Welcome to MECS

Emmett clearly having a happy first day of school in the Prep rooms

Whole School Assembly - Fri 13 Feb 10am
Please join us
**Good News... Great Joy... All People!**

I love a good ‘one-liner’ – perhaps something witty like;

**If first you don’t succeed, don’t try sky-diving, or**

*Work is for people who don’t know how to fish, or*

**Sometimes I wake up grumpy; other times I let him sleep!**

Then there is the amusing bumper sticker – *Honk if you like peace and quiet!*

Or the pearls of wisdom from famous people, ‘Not everything that can be counted counts and not everything that counts can be counted.’ (Thomas Edison)

Of all the words spoken across human history, some stand out and are etched in our collective memories. “That’s one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind.” Neil Armstrong, July 20, 1969 (Moon landing) or “Well may we say ‘God save the Queen’, because nothing will save the Governor General.” – Gough Whitlam, November 11, 1975 (Dismissal by Governor General John Kerr).

Even images evoke one-liners. As soon as we see a picture of the Terminator, we all chorus, “I’ll be back!” or Forest Gump, “Life is like a box of chocolates, you never know what you are gonna get.”

There are about 31,000 verses in the Bible, and again, some of them are lines deeply rooted in our minds.

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” (Jeremiah 29:11) and “... those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.” (Isaiah 40:31)

However, one of the great ‘one-liners’ of the Bible that summarises what the whole biblical story is about is found in the familiar Christmas story recorded in Luke 2. You may have even read it over the Christmas break!

While they were in Bethlehem, the time came for the baby to be born. And Mary gave birth to a son, wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn. There were shepherds in the nearby fields, keeping watch over their flocks at night. An angel of the Lord appeared to them, and the glory of God shown around them, and they were terrified. ‘Fear not,’ said the angel. ‘I bring you good news of great joy that will extend to all people. Today a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. You will find him wrapped in cloths and lying in a manger.

Good news of great joy for all people!

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**Good News**

People are hungry for a word that is true; people are hungry for a word that brings hope; people are hungry for a word they can build their lives on. We have it! “A Saviour has been born. He is Christ the Lord!” Indeed the central features of the gospel story – Christ’s birth, life, death and resurrection – is indeed good news for a world that seems hopeless and without foundation.

**Great Joy**

Joy is not a fleeting emotion that comes and goes. It’s not dependent on circumstances going our way, but rather a settled assurance that God is in control of our lives, the quiet confidence that ultimately everything is going to be alright. Believing in the good news, the gospel of Christ is the ultimate source of joy.

In 2015, as we gather around the vision of seeking God’s Kingdom in education, let us be a community where this ‘one-liner’ is at the heart of all that we do.

**All People**

God communicated through the angels that the birth of Jesus was the best thing that ever happened and it would be for all people. Jesus would be the Saviour for all people. He would be the Messiah over death for all people. He would be the Lord over life for all people. Sometimes we live like people who want to keep the good news of great joy to ourselves! Instead, the call of God’s Word is that this message is for all people – for each student, family and staff member in our community. Every day you encounter people in your world. At the petrol station, the coffee shop, your workplace, your neighbourhood. Most of them don’t know God’s heart for them. The good news of great joy is for them!

In 2015, as we gather around the vision of seeking God’s Kingdom in education, let us be a community where this ‘one-liner’ is at the heart of all that we do. Let us be people who embrace the good news of the gospel. May it bring great joy into our lives and may we share this with all people.

*Narelle MECS Principal*

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**VCE Creative Showcase**

John, Mikaela and Joel have had their 2014 Studio Art artworks accepted to the Yarra Ranges Council VCE Creative Showcase Exhibition. John, Mikaela and Joel had the opportunity to have input on how their folios of work are displayed, gaining insight into the process of putting together an exhibition. It is a wonderful accomplishment for young artists to have their work exhibited for the public. Their artworks will be displayed at the Red Earth Gallery (Mooroolbark Community Centre) from Feb 4 - March 8. There is an opening night this Thursday Feb 5 at 7pm. I encourage you all to head to the Red Earth Gallery and associated galleries to view the variety of artworks created by students in our local area.

**John - ‘Escapist Dream’:** through my installation I have sought to encapsulate the escapism experience. I have filmed gouache falling into water, and then choreographed this footage to various songs.

[continued page 4]
Welcome back to school!
How exciting it was to see everyone back at school on Monday morning – by the turn out at the parent coffee morning, it was hard to know whether the students or parents were more excited to see each other! As always, there was a lovely buzz of chatter as friends caught up with each other. As we moved through the school throughout the day, it was pleasing to see how quickly students fall into the patterns and routines of school. We particularly welcome new students into our school community. This year on top of the 59 new Kinder, Prep and Year 7 students, we welcomed 47 new students into the other year levels. We feel so grateful that our school community is a place where new students feel welcome to join us at any point in their education.

New Teachers
It’s always great to also welcome new staff on board. Nathan joins the Senior School team as a Humanities teacher, Jo is back on board heading up our Secondary Education Support team, alongside Ileana who will work in the Middle School as the Education Support teacher. Kaye and Angela join our Junior Primary team teaching in the Year 1/2 classrooms and Helen joins the Primary School music program. We welcomed Rachel, our Indonesian teacher last year, but it is exciting that our Indonesian program officially gets underway this week! We also welcome Simon as the school’s full-time IT Manager and Val who comes into the Senior School Administration. Narelle, Roslyn and Amelia all join us as Primary School Learning Assistants. It’s also great to see Tim and Shannon back on staff in the Senior School. What a great number of new people to join the impressive cast of staff we already have!

Workbreak
Whilst school started for students this week, teachers were already back into the swing of it last week. Workbreaks are an important part of the way we ‘do’ education here at MECS. To deliver an authentic approach to Christian education, much time is required to work in teams and in faculties to develop curriculum units together. Friday saw all our staff involved in training to embrace a whole school approach to spelling which will provide consistency in the way that this important literacy skill is taught at MECS across the year levels.

Over 20 of our teachers are presently engaged in studies with the National Institute of Christian Education. Last Thursday they were involved in a one-day intensive program to get their studies underway for the year. We were pleased to have Dr Ken D, the CEO of Christian Education National, come and deliver one of the units. We appreciate the community support of these pupil-free days as we seek to unpack what it means to seek the Kingdom of God in education.

Behind the Scenes!
Whilst your children are home enjoying the holidays, a team of staff are busy working away getting the school ready for another year of operation. Peter, Steve and their crew of contractors do a fabulous job working on some of the bigger maintenance projects around the school. Much has been accomplished over the last few weeks! Admin staff also continue to work hard throughout January keeping the wheels of business turning over. We have just moved to a new student management system that will enable more effective communication throughout the school. This also provides the platform for exciting initiatives in the future. A big thank-you to Corrie and Natasha who put in a lot of extra time over the break to get this system up and running for the new year with little interruption to our normal processes. We do have a great team of staff who support the teachers in the main mission of the school. We are so grateful for all their tireless work over the summer break!

FOCUS On... Spelling
On January 30, the MECS staff worked with me (Literacy Consultant Michelle) on the area of spelling. Spelling is an area that is built on at each stage of the school and progressively develops as students progress through the school. Students build on knowledge of letters and sounds (e.g. as in cat) in Prep to more complex letter combinations (oa as in boat and igh as in light) and longer words (information and chemistry). Students need to master the 26 letters of English and also the 44 sounds they make! There are over 120 combinations of common letters that make these sounds (the sound “E” can be spelled; e, ee, aa, y, ey, i, ie, etc….) so spelling is not mastered at any one stage of school, but slowly built on each year.

As students learn longer words, it can be helpful to break words into syllables first, for example information. We then look at which parts the students already know and which part someone might find tricky. This assists students not to feel overwhelmed by long words, but to focus their attention on the parts they still have to learn.

The more students apply what they learn in spelling the easier it is for them to remember the spelling of new words. It is a case of ‘Use it or lose it!’ So… how can you help at home? Looking for genuine opportunities to write such as:

• Emails or letters to family or friends
• RSVPs for invitations
• Birthday and thank you cards
• Shopping lists
• Checklists
• Lunch orders

Michelle
Literacy Consultant

Focus on…
As you will see from the ‘Focus on Spelling’ to the left, we are introducing a new feature in the newsletter this year. A range of topics will be explored throughout the year as we seek to keep you informed about the teaching and learning program of the school. Sometimes the focus will be on a particular section of the school; sometimes it will have a whole school focus and at other times we will focus on topics that encourage or impede learning. Our teachers are excited to have the opportunity to share with you some of their key ideas and programs as we partner with you in the education of your children.

Narelle
Principal
MECS Notes

Whole School Assembly

On Friday February 13 at 10am we will hold our first Whole School Assembly for the year. Please join us as we come together to pray for a blessing on the year, and celebrate our community. A cuppa and some morning tea will be available in the staffroom from 9am-10am. We’d love to see you there!

Amanda & Nicole
Community Relations Officers

School banking

This week, the youngest child in each family will have received an information pack about the Commonwealth Bank School Banking program and the upcoming rewards that will be available. The School Banking program encourages great saving habits and is open to all Primary School aged students (Prep-Year 6). Additional information packs are available from the Main Office. Banking day is Wednesday.

Cassie
Receptionist

Lost Property

Do any of the items below belong to you? We have lots of lost property from last year that has not been claimed and we would love to find the owners! Some of the items include a blue/green weatherproof Antarctica jacket, a grey Mooks bomber jacket and a white Fox jersey. We also have quite a few black MECS hoodies, including Cycle A Compressed Works of Shakespeare, Cycle A Beowulf and Year 6 2013 hoodies. Please speak to the Main Office if you think one of these items may be yours.

Cassie
Receptionist

Some Things to Note from the Office

We hope your family is starting to settle into the routine of school for 2015. We’ve certainly enjoyed having all the students back at school this week!

Electronic Communication

During the break the office was busy installing and setting up new school management software. This will provide us with many great features which we will roll out over time – stay posted! One of these features is a ‘Parent Portal’ where parents will be able to access, via the internet, information about their child/ren, such as their child’s timetable, homework tasks, notifications from teachers etc. We are still a little way off getting this set up, but it will definitely happen. As with any new system, we have had a few minor teething issues (sorry if you’ve been getting our emails twice!) but overall we’re making good progress. All this means that we are continually expanding our utilisation of electronic methods of communication. Our main form of communicating with you will be via email, except in cases where a notice requires you to sign and/or return something. If you are a family that does not have/utilise internet and email, we encourage you to consider possible ways that you may access this. Over the next 2 years it will become essential for our families to be able to access electronic communication with us.

New Admin Staff

This year we welcome Val to SS Reception, having said goodbye to Rosalie at the end of last year. Say hi to Val and introduce yourself if you’re in the SS office!

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 to your contacts in your mobile phone. Please keep the message brief (reason for absence: ‘sick’ is sufficient – we don’t need details unless it’s a highly contagious illness such as gastro) and mention the class that your child is in so that we can easily inform the class teacher.

Later this year we will be introducing SMS alert messages to parents for students who have not arrived at school, so please get in the habit of notifying us.

Students arriving late/leaving early

Please make sure that any student who is arriving late or leaving early, signs the appropriate book in the main office or the SS office. This is a legal obligation, and essential so that we know who is on campus at any given time in case of emergency. Prep-Year 9 students being collected from school early must be signed out by an adult.

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 Year 7-10 students. Please make sure you complete the information and return it to the school office as soon as possible.

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

VCE Creative Showcase Continued

Mikaela - ‘Fashions role in conformity’: when we conform we are labeled and placed into identity groups. My finals reflect the negative effects of conforming such as identity loss.

Joel - ‘Feel without Touch’: I explored the compelling effects that music has on my emotions. I wanted to emphasise the sentiment shown in the eyes with a loud rich background.

Bre
SS Teacher
Welcome back! It was lovely to see so many smiling students and parents back this week.

Friends of MECS has a lot planned for this summer. The usual events such as our Fair Trade Mother's Day and Father's Day stalls will run; we are planning a cook-off day once a term to fill the Friends of MECS Freezer and bless our community with meals (dates will be confirmed soon) and we are planning a fundraising Family Portrait Day.

We are also introducing a new community building program in the Primary School called the Class Connection Representative Program. Each Primary class will have a Class Connection Rep who will be the contact person for that class. In the next few weeks we will introduce these wonderful volunteers and explain their roles in more detail.

I would like to thank Evelyn (and her team of volunteers) who have once again done an excellent job filling all the stationery orders for this year. This is a wonderful service to our school community and a great fundraiser. Last year Karen did a great job managing the schoolwear orders but has recently taken up a full time job - thank you Karen for the wonderful service you provided. Michelle has volunteered to take over this year - welcome Michelle!

We are looking forward to a great year.

Nicole and Amanda
Community Relations Officers

I love the action at school over the summer break. While teachers and students were away we completed a huge amount of physical work around the school. This work is done by our wonderful team of Peter and Steve, some casual workers – including Sheryl, Tim and Phil, and a whole bunch of contractors. The work included: the completion of the room swap between Primary School music and Middle School art, including renovations for the art room; the removal of tired old cabinets from Senior School room 2; the testing and tagging of over 1500 pieces of electrical equipment; the servicing of buses; some new fencing; the relocation of a fire hydrant; the installation of a new underground mains power cable; sound fields (special voice amplification for teachers) installed in Kinder and Middle School rooms; a two-way radio system installed for our emergency management plan; painting – painting – and more painting; makeovers for the Assistant Principal – Secondary’s office and the Innovation room; the delivery of new Junior Primary furniture; the preparations for the Indonesian classroom (including delivery of new furniture); the construction of new car parking; the trimming of unsafe branches throughout the playground; and the building of a new landing and ramp for the Ranges TEC workshop at the Coldstream airfield.

Of special note is that contractors completed preliminary work for the installation of air-conditioning in Senior Primary rooms and Middle School rooms 21-23. One unit was installed but sadly the other five could not be completed due to a shortage of stock from the supplier. The target installation date for those five is the third week of February.

Sadly, on Christmas Eve a large branch (read over 500 mm diameter at the bottom end) broke off the large Pinoak tree in the Junior Primary play area. The tree had significant rot in it where the four huge branches left the main trunk. Thankfully this happened when no one was at school, and caused only minimal damage. An arborist report showed us that the remainder of the tree was unsafe so we have removed it. To lose such a beautiful shade tree has been the downside of this summer.

Finally we also saw MMM Build commence the construction of a new administration building, hence the chaos in the main office car park. Please bear with us through Term 1 as the work is completed.

I’ll write more about the remaining two stages of the Admin project in the context of the Infrastructure Master Plan in a few weeks’ time.

Welcome back!

Gerry
Administration Manager

Friends of MECS - 2015

MECS Notes

A Note from the Primary School

It has been a wonderful start to the school year in the Primary School. We have loved welcoming our new teachers and our many new students. The Preps are settling in beautifully and it is lovely to see their happy faces enjoying learning and playing.

Sometimes parents are not sure who to go to if they have concerns or queries. This list will help you and is worth keeping handy.

1. The class teacher is always the best person if you have any concerns. They know intimately what is happening with your child, and can deal first hand with any issues or problems. In order to chat with them, you can email them for an appointment or call the office. Before school is always a very busy time and isn’t a good time to discuss issues. If you need to give the class teacher a ‘heads up’ for the day about something that is happening with your child please write a note, phone message or email. To email a teacher, their address is: their first initial, followed by their surname @ mecs.vic.edu.au

2. The Cluster leader - each cluster of the Primary school has a leader, who will deal with bigger more concerning issues that are not so easily resolved.

3. Educational Support assistance can be sought from Shirley (Education Support Coordinator) and Gen (Primary Education Support teacher). The teachers work closely with Education Support for the best learning outcomes for students.

4. Finally if these avenues have not resolved your concern and you need to meet with me (Di) as Assistant Principal – Primary, please email or ring for an appointment. You may need to leave a message and your call will be returned as soon as possible to set up a meeting time. Unfortunately it is very difficult for me to meet with parents on a ‘drop in’ basis, as I cannot give you my full attention. Setting up an appointment time allows me to focus specifically on your issue and give you dedicated time.

Blessings for an exciting learning year.

Diane
Assistant Principal - Primary
Year 12 Study Camp

Year 12 study camp was a definite success, and not just because of the food. The camp began at 10am on Thursday January 29 and as soon as everyone was there any negative thoughts about losing holidays were washed well out the window. The first thing we did was have morning tea so that made a very good first impression!

Over the two days, we rotated through 3 sessions in groups A, B and C. We learnt time management skills with Jenny, exam revision techniques with Emma and initiatives with Scotty. In the afternoon on Thursday we got to choose between volleyball, board games, flying fox, archery, swimming or a pamper session. We all had a lot of fun and it was great to be out mucking around as a year level again. After getting warm doing these different activities the pool was just too good to resist so many of us didn’t even bother to change and jumped straight in. With Radke as our very own life guard many semi-dangerous, rambunctious things took place, the least of which was not the four-person shoulder tower.

That night our mentors came for dinner, a seminar by Amelia, and a goal setting session. This was the highlight for many of us and we all got a great deal out of it. It was a really good exercise to help us start decision making and thinking of our futures with someone we hold in high esteem. On Friday we found out actually how ATARs work, including SACs and scaling. For me personally this was something I really needed and now with it all clearly explained I know how to tackle the year better. We also did two more sessions split into red and blue groups, one on managing stress and the other about careers. All in all the camp was lots of fun and very beneficial. A HUGE thank you goes out to all the teachers, mentors and of course the Oasis staff for making the two days so enjoyable. We came out of it not only motivated for Year 12 but everything to come after that. As they say, the world is our oyster.

Asha
Year 12 Student
Parents are warmly invited to attend the Whole School Assembly
Friday Feb 13, 10am
in the MECS Gym
Coffee in staffroom
9-10am
MECS COMMUNITY NOTICES

MECS does not endorse the products or services of any private advertiser. No responsibility is accepted by Mount Evelyn Christian School for the accuracy of information contained in advertisements or claims made by them.

For Sale
Deep fryer - only used once $30.

Juicer - only used a few times $30.

Sewing Machine - used once. Cost $250 selling $125.
Contact Nicole 0400 537 967.

The Brave Program
Need help managing stress or anxiety?
If your child or teen has difficulties with anxiety or just seems to have too many worries, we would like to introduce you to BRAVE Self-Help – an interactive, online program for the prevention and treatment of childhood and adolescent anxiety. It was developed by a group of researchers from the University of Queensland and now, with the support of Beyondblue, this program is freely available to all young people aged 8-17 years old who are living in Australia.

BRAVE Self-Help provides strategies for children and teenagers to better cope with their worries. There are 4 programs available, one for children aged 8-12 years, one for teenagers aged 12-17 years and ones for parents of children at these ages respectively. The program can be accessed as often as you like, from the comfort of your own home. For more information, or to register for the program, please visit www.brave4you.psy.uq.edu.au.

Mount Evelyn Toy Library
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Opening Hours: Monday 9.30-11am (fortnightly), Thursday 6.30-7.30pm (fortnightly) and Sat 9.30-11am. wwwmtevelyntoylibrary.com or find us on facebook.

Homework Assistance
Homework assistance is available to students every Thursday from 3.30pm-5.00pm through the Yarra Ranges homework group at Lilydale Library. The first session will begin on Thursday February 12. A maths professor is also available free of charge to provide one on one maths tutoring. The group is available for 12-18 year olds.
For more info contact Maria on 9294 6775 or email m.mcloughlin@yarraranges.vic.gov.au

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Heather Mellow
Newsletter Editor

Calendar

2015 Term 1 Week 1: 2 Feb - 8 Feb
Mon 2 February
Term 1 Begins

Wed 11 February
MP Swimming
Prep Information Evening 7.30pm

Fri 13 February
Parents Morning Tea 9am Staffroom
(Before Assembly)
Whole School Assembly 10am in Gym
SP Swimming

2015 Term 1 Week 2: 9 Feb - 15 Feb

Wed 18 February
MP Swimming
VCE Drama Excursion
VCE Music Excursion
MP Community BBQ & Information Evening
5pm PUMP Room

Thur 19 February
Prep Connect Morning Tea 9am Staffroom

Fri 20 February
SP Swimming

Sat 21 February
First Working Bee 7am with BBQ Breakfast

2015 Term 1 Week 3: 16 Feb - 22 Feb
Mon 16 February
Year 9 City Excursion

Tues 17 February
Year 9 & 10 Volleyball

Wed 18 February
MP Swimming

Thur 19 February
Prep Connect Morning Tea 9am Staffroom

Fri 20 February
SP Swimming

2015 Term 1 Week 4: 23 Feb - 1 Mar

Tues 24 February
Year 7-10 Tribal Swimming

Wed 25 February
MP Swimming

Thur 26 February
JP Information Morning Tea Staffroom 9am

Fri 27 February
K4 Connect Morning Tea 9am Staffroom
SP Swimming
New Parent Dinner 6.45pm

2015 Term 1 Week 5: 2 Mar - 8 Mar
Mon 2 - Fri 6 March
MS Camp Week

Mon 2 March
SP Connect Morning Tea 9am Staffroom

Wed 4 March
MP Swimming

Thur 5 March
Grandparents and Special Friends Day

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MS Connect Morning Tea 9am Staffroom

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