Whole School Assembly -
Tomorrow 10am
Please join us

The First Week of Kindergarten is Fun

Eve has been enjoying the wonderful Kindergarten at MECS School
Suprised by Joy

“I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete.” (John 15:11)

Last week in this editorial I reflected on the ‘one-liner’ found in Acts 2, that sums up perhaps most succinctly the biblical story – ‘good news…great joy… all people’. As I reflect on this further, I wonder how it is that we can be people that experience great joy, particularly when it seems we are up against it. As humans we are more prone to think of what makes us happy or gives us pleasure, rather than seek true joy. We tend to live in the present and our wants are more immediate. Joy often seems illusory. However, this fruit of the Spirit is supposed to be central to the Christian life; indeed it should be one of the key features that draws all people to the good news of the gospel.

Sometimes it is easy to be joyful – our daily needs have been generously supplied, our relationships are good, we see God working for us and through us. However, the reality for many is very different. Making ends meet is difficult, broken relationships have taken their toll and God seems far away.

John N. Gladstone, in his sermon entitled ‘Weeping and Whistling’, writes “…Joy is a by-product of possessing the Spirit and being possessed by the Spirit. It is a conscious possession of power adequate enough to carry us through every trial, every situation, and it will remain ours to the end… in this life; we shall never be free of sorrow. But, then, we shall never be free of joy. And joy is the dominant note. We are in touch with a power that dries all tears, lifts all burdens, and satisfies all needs. Our lives are hidden with God in Christ.”

And so what does a joy-filled life look like? Richard Foster in his book, Freedom of Simplicity reminds us of a great way of ‘being’ in the world. “Joy, not grit, is the hallmark of holy obedience. We need to be light-hearted in what we do to avoid taking ourselves too seriously. It is a cheerful revolt against self and pride. Our work is jubilant, carefree, and merry. Utter abandonment to God is done freely and with celebration. And so I urge you to enjoy this ministry of self-surrender. Don’t push too hard. Hold this work lightly, joyfully.”

The idea of holding the ‘work’ of being a Christian lightly and joyfully is an encouraging one. Sometimes our Christian faith becomes something that we carry around as if it is a heavy burden. The good news of great joy is a firm belief in the ultimate Joy of life, not in the joys of life. As a result we need to choose joy every day. How does one choose joy? How do we live in the light-heated and carefree way that Richard Foster talks about, despite the circumstances of life? By choosing to dwell in the good news! God loves and accepts me. Christ’s birth signals the beginning of God’s redemptive plan for His world, His death on a cross deals with the sin and distortion that I know and experience in my own life and in the world. In Christ, I am a new creation. My life is hidden with Christ and therefore I can endure the sorrows of life. I see glimpses of God’s Kingdom now; I will experience it fully in eternity. Therefore, I choose joy!

I believe that if we are a Christian school community ‘seeking the Kingdom of God in education’, our school needs to be characterised by a Spirit of Joy. We need to teach our students to choose joy in every circumstance of life; we need to model joy in the pressures and challenges of a busy life; we need to live out joy in our interactions with each other and finally, we need to share the ultimate source of joy with all people in our community and beyond.

Narelle
MECS Principal

Congratulations Ryan and Lauren

Congratulations to Ryan and Lauren on their excellent academic achievements in 2014! Ryan received an ATAR of 98.95, and Lauren’s ATAR was 98.90, which included a perfect score of 50 in Physical Education.

Ryan will shortly commence a Bachelor of Science at Melbourne University hoping to pursue a research career in Physics or Chemistry, while Lauren commences a Bachelor of Biomedicine also at Melbourne University with the goal of becoming a GP.

We are proud of the fact that these two students have used the academic abilities God has given them to excel in their chosen subjects, and we know that they will continue to serve God with these gifts in the future.

Narelle
MECS Principal
Whole School Assembly

We are looking forward to seeing as many parents as we can at our Whole School Assembly tomorrow. Why not stay for coffee in the main staffroom and then head up to the gym for 10am? Thanks for the positive feedback we received last year about these assemblies – we too, think it is important for our whole school community to get together once a term for not only a time of praise and worship, but also to celebrate the great learning that happens here every day. Please join us if you can for these special assemblies!

Community Relations

Earlier this week, Tim C, our Community Relations consultant came and spent a couple of days with various staff and Board members. Tim visits us regularly to assist and provide guidance on what we are doing to build community here at MECS. Many of the initiatives that Amanda and Nicole in Community Relations ‘make happen’ come from his time with us. On this visit he also met with our Board and other leaders in the school to present and discuss opportunities for Association membership, as well as some time with our new Assistant Principals. We really value the insights that Tim, and others, bring to MECS. We are always looking to improve what we do to make this school a place that is welcoming, friendly and supportive – one where students and their families feel part of the place. We welcome any ideas that you might have as well!

Praying for Martin and others

A number of our community need our continual prayer and support as they battle serious health issues. In particular, we think of Martin. As former Principal of MECS, he is well known and loved by many people. Martin continues to receive treatment for his cancer in his typical positive, ‘can-do’ way! We are happy to report that he is ‘looking and feeling well’, even though the road ahead is a long one! He is working with Jacqui, our Director of Teaching and Learning, on finalising some curriculum resources that teachers in all Christian schools will benefit from. We are so blessed and encouraged that even in these difficult times, Martin still continues to serve Christian education and is committed to the bigger picture of ‘seeking the Kingdom of God in education’.

Welcome Preps!

Last week all the Preps came to visit me on their first day of school! Come and check out the colourful ‘chalk’ drawings that they did on the windows of my office. They were all very excited to be drawing on windows as they jostled for position to get their drawing completed. Their instant mural is indicative of the creative, dynamic and fun learning space we want this school to be.

Great Start to the Year

From all reports, last week was a great start to the year. Teachers commented on how settled and positive the students were; students seemed to be happy to be back into the swing of it and parents could get back into their ‘normal’ routines as well. We thank God that this school is a happy and safe place to come each day and we pray that the ‘vibe’ of last week will continue throughout the year!

FOCUS On... Primary Numeracy

There have been some exciting developments in Middle and Senior Primary Numeracy throughout 2014, and continuing now into 2015! The Senior Primary Numeracy team implemented a new framework for teaching Numeracy, which framework was originally researched and developed by Melbourne University Assessment and Research Centre. Over the past few years, the Numeracy team has moulded it into a program that works particularly well for our students here at MECS.

The program focusses on assessing the specific skills and knowledge that individual students already have, through the use of a detailed pre-test, and then uses this data to determine an exact starting point in their Numeracy learning. This strategy ensures that students are not wasting time going over topics and skills that they are already confident in; instead, it allows us to extend their learning from their individual point of need. It also relieves students from being asked to complete work that is well above their level of understanding, or on the flip side, ensures students who are ready, to begin exploring numeracy skills and concepts normally expected from those above their age bracket.

What are the main advantages of this framework?

• For students to gain confidence in themselves as a learner.
• Allows greater depth and time to be spent learning the four processes (+, -, ÷, x), as well as fractions.
• Allows teachers and support staff to keep a closer eye on how students are ‘travelling’ in their learning.

We have been excited to see the improvements in student results already made, and are looking forward to seeing each child continue to flourish in Numeracy this year!

Michelle
Primary School Numeracy Coordinator

What Is It?

It’s a framework to structure Numeracy planning and assessment. It can be modified to cater for Year 1 – 6.

• For all students to feel success in their Numeracy learning, at all levels.
• To close the ‘gaps’ in student learning.
• To extend students in their specific area of need, so not to repeat concepts and skills that they already know.
MECS Notes

Emergency Parent Contacts

The Emergency Parent Contacts are listed on the front of the school calendar, and included on the Bushfire Response notice that was sent home last week.

Please note that one of the Middle School emergency contacts, Liz, has a new home phone number: 5961 5291.

Please update this phone number on your documents.

Social Skills Drama Program, Semester 1

Social Skills Drama 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 12 years. Choice Learning and Social Lights provide the program to MECS. 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 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 are invited to join the program in Semester 1, 2015 (two terms).

Term 1 will run on Thursday 19, 26 February, and Thursday 12, 19, 26 March.

Term 2 will run on Thursday 16 April, Thursday 7, 21, 28 May, and Thursday 4, 11, 18 June.

MECS recognises the positive impact of the Social Skills Drama program, and has subsidised the program for a number of years. We are now enrolling students for this drama program at a cost of $230.

If you would like your child to attend in Semester 1, please ask for a form from the front office and return before week 3.

Shirley
Primary Education Support Coordinator

Volunteers Needed

We would like to run an icy-pole and sausage sizzle fundraiser at the Years 7-10 Swimming Carnival at Belgrave Outdoor Pool on Tues Feb 24. Can you help out? We need help with shopping before the day and help on the day.

Please email aforbes@mecs.vic.edu.au if you can help. Thanks!

Nicole Nyhouse
Community Relations Officer

Meet the New Staff

Nathan
SS Teacher
Angela
JP Teacher
Helen
Primary Music
Roselyn
Learning Assistant
Kaye
JP Teacher
Val
SS Admin
Narelle
Learning Assistant
Simon
IT Manager
Shannon
SS Teacher
Jo
Secondary Ed Support Coordinator
Tim
SS Teacher
Rachel
Indonesian Teacher
Ileana
Secondary Ed Support Teacher
Amelia
Learning Assistant

Welcome Back To...
We are thankful...

Our Kindergarten groups have had a wonderful start to the year. During our orientation period the Kinder staff have had the chance to meet and get to know the children and their parents, and chat about the finer details of 4 year old Kindergarten. The children have been focusing on meeting friends and remembering their names (not hard for those who had a year in K3 at MECS); the shorter, small group sessions, have allowed the development of relationships, routines, friendships and positive classroom culture. To help the children feel a sense of belonging each child has placed a photo of their family on the shelf in their room. We talked about our God, who can be known through the BIG story in the Bible, and the children said prayers for things for which they are thankful. Kindergarten parents have joined with the Primary school in writing things for which they are thankful, and we have displayed these on the fence as you walk into school or kindergarten.

Children are so good at exploring and discovering. We have had many discussions about family time during the holidays, with many children visiting the beach over the summer. We have been ‘listening to the sea’ in a large conch shell, followed by the lovely story by Margaret Wild, “There’s a Sea in my Bedroom.” We talked about our God, who made all things, even the beach where the waves can be sometimes scary and sometimes friendly. The children were awe-struck when they heard the echo-soft-rumbling-sound inside the shell!

Wendy
Early Years Coordinator
Getting Started in Kinder - K3

The K3’s have settled in beautifully during their orientation sessions. We have started with small groups of 6, where the children have separated from their parents (some for the first time) with ease and no tears!! The children have coped with the hot afternoon sessions and have been great at keeping their hats on and drinking plenty of water outside.

In these first sessions the children have been getting to know each other, learning the routines of mat time, snack time and the importance of wearing shoes and helmets whilst on the bikes!! We have been singing their favourite song ‘Twinkle, Twinkle little star’ and our Kindergarten theme song ‘I’m a little Bluebird/Rosella’. Most importantly, the children have been reminded that Jesus loves them, is with them and is their friend.

Even though happy to see their parents at the end of the session, the children have shown they are quite ready for the longer morning session, as they were not ready to go home after 2 hrs!

Well done Bluebirds and Rosellas. Mrs Grant and I are very proud of you.

Lee
3 Year Old Kindergarten Teacher

Getting Started in School - Prep

The Preps have already settled so well into their new classrooms and made many new friends. There are so many things for them to remember and it has been very exciting to see them getting used to the routines and taking ownership of their own learning.

So far we have already had a very busy time. We have visited Narelle’s office and drawn some lovely pictures on the windows; we have been for many walks around the school to get to know the boundaries and we have already had PE, Music, Indonesian and Library. The Preps are learning what is like to be at school and more specifically Summer at school. They have been creating some beautiful artwork and already seem to be ‘experts’ in the 5 sounds that the letter ‘A’ makes. With such a beautiful start, I am sure it is going to be a wonderful year.

Rebekah
Prep Teacher
Parents are warmly invited to attend the Whole School Assembly Tomorrow Friday Feb 13, 10am in the MECS Gym Coffee in staffroom 9-10am
First Aid Officer Position
MECS has a position available for a Part Time First Aid Officer.
This position is for 3 ½ hours each Friday between 10.50 am and 2.20 pm, during school terms. The applicant must have a Certificate 2 in First Aid and a Working with Children Card, as well as a caring and approachable way with children. The successful applicant will be required to become a member of the school association and agree with the educational creed of the school.
Duties will include monitoring the Prep to Year 9 First Aid facilities, and possibly attending school events such as sports days.
We would like the successful applicant to wholeheartedly join a team implementing a distinctively biblical approach to education.
To apply please go to the Mount Evelyn Christian School website www.mecs.vic.edu.au employment page and download an Application pack and Application Form from the First Aid Officer position advertisement.
Please do not apply using the online application method, rather download the application pack.
Applications close: 19 Feb 2015, 2pm.
Michelle Smith
HR Administrator

Maths/Psychology Tutoring
Want to get the most out of your VCE classes? Affordable and reliable Further Maths and Psychology tutoring from a recent graduate who can help you maximise your scores. Get a head start in your studies, and establish productive studying routines early.
For more information, or any questions you have regarding those subjects, contact Corey McCabe at 0497 552 846, email me at corey.l.mccabe@gmail.com, or find me on Facebook.

Let’s Talk About the Girls
Compassion is hosting a women’s breakfast event to hear girls’ and women’s moving and inspiring stories from around the world, including right here in our own neighbourhoods. Our very own Sharon Witt is one of the speakers.

For Sale
Juicer - only used a few times $30.
Sewing Machine - used once. Cost $250 selling $125.
Contact Nicole 0400 537 967.

First Working Bee
Saturday 21 Feb, 7am-1pm
BBQ Breakfast

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