Y and X are going to get right up my nose. However, whilst I need to acknowledge my ‘baby boomer bias’, what I really don’t get is that the ‘me’ generations just don’t see how self-indulgent they are. I know that I’m looking through 50 year old glasses, but no matter how empathetic I try to be, I just don’t think this outlook is normal, healthy or balanced.

The self-indulgence of...

The problem with the ‘You are special’ message (the self-esteem flag) is that it has seemingly developed a generation of narcissists (those who have fallen in love with their own reflection after the Greek legendary god Narcissus). Whilst genuine self-esteem (an appropriate sense of self-worth) is developed from healthy relationships and good discipline, narcissistic self-esteem is so out of balance.

Indulgence and the loss of meaning

In his book ‘The Cosmic Egg’, Richard Rohr says there are three layers of stories that should be a part of our lives – the story, our story, my story. The big story provides meaning to the existence of our world and ourselves. Our story provides meaning to the areas of our shared identity (eg, Australia, my church family). My story takes a look at the things that help me personally, make sense of myself and my world.

Rohr explains that the death of the ‘story’ and ‘our story’ means we are left with me, myself and I. These ‘passings’ have created a rife individualism with its chief pursuit of happiness. His appeal is that we reengage in the broader story in order to find ‘hope against darkness’.

Offering a meaningful story ... a meaningful challenge

A while back I wrote about this challenge for us as a school. We need to join together with parents assisting our young people to see that a meaningful big story exists, it makes sense and it calls young people to be vital and live players. They’ve got such a big part to play. Particularly as our Year 12s are leaving, we send them with our blessing and remind them of the major contribution they’ve got to give. Call them to nothing and that’s what they’ll give.

“Give young people something that’s worth believing in and they’ll embrace it wholeheartedly.”
School Notes from Martin, Principal

Year 12 Celebration

Last Thursday was a delightful time of celebration as we farewelled another group of Year 12s. A little bit of mock-up was had by students and staff alike. On a personal note, for my wife Anita and myself it was a particularly significant occasion as our youngest child, Taminka, was finishing up. We now join that bunch of parents who no longer have school aged children. We look forward, as do the other 40 parents, to celebrating on Graduation Night on Nov 30.

Congratulations Jodi

Also a big congratulations and thanks to Year 12 Coordinator Jodi, for organising the day and her charges so well. Jodi has done a remarkable job. Only 4 days later, on Monday morning this week, Jodi gave birth to another daughter Eliza Jean, sister to Hannah and Samuel.

Year 10 & 11 Leavers’ Assembly

A special assembly and morning tea was held today in the SS for students who are leaving from Years 10 and 11. Even though students typically get farewelled formally as they graduate, for the students who are going to a place like Ranges TEC, or entering the workforce, the time of their departure is an important milestone and one where each student should be honoured and acknowledged for their contribution to this community. It was good to celebrate this group of students.

Year 12 Exams

VCE Unit 3 & 4 exams start this Thursday with English, and Maths on Friday. Please pray for our oldest students as they enter some of the most challenging and stressful times that they may yet have experienced. Exams finish on Mon 19 with Religion and Society. The Graduation Ceremony is on Nov 30.

Primary Camps

Our Middle Primaries were experiencing a new campsite down at Merricks for their ‘Plants’ unit last week. This week our Junior Primaries are at Belgrave Heights doing their Transport unit, which includes a trip on Puffing Billy.

Harry

Many of you will know the Donvale CC Deputy Principal Harry, a long term friend of MECS and Ranges TEC. Harry has undertaken wide-ranging training, speaking and consultancy for us over the years. Two weeks back Harry fell ill with a bad bout of pancreatitis and he is still in Monash ICU being sustained by machines. He’s not out of the woods yet and we pray for his healing and recovery. This occurred within a week of Harry retiring from teaching his VCE history classes and finishing at Donvale.

A Nice letter to receive...

I received the following note from one of our teachers and I think it’s good to share (with permission) the impact of the school’s support for teachers being trained in ‘Christian education’:

“I just wanted to say a huge thank you for being given the opportunity to do NICE studies... It has filled me with a sense of privilege to be working at a Christian school and to be able to be part of the process of Christian Education. Teaching has never been so meaningful to me, nor my sense of calling. It has given me the chance to think deeply about the purposes and reflect on this in terms of my pedagogy in a way you could never do if you journeyed alone.

I’m writing this now as I have just finished... I just wanted to express that the help with fees and particularly the days off to write up assignments is what has made it possible for me, working full time with a family... to manage this. It has been a complete God-send, and is in absolutely no way taken for granted. I look forward to further study, as a lot of the other units I’ve heard about sound very interesting...”

Going Solo - VCE Drama

Last Wednesday evening VCE Drama students presented their solo performances to a supportive audience of family and friends who also had the opportunity to view the amazing Visual Arts exhibition in the Senior School. It can be a daunting task, developing your own drama from start to finish, but it’s truly exciting to see the final creations come together! Unit 4 Drama students performed characters from the VCAA list comprising The Newspaper Mogul (Cameron), The Imposter (Jack), the Hotel Guest (Charlotte from MDCS) and Pinocchio (John). For John, the presentation marked the official end of his thirteen years of education here at MECS!

Unit 2 students (all currently in Year 10) performed The Australian Tourist but came up with a variety of interpretations. There were: a bogan on a student exchange (Sam), a soldier touring the US (Damien), a grandmother on a world trip (Laura), an aid worker (Isaac) a young man visiting Egypt (Nathanael) and a woman searching for her family (Chloe). It was a wonderful evening of creativity! But stay tuned for the next Performing Arts venture: The Children’s Progress on Thursday 8 November at 7.30 pm!
MECS Notes
Power Outage 2 Nov
We have been advised that the school (and surrounding area) will have no power this Friday 2 November. School will continue as usual, other than the following:
- No canteen
- No heaters – please dress warmly if the weather is cold
- No landline phones – if you need to contact the school urgently, please call this mobile number: 0477 327 694. The school will still be able to contact parents in the case of any emergency using mobile phones.
- Traffic flow around the school will be impacted as SPAusnet undertakes work to the power lines around the school. Please allow extra time for drop off and pick up.

If you have any questions, please call the office.

Congratulations Rachel & Rohan
Congratulations to Rachel and Rohan who were married on 8 September at Mount Evelyn Christian Reformed Church.

Congratulations Eunice & Kennedy
Congratulations to Eunice and Kennedy on the birth of Daniel on October 10 - a little brother to Timothy and Anna in Years 3 and 5.

Parents & Friends
Shopping Tour – with a difference - more shopping, less touring!
Don’t forget tickets are now available from the office. Saturday 10 Nov, $20.
BYO lunch. Morning and Afternoon Tea provided. Depart 7.30am sharp. Return approx 7.30pm.
Visiting Smith St Collingwood, West Meadows and DFO Essendon.
Enjoy Friends and Shopping with no parking problems!

Stationery Helpers
A big thank you to all those who have offered to help. The roster will be sent out closer to the date. There is still an urgent need of helpers for the following date.
Jan 31: am & pm (sales day and pack-up)
If you can help please phone me or email me.
It is a great way to meet other parents at the school and the days are filled with fun and laughter.
Evelyn
Stationery Coordinator

Sport News
Records from the Secondary Athletics

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Secondary Athletics Results
1. Warlpa (white) 536
2. Wirri (blue) 513
3. Warlu (gold) 446
4. Walya (red) 332
Sport News Cont..

Year 7 & 8 Super 8s Cricket

Well done to our girls team who won the Year 8 competition. Unfortunately, the next final is during camp week so they can’t go on. It was a great effort considering no practice was done.

Year 7 boys came second with lots of big hits, wickets and noise!! Year 8 boys were last in their division but worked hard and had a good day. Thanks to Bayley and Jo for helping on the day.

Anne-Maree
Sports Coordinator

MECS Notes

Association Extra General Meeting

Last Thursday evening we had the Staffroom full of people all gathered together for a Community Meal hosted by the Board, followed by the Association Meeting.

Jurg and Jarka were welcomed into membership and Jacki was introduced as the Interim Deputy Principal for 2013. The board thanked the Admin team for their hard work; Craig was welcomed as the new accountant and the board thanked and farewelled our receptionist Debra. Ellen (Ranges TEC Director) was thanked for 18 months of hard work in establishing Ranges TEC and Phil was welcomed as the new director for 2013. Some of the teaching staff presented several inspiring skits related to the community, the transformational Education Document, completing what was begun at the AGM. It was a great night.

Amanda
Community Relations Officer

Fast ForWord

‘Fast ForWord’ applies the scientific principles of brain plasticity to help children, adolescents, and adults learn more effectively. For many people, frequent and intensive training, exercises that adapt to the individual's level and timely feedback are effective strategies to help them learn. They simultaneously develop cognitive and language skills.

Fast ForWord offers a series of computer based educational training programs that help improve memory, attention, and ability to follow instructions plus language and reading skills including phonological awareness, decoding, vocabulary, spelling and comprehension. It is an effective intervention for those diagnosed with an auditory processing disorder, autism, or a learning difficulty.


Our visiting psychologist, Tom, has undertaken training in this program, as he is excited by the evidence of the results. Tom will hold an Information Session about Fast ForWord on Tuesday 20 November, 2.00pm, in the Primary PUMP Room. For further information visit the Fast ForWord website www.fastforword.com.au and http://www.fastforword.com.au/content_common/pg-fast-forward-for-primary-school.seo.

Jo
Ed Support

Year 9 and 10 Super 8s Cricket

Last Thursday MECS had a boys and a girls team entered in the Cricket Victoria Super 8s modified cricket tournament. We had some great hits over the house fences for 12 and some interesting golden ducks (out first ball, not score). The boys worked well as a team and represented our school well.

Without any training or knowledge, the girls managed to have a full day of fun, involvement and rapid learning. The girls found bowling the hardest but some managed to pick it up by the end of the day. They didn’t win on the scoreboard but were by far the liveliest and most vocal.

The learning that takes place on these days can’t always be measured but is definitely valuable. Well done to all involved.

Anne-Maree

Year 5 & 6 Hooptime Finals

Well done to our 8 girls from Senior Primary who competed in the regional round robin Hooptime tournament at Maroondah stadium on Monday. There was some very tough competition but we scored the most against the top team! The girls managed to win their last game by 2pts and generally had a really fun day. Thanks to the Year 11 coaches Kyle, Callum and Ryan who scored, coached and encouraged. Well done. Thanks to the mums who came to support the girls.

Anne-Maree

Year 7 & 8 Basketball

On Friday 26 October, 52 Year 7 and 8 students travelled down to the Dandenong Basketball Stadium to represent MECS at this year’s Interschool Basketball competition. Eight independent schools from all around Melbourne participated in the day, and as always, students represented their schools admirably and competed in a great spirit. Congratulations must go to two of our girls’ teams in particular: MECS B were Runners Up in their division, and MECS C were Champions of their division. Special thanks also to the Middle School students who came along to assist as scorers and helpers.

Bradley
Year 7 PE Teacher
Year 11 Formal

Last week's Year 11 formal was a great night. After months of dance practice the big night had finally arrived. We were all a bit nervous that we would forget the steps, not to mention giving a speech on our future. As we arrived we were greeted by an amazing sea of colours that were the girl’s gorgeous dresses. The guys looked pretty smart as well in their suits and matching ties. We survived the dances with no major mishaps and whilst they were really fun, it was a relief when they were done and we could relax and enjoy the evening. It was truly inspiring to hear everyone’s speeches and to gain some insight into what the future holds for our group. There is some amazing talent among them and I am sure they will all be successful in whatever the future may bring. It was a lovely evening spent with family and friends.

Jade
Year 11 Student
Year 12 Last Day

Last Thursday - October 25 was a momentous day for 40 Year 12 students. From the wondrous tale of Peter Pan we saw pirates and lost boys, fairies and Indians, and even a stray crocodile descend in style to our humble MECS. The day was filled with celebrations which had many delights in store such as fairy floss, tepees, scary skeletons and fairy dust.

A wonderful whole school assembly saw Peter Pan and the lost boys enter via the rockwall, and included the lovely tradition of Preps presenting cards to their buddies as well as many musical numbers. Perhaps the most rousing was the wonderful rendition of John’s original song ‘Will you come home with me’ that was met with strident applause and a standing ovation.

Spilling out to the oval for the next stage of the day, the teachers with some helpers, snatched victory in a closely contested game of matball. Following this, a friendly game of water balloon volleyball quickly descended into a battle of balloons, and a mud fight to boot.

All in all it was a wonderful day where many memories were made and remembered, where the Year 12 students had a chance to let their hair down and celebrate together the fantastic years they’ve had at MECS, and to brace for the trying few weeks to come.

Emma
SS Teacher
Call Amanda or Nicole. Would love to hear from them. If you know of any families that may be interested in a 4 year old position, we will have a second group of 4 year old kindergarten, more on this next week!

**Exciting Kindergarten News!**

We are excited to announce that we will have a second group of 4 year old kindergarten, more on this next week!

If you know of any families that may be interested in a 4 year old position, we would love to hear from them.

Call Amanda or Nicole.

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**Caravan For Sale**

Future System 1998, tandem independent suspension. 2 sets of bunks, gas oven, hot plates etc. 3 way fridge, roll out awning and full size annexe, bike rack on back plus lots of extras. Well looked after. $18,500.

Phone Bruce.

**Free Graduation Outfit**

Size 12 white shirt and black dress pants - would suit Year 6 graduating boy. First in best dressed!

See Debra in the Office.

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**Working Bee 27 October**

The school grounds look great! This only happens because all the parents spend one weekend a year working around the school doing lots of odd jobs. On Saturday we had about 40 dads and mums and a lot of children helping.

We mulched the playground, filled holes in the oval, spread sand in the long jump, mulched part of the fitness track, cleaned a drain out at the bottom of the oval, spread Lilydale toppings beside the main driveway, cleaned all the storm water pits, did lawn mowing, vacuumed the bottom oval, blew all the paths and water pits, did lawn mowing, vacuumed the bottom oval, blew all the paths and courts, washed and de-cobwebbed the MP complex, shaped some gravel in the lower carpark to redirect water runoff, filled in some electrical test tags, and sanded lots of wooden blocks and wiped them over with linseed oil and washed and cleaned the buses.

Sadly two people were doing their last Working Bee as their children have finished Year 12, but happily we had 4 new parents attending for the first time which was great. Thanks to all who attended. The next working bee is on 1 Dec for a BBQ breakfast. See you there.

_Peter and Steve_