Welcome to 2014

Josh, a happy Prep student on his first day of school

Narelle’s Commissioning
4pm, this Sunday
February 9

135 York Road Mount Evelyn 3796  -  www.mecs.vic.edu.au - 03 9738 6000 - 03 9738 6001 (fax) - Absent student: 03 9513 1561
One of the most controversial books I have read in recent years was a novel by Melbourne writer, Christos T, called The Slap. This was made into a mini-series for television and aired in late 2011. The key event of the novel, set in an inner-city backyard, is a gathering of friends and family for a BBQ. As the afternoon progresses, an out-of-control young boy is slapped by another guest. The reactions and ramifications of this incident are told in the rest of the book as each chapter introduces and tells the story of one of the guests.

Each person’s story was an intriguing snap-shot of life in modern Melbourne; each person so different – shaped by a variety of experiences throughout their life; their values and foibles shaped by as many different influences. We are not choosing to live out of God’s story – but by default we will serve something else.

At about the same time I read Philip Y’s book, What good is God? In this collection of stories, he tells the account of a brave young woman called Natalya D who lived in the Ukraine during the Orange Revolution of 2004. On the state-run television network, her job was to provide translation to the deaf community through sign language. When the main announcer declared that the pro-democratic candidate, Viktor Y, had been soundly beaten, instead of translating this message accurately, she had a different story. She communicated, via the small screen inserted in the lower right-hand corner of the television screen the following message, “I am addressing all the deaf citizens of the Ukraine. Don’t believe what the authorities say. They are lying and I am ashamed to translate their lies. Viktor is our president!” This act of defiance, revealing the true nature of the election without the need to translate, gave voice to the ‘people power’ that emerged as the ordinary people of Ukraine flooded the capital city of Kiev demanding new elections that finally ushered in democracy to this country after years of communist rule.

When I read this, I was challenged once again to think of the stories that shape us, the stories that we live by and listen to. I think we all understand that we live in a world in which the cultural stories of our time are pervasive and powerful. Stories of individualism and consumerism dominate our lives and compete for our attention. It would be naïve to think that as Christians, we aren't shaped and influenced by these stories as much as anyone else. It is hard work, requiring deliberate choices, to live by another story – to live by ‘the’ story!

One worldview writer believes that “narrative is the scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their existence.” As such, teachers and parents become powerful story-tellers! It goes without saying then, that the story that we live by and indeed, the stories that we tell our children are critically important.

I like the image or metaphor presented in Philip Y’s story. I would like to think that our job as Christians - and perhaps more importantly as Christian teachers and parents - is to be the small screen in the bottom of the corner of the large screen. Our job is to be saying “don’t believe what they say ... they are lying... there is another story to live by – one in which the poor are blessed, as well as the persecuted, where to be a servant is more important than being the master, where life in all its fullness comes from following God, where it is more important to be something, than to have something, where power and status are not the things that define a human being...”.

However, the constant challenge for us as people of faith is to make sure our own lives are consistent with the story we profess. I am challenged by the call of Joshua as he gave the people of Israel a clear ultimatum in regard to whom they would worship. They were given a choice – and they needed to decide! If they didn’t want to follow Joshua’s God, they needed to choose someone or something else to serve.

It seems to me that if we are not choosing to live out of God’s story every year, every term, every day – then by default we will serve something else. And how easy this becomes! Bit by bit we let the dominant cultural story shape our lives - our choices, our decisions, our motivations, our relationships, our purchases!

Let us return to the group of family and friends in The Slap. They had things in common – they were a community of sorts – that’s why they were all together on that afternoon having a BBQ. And yet, they couldn’t have been more different from each other when the facade was stripped back and we really saw them and the stories that shaped them. As we gather together as a community at the beginning of this school year, called together for the purposes of Christian education, let us encourage each other to be faithful to the story that we have chosen to live and serve by. That doesn’t mean that we will all be the same – of course, other experiences shape and influence us - but we do have something more in common than just sending our kids to the same school or working in the same place. It’s hard to live out all aspects of our lives consistently with the biblical story and even harder to know how this story shapes all aspects of the educational task – but let us be faithful in encouraging and supporting each other so that we can say with confidence, like Joshua, “But as for me and my school, we will serve the Lord.”

Narelle
MECS Principal
Warm Welcome

It has been so lovely to return to the MECS community and be overwhelmed with so many warm wishes, familiar faces and prayers of support and encouragement. Thank you so much for your generous welcome. I am excited to be taking up the role of Principal and look forward to serving this community as together we “Seek the Kingdom of God in education.”

First Day of School

With great excitement our students rolled through the gates on Monday morning ready for another year of school. The sense of fun and friendship was immediately evident as they greeted each other, found their classrooms and settled into new routines. We particularly want to welcome new students across the whole school, and particularly our new Prep and Kinder kids. We hope you feel at home here as quickly as possible.

New Teachers

It’s always great to welcome new teachers onto our staff as well. Luke and Bre join the Senior School team, Ella will be teaching Maths and Science in the Middle School and Jason and Michelle take up roles in the Primary School. Bec and Sharon also return after a year’s leave.

Year 12 Camp

Last Thursday and Friday, our Year 12 students, along with Senior School staff prepared for the year ahead with a Year 12 camp. This provides the opportunity for our Year 12’s to be reminded of important study skills and advice, as well as some time to relax, be pampered and spend time with their mentors. We wish our Year 12 students all the best as they begin their final year of secondary schooling and pray God’s guidance and protection upon them.

Workbreak

Whilst we were glad to welcome our students back to school this week, teachers were already busy the previous week working on their curriculums, meeting in teaching teams and starting their NICE Units. The MECS tradition of workbreaks for teachers is not about giving them some extra time to get their rooms ready, but an important opportunity to think through and develop innovative and exciting curriculum that points to God as the creator and redeemer of all creation.

Get well Peter!

Unfortunately Peter had a small accident a week or so ago that saw him in hospital to have a severe infection treated. We wish him a speedy recovery! However, this gives us the opportunity say a big ‘thank-you’ to Peter, Steve and the crew of contractors who worked tirelessly over the summer getting our school ready for the new year. The grounds and buildings are looking great.

Sad news from Donvale Christian College

As a broader community of Christian schools, our thoughts and prayers are with Donvale Christian College as they mourn the recent loss of one of their Grade 2 students, Jemima. Some of you may know the Barton family more personally as they worship with the Yarra Valley Vineyard Christian Fellowship. Her life was celebrated in our MECS gym last Saturday afternoon with lots of laughter, tears, balloons and ice-cream! Let’s uphold the Barton family and DCC in our prayers.

You are warmly invited to attend the Commissioning Service for the new Principal of Mount Evelyn Christian School

Narelle

Sunday February 9, 4pm

in the MECS Gym, followed by a community BBQ. BBQ meat and salads supplied by MECS, please BYO everything else including drinks, bread, crockery and picnic rug.

We would love you to join us in welcoming Narelle to our community, and to join with other MECS families as we start 2014 together.

Please RSVP to the Office if you can attend.

Parents are warmly invited to attend the first Whole School Assembly

Tues February 18, 10am

in the MECS Gym
Robert S

Robert (MECS class of ’99) graduated with a D.Phil. in Political Philosophy from Oxford University late last year. His thesis was on “Hate Speech Laws”. Following his graduation, Robert was able to secure a prized lectureship in the Philosophy Department at Monash University and has been working there since July 2013. Prior to his study at Oxford, Robert worked as a sessional tutor in Philosophy at Monash in the years 2007-2008.

His research interests are primarily in social and political philosophy; they include: free speech, hate speech, the analysis of speech-harm, attributions of responsibility in law, the moral limits of the criminal law, the ethics of human enhancement, the epistemology of disagreement, and philosophical issues around religious conflict. His teaching at present is in human rights theory and philosophy of language.

We are thrilled with his appointment and offer him our warmest congratulations.

His appointment makes him the fourth ex-MECS student to secure employment as a lecturer at a University. The other three are: Dr Robyn A (MECS class of ’83), Associate Professor - Central Australia Remote Health Education, Flinders University; Dr Daniel P (MECS class of ’85), head of the Dan P Laboratory – Centre for the Molecular Genetics of Development, The University of Adelaide and Dr Rowan W (MECS class of ’86), Senior lecturer in the Life and Social Sciences faculty, Swinburne University of Technology.

Dr Roger
VCE Coordinator

Friends of MECS

Dollarmite Banking

School Banking starts again on Wednesday 12 February.

This year the Dollarmites treasure is hidden in the Deep Sea so be on the lookout for your School Banking pack which will be sent home soon.

The new rewards are fantastic, so don’t forget to keep your rewards card in a safe place, ready to order when you have saved 10 tokens.

Happy Saving Everyone!

Things to Note!

We hope your family is starting to settle into the routine of school for 2014. We’ve certainly enjoyed having all the students back at school this week!

A couple of things to note from the MECS Office:

Bushfire Response Plan
This is the time of year when the threat of bushfires weighs on our minds. Today we sent home a notice outlining the details of our bushfire response plan. Please make sure you read this information carefully so that you are informed about what steps we will take should we face a bushfire at school.

Immunisation packs
Immunisation packs were sent home this week for all Year 7 and Year 10 students, and Year 9 boys. Please make sure you complete the information on the front of the pack and return it to the school office as soon as possible.

Absent Students
If your child is going to be away from school, please make sure you notify us by leaving a message on the MECS Absentee line (9513 1561), rather than calling the main office number. It might be a good idea to add it your contacts in your mobile phone. Please keep the message brief (reason for absence, ‘sick’ is sufficient – we don’t need details!) and mention the class that your child is in so that we can easily inform the class teacher.

Notices Home and Excursion Permissions
One of our goals this year is to find ways of improving the way we communicate with parents – looking for ways to minimise the number of notices while still ensuring you are adequately informed. One step toward this is to change the way we do excursion permissions. You will continue to receive information and details about every excursion your child will be taken on, however you will not be required to provide permission and sign and return a form each time. Of course if you have any concerns about your child’s involvement in the excursion, you can contact your child’s teacher. We hope this step helps reduce the pile of notices sitting on your kitchen bench!

Apart from reducing the number of notices to and from the office, our reasoning behind this decision is based on the MECS ‘Partnership Agreement’ which each parent signed at the start of their involvement with MECS. Each parent already committed to ‘uphold and support the educational purposes at MECS, and understand that all excursions and camps are integral to the school curriculum and as such will be attended by our children’. As you’ve already agreed to this, we feel that it is unnecessary (and cumbersome for you) to get your permission again for each excursion.

For school camps, you will still be required to provide your updated child’s medical and emergency contact information (these things can change from time to time and we want to ensure we have the best information available), and the return of this form will confirm your permission for your child to attend.

If you have any suggestions about ways we could communicate better with you, or have any concerns, please don’t hesitate to contact me via email or via the main office. Natasha
School Services Manager

MECS Notes

Graduate News
Robert S

Natasha
School Services Manager

Thursday 6 February 2014
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**Education Maintenance Allowance for 2014**

**EMA Eligibility** – The Education Maintenance Allowance is paid to parents of eligible students under 16 years of age, whose child is enrolled at a Government or non-Government School in Victoria on census day, February 28, 2014 for first instalment and August 2, 2014 for the second instalment.

The Education Maintenance Allowance will be paid in two instalments, and to be eligible the following must be true for you on these dates:

- on 29 January 2014 for the first instalment and on 15 July 2014 for the second instalment:
  - (a) be an eligible beneficiary of a Centrelink pension, allowance or benefit, that is, a holder of Veterans Affairs Gold Card or be an eligible Health Care Card (HCC) or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC) holder within the meaning of the State Concessions Act 2004, OR
  - (b) be a Veteran Affairs Pensioner (TPI), OR
  - (c) be a (temporary) foster parent AND
  - (d) submit your application to the school by the date/s listed below.

Parents who receive a Carer Allowance (formerly known as Child Disability Allowance), or any other benefit or allowance not income tested by Centrelink are not eligible for the EMA unless they also comply with one of (a) (b) or (c) above.

**Submission Dates** – The application form must be lodged at the school by 26 February 2014 for the first instalment. LATE APPLICATIONS CANNOT BE ACCEPTED due to government rules. We urge all who believe they are eligible to apply as this also affects State government funding of the school.

EMA application forms will be sent out to existing families who have received EMA allowance for 2013. If you are eligible for the 2014 EMA please collect an application form from the main office. If you are uncertain about your eligibility or have any questions please contact Alison or Craig via the office.

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**Active After-school Communities**

The Active After-school Communities (AASC) program is a major component of the Australian Government’s package ‘Building a Healthy, Active Australia’ that aims to improve the health and well-being of Australian children.

MECS Primary is once again participating in the AASC program in Term 1, 2014.

In Term 1 activities to be offered are:

- **Monday** 3:45pm – 4:45pm: **AFL** (fun games and ball skills)
- **Thursday** 3:45pm – 4:45pm: **Netball** (discover skills in a fun way)

The program will run for 7 weeks **beginning 10 February, 2014**.

Children attending will be offered fruit for afternoon tea prior to the activities commencing. Please ensure that your child brings a refillable water bottle to each session.

The program will offer fun, safe and inclusive activities which will provide children with the opportunity to develop their motor skills. It also promotes a healthy lifestyle in a comfortable, non-competitive environment.

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 tomorrow, Friday 7 February.

This is a free program for Primary students and places are limited.

For further information, contact the office.

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**MECS Notes**

**Drama for Everyday Life Program Term 1.**

Drama for Everyday Life is a program that uses drama games and role play to teach social skills and self-confidence in a safe and creative small group environment (4 or 5 students), and has been offered at MECS for the past 11 years. Parents, teachers and students themselves anecdotally report a significant improvement in social skills, behaviour management and confidence. A research partnership with Latrobe University has recently been completed that confirmed these reports.

Each session consists of three main components that assist students in addressing the above aspects: conversation skills; non-verbal cues and role plays. Through this program, students are provided with skills to successfully manage a number of everyday situations, including:-

- conflict
- meeting new people
- friendly conversations
- anxiety
- losing at games
- sharing and taking turns
- appropriate skills for the workplace (for senior students)
- identifying and expressing emotions

Students currently enrolled and new students are invited to join the program in Term 1, 2014. Students who have previously participated benefited from the ongoing nature of the program. Generally programs run for 6 – 8 weeks, depending on the school term program with camps and other activities.

In Term 1, a 6 - week program will be offered for students, with the following dates: Thursday 20, 27 February, 13, 20, 27 March and 3 April at a cost of $115. MECS recognises the positive impact of Drama for Everyday Life, and has subsidised the program for a number of years.

If you would like your child to attend in Term 1, please indicate this on the form and return as soon as possible. If you have any questions, requests or suggestions, please contact me at school by telephone or email.

Shirley

Primary Education Support Coordinator
A warm welcome to all those who started at MECS this week but especially to our smallest students - the Preps and Kindergarteners. We trust your first week has been a happy one. Check out the cute portraits the Preps drew for our new Principal, Narelle, when they went to meet her on their first day. They are in Narelle’s office windows.

Heather
Newsletter Editor
Last Thursday the Year 12s embarked on the last of the many memorable MECS camps – a time of friendship, laughter and preparation for the year ahead.

Run at Oasis at the start of every school year, the aim of ‘Study Camp’ is to equip the Year 12s as best as possible for the challenges we will face as we embark of our final year of secondary schooling.

During our overnight stay we were involved in a number of interesting and highly valuable seminars led by the teachers on topics relevant to us this year such as stress management and study techniques. We were also privileged to have our Year 12 mentors join us for dinner, followed by a constructive time of one-on-one discussion and goal setting.

There was also, of course, much fun to be had in our free time and we took full advantage of our opportunities to play volleyball together and use the swimming pool, games room and flying fox.

A huge thankyou to all of the teachers, particularly Sharon, for organising such a valuable camp.

Lauren
Year 12 Student
Calendar

2014 Term 1 Week 1: 3 FEB - 9 FEB

Mon 3 February
Term 1 Begins

Sun 9 February
Commissioning Service for Narelle Sketcher, 4pm in the Gym

2014 Term 1 Week 2: 10 FEB - 16 FEB

Wed 12 February
VCE Drama Excursion
MP Swimming
Prep Information evening 7.30pm

2014 Term 1 Week 3: 17 FEB - 23 FEB

Tues 18 February
Whole School Assembly 10am
Year 9/10 Volleyball

Wed 19 February
K4 Connect Morning Tea Staffroom 9am
MP Swimming
JP visit from Mount Evelyn Vet Clinic
VCE Music excursion to the Sidney Myer Music Bowl

Thur 20 February
Year 10-12 Basketball
K3 Connect Morning Tea Staffroom 9am

Sat 22 February
Working Bee

2014 Term 1 Week 4: 24 FEB - 3 MAR

Wed 26 February
JP Meet and Greet Parent night

Thur 27 February
Years 7-10 Tribal Swimming Carnival

Diary Date
On Tues 18 February 2014, 10am, we will be having a Whole School Assembly to which you are cordially invited.

LOST
Lost – late Term 4, 2013
A much loved iPod touch with a colourful case. Belongs to a Year 2 student. If found please return to the main office.

Like us on Face Book!
Mount Evelyn Christian School - MECS MECS - Kindergarten MECS - Past Students

Electrical Apprenticeship Needed
A 3rd/4th year Electrical Apprentice needs a new apprenticeship. Retrenched due to his previous employers need to downsize. Has experience in commercial, solar and airconditioning and has completed his TAFE classes. Honest, hardworking, punctual, well presented and has own transport. He is very keen to complete his apprenticeship. If you can help please contact Leon.

Discovery Craft Group
Wednesday mornings 10am to 12 noon.
at Discovery Church, 89 Monbulk Rd.
Mount Evelyn.
Enjoy patchwork, folk art, embroidery, papercraft and more. Beginners to experienced crafters, all welcome.
Term 1 starts 19 Feb 2014.
Registration day 12 Feb.
Free creche is available
Contact Cathy or Cynthia.

Seville Netball Club
Seville netball club is currently recruiting players of all ages from under 7s to opens for their winter season. New players most welcome.
Season commences on Sat 15 March with all games played at Mooroolbark on Saturdays.
All under 9 players will receive a ‘Netsetgo’ participation pack valued at $50.
Registrations close 8 Feb.
Contact Sue.

‘Big Sisters’ babysitting
Two very reliable, friendly, Middle School MECS students, happy to baby sit children up to 12 years of age. Rate is at a very reasonable $10 per hour.
Happy to cook simple meals if required for an extra $10 (you supply products).
Great value as you get 2 baby sitters for the price of one. References provide on request. Chandelle.

What can parents and carers do to help their child’s asthma at school?

• If your child is self-managing their asthma, or capable of taking their asthma medication independently, ensure that your child is always carrying their reliever medication (e.g. Ventolin, Asmol, Airomir and Bricanyl) as well as a spacer while at school

• Ensure that you have provided your child’s school/preschool with an updated Asthma Action Plan

• Ensure that your child knows how to recognise early symptoms of an asthma attack and check to make sure they are using their reliever medication properly

• Ensure your child will seek help from school/preschool staff if they experience asthma symptoms

Ensure that your child’s asthma is being well managed and that their medication and management is reviewed annually by your GP (this is a good opportunity to also update the Asthma Action Plan required by your child’s school/preschool).

For more information, please contact The Asthma Foundation of Victoria on 1800 278 462 or www.asthma.org.au

Respiratory experts talk to parents about asthma
Ever wondered what the experts would say about a cure for asthma?
Or how to get your teenager to take their medication?

If you want to find out the answers to some of the most frequently asked questions about children and asthma, watch The Asthma Foundation’s new video series – available from http://forum.asthma.org.au/