Starting School

Eden getting into the playdough at Kindergarten on her first day
The Perfect Gift

Hopefully you received some great presents over Christmas, but perhaps more importantly, gave some great presents!

For me, the giving of presents is more important than receiving them because it shows my heart – a gift may convey my gratitude for a job well done. It might convey my encouragement of a new hobby or interest in a friend or family member. I use gifts to express my love and affection and I want to make sure these gifts really hit the mark! What would this person like? Find funny? Enjoy?

At the beginning of this school year, I want to remind our community about the perfect gift of Christ and what this gift tells us about God! You might think this is more of a message for the last newsletter of the year (as we lead into Christmas) rather than the first, but as Christ is at the centre of this school, I see it more of a message of re-calibration – making sure we all understand the One we worship. Hopefully, it will be a reminder that as we seek the Kingdom of God in education here at MECS, we will always acknowledge that Christ is the King of this Kingdom!

So, let’s remind ourselves of these truths -

The gift of Jesus reminds us that God is the ultimate giver.

In John 3:16, we read that “God so loved the world that He gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” Jesus is the perfect and complete gift! God knew exactly what we needed to restore our relationship with him, with each other and with his world.

The gift of Jesus comes free, with no strings attached. It comes from the hand of a generous and extravagant God. We can’t earn it, we can’t buy it, and we can only accept it as a free gift.

God’s gifts are always good! In Matthew 7:9-11, we read, “Which of you, if your son asks for bread, will give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a snake? If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him?” Good gifts such as salvation, peace, forgiveness, grace, joy, hope… gifts that bless us and others, and of course, Jesus is God’s ultimate good gift!

The gift of Jesus makes God known to us in all his fullness. By looking at Jesus, we understand God better. In John 1:18, we read, “No one has ever seen God, but the one and only Son, who is himself God and is in closest relationship with the Father, has made him known.” As we seek to imitate Christ in all aspects of life, we image God more fully.

So what do we do with our carefully chosen gifts?

I must admit I like getting my Christmas presents all beautifully wrapped early in December so that I can enjoy seeing them all there under the tree. But the point of putting presents under the Christmas tree is not just for show – they are meant to stay there – they are meant to be given. The Christmas tree is just a holding spot for them. No one places a gift under a Christmas tree and thinks that’s all there is to it. They expect to give that gift to someone and for that person to receive it.

It’s the same with Jesus. God gave us Jesus so He can be given to others, and that others will receive him!

We have a unique opportunity as a Christian school to share and give the gift of Jesus to our students! Our teachers have been encouraged this year to use this opportunity purposefully and intentionally; to plant the seed of hope, to offer a word on encouragement, to intervene in unhelpful behaviours and conversations, to turn things around for those who are lost, to pray for, and to pray with students, to share with them who Jesus is, to give them the gift of Christ.

It will be the best gift they ever receive. God’s perfect gift. I hope you agree!

Narelle
MECS Principal
Welcome back to school!

How exciting it was to see everyone back at school on Monday morning – there was even a great turn out at the parent coffee morning! 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 and their families into our school community. This year on top of the 49 new Kinder children, we welcomed 46 new students into the school from Foundation to Year 12. That’s 95 new students in total! We feel blessed that MECS is a community that welcomes new students so readily; we hope they will feel part of the place in no time.

New Teachers

It’s always great to welcome new staff on board. Sarah joins our secondary team as a specialist Maths teacher, whilst Andrew is our new senior Maths and Physics teacher in the Senior School. Natalie joins the Secondary School as a Year 7/8 Cycle teacher and Health/PE teacher. She will also be teaching our Year 12 Health and Human Development class. We welcome Paul who transitions from Ranges TEC staff; he joins our secondary humanities team. Steph also makes an important transition, from Learning Assistant to Foundation teacher after the completion of her teaching degree, and Sarah and Rachel take on part-time roles in the Primary School. Naomi joins our Kinder team, as the 3 year old Kinder teacher. Sam Blood, Marilyn and Beth all join us as Learning Assistants. Finally, it’s great to see Ange back from maternity leave. It was great to be able to pray for each of these new staff members last week and ‘commission’ them for service here at MECS.

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, as well as planning and preparation. On the Monday morning we met together for a time of singing and communion, as we committed the year to God, and on Wednesday morning, we started the day at Ranges TEC for a delicious breakfast.

Over 20 of our teachers are engaged in post-graduate studies with the National Institute of Christian Education this year. Last Friday they were involved in a one-day intensive program to get their studies underway for the year.

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, particularly in regard to our major building projects. We look forward to giving you an update of all these projects in a special ‘Building Matters’ newsletter which we will be publishing once a term this year. Look out for that in the next couple of weeks!

Admin staff also continue to work hard throughout January keeping the wheels of business turning over. We 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!

End-of-day routines

Finally, just a reminder that the Primary School playground and car-parks are not supervised after 3.45pm. We would really appreciate it if all children and families left the school grounds by this time so that we can ensure that everyone is kept safe and well. If you are unable to make arrangements to collect your child(ren) before this time, you might like to consider using the after-school care service provided by 3CKidz. Please contact the office if you need further information about this service.

FOCUS On... Culture

Cultures within work places, schools, classrooms and even families form, whether we do so intentionally or not. We can purposefully choose the way we establish the routines and habits of our lives or we can allow the forces that we may not even recognise and identify, to just blow us about. Culture will form despite us. Often the loudest voices in our society come to us via subversive messages through advertising, social media and the economic and business agendas of the day - these can be strongly defining forces on the culture of the day.

In order to form a culture that is being transformed by Christ we have to make intentional decisions to follow Christ and to establish and fortify across our individual and corporate lives, not just in our belief systems, but in the everyday aspects and daily habits of our lives.

At school, the start of the year provides us with an opportunity to be intentional in establishing a culture that is transformational. As classroom routines become established, we do so with a view to being a body of Christ. Staff and students set forth on a new year to work, play and relate together honouring God within and without the classroom. This looks like respectful relationships, teacher authority and captainship of the class under God, forgiveness and restoration when things go wrong and being faithful to our calling as teacher, student, administrator or parent.

The first weeks of our school year are dedicated to establishing cultures, routines and ways of being together. In the primary school we intentionally use Anchor charts to be specific in teaching children how we move around the school, interact with each other, complete our work and play together. Students need to learn the specifics of the expectations and Anchor charts set that out clearly (you can see them in classroom windows and on class boards). We also spend time in circles, establishing the guidelines of our interactions and how our classes operate. We do not leave it to chance to set the culture rather we clearly establish the way we do everyday things together, right down to how we get out and put our books away, enter and leave the classroom. We then continue to draw students back to these cultural expectations and key ideals as the year goes on.

Over these first few weeks of 2017 we will be establishing some new ways of doing things in the primary school. Our wrapper free lunches and ‘rubbish in, rubbish out’ practices will need to become habit and our new way of doing things.

We hope as you come along to school throughout the year, you will be able to see, feel and know this intentional, distinct transformational culture at MECS.

Diane

Assistant Principal - Primary
MECS Notes

Medication Changes
During the holidays, you would have received an email from the office outlining some changes to medication permissions for the start of Term 1.

If we have not received a reply from you to state otherwise, we will assume that you have given your consent for trained First Aid staff at MECS to administer paracetamol, ibuprofen or antihistamines to your child if deemed necessary. We will continue to notify you via SMS or email if we dispense any medication to your child during school hours.

If you did not receive this information email, or have any questions, please contact the office.

Corrie
Admin Support

Photo Permissions
When you enrolled at MECS, we collected information about your consent for us to use photos of your child/ren in either school publications or social media (without names). Unless we hear from you, we will assume that you are still happy with the level of consent you provided to us at the time, and will continue to use photos of your child/ren in the same way as we have previously (or not use them, as the case may be).

If you would like to change your preferences, or check what permissions we have on file for your family, please contact the office.

Foundation Parent Information Session
Wednesday February 8, 7.30-9pm
Foundation parents are warmly invited to come along to an Information Session in the PUMP room to hear about the Foundation program for 2017. This is a valuable time to learn more about the program, ask questions and get to know other Foundation parents and the Foundation teachers. For those who are unable to attend, relevant information will also be sent home.

JP Parent Information Afternoon
Thursday February 16 at 2pm
Junior Primary parents are warmly invited to come along to an Information Session in the PUMP room to hear about the JP program for 2017. This is a valuable time to learn more about the JP program, ask questions and get to know other JP parents and the JP teachers. Please come at 1:45pm for a cuppa and a chance to chat. The information session will commence at 2:00pm. For those who are unable to attend, relevant information will also be sent home.

Friends of MECS

Welcome to 2017! We have had a great first week with a lovely buzz of excitement in the air.

One of the wonderful ways we support our community during the year is with frozen meals. We love being able to bless families with a new baby or those facing a difficult time by providing them with a meal. Once a term we have a ‘Cook Off day’ to fill our Community Freezer.

Our first ‘Cook Off’ Day for the year is on Thursday February 23. Please put this in your diaries and let me know if you can help out by emailing me.

It is a wonderful day of getting to know other parents and helping out at the same time!

If you are unable to help but would like to support the day, there will be a list of the groceries we need in the coming weeks and cash donations are also welcome and very much appreciated.

Nicole
Community Relations

Taking Enrolments Now!
Are you planning on using the After School Care Program this year? Start the enrolment process now, as approval can take up to two weeks.

Contact the office for more details.

3C Kids Care
3C Kids Care is a ministry of Casey City Church
Starting School

Our Kindergarten and Foundation students are having a happy time getting to know their teachers and classrooms over a number of orientation days. Here are just a few of them getting started! Foundation students had their first full day today - the start of fun and learning at school!

Heather
Newsletter Editor

MECS Notes

School Banking

School Banking starts next Wednesday 8 Feb.

If you would like to start up a dollarmite account (or a Youth Saver account), packs are available from the office. New reward prizes available throughout the year. Contact Anita if you have any questions. Happy banking!

Social Skills Drama

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 14 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.

Three main components provide conversation skills, non-verbal cues and role plays which provide students 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 for Semester 1, 2017. We are now enrolling students for a semester (2 terms) as we find this to be more beneficial to their progress. Parents will be charged for the semester rather than each term, however the price is the same per lesson.

Students who have previously participated benefit from the ongoing nature of the program. In Semester 1, a 12 week program will be offered

Term 1 dates: Thursday February 16 & 23, March 2, 16 & 30.

Term 2 dates: Thursday April 27, May 4 & 25, and June 1 & 8.

Cost: $240 for the semester.

If you would like your child to attend in Semester 1, please indicate this on the form sent home or available from the office and return by Thursday 9 February. If you have any questions, requests or suggestions, please contact Shirley Gillie or Jo Miller at school by telephone (9738 6000) or email sgillie@mecs.vic.edu.au or jmiller@mecs.vic.edu.au.

Shirley
Education Support Coordinator - Kinder/Primary
MECS Notes

MS Art Request
The Middle School art room is in need of empty glass jars of all sizes. Please no jars that have contained nuts. We also need small/medium spray mist bottles (often used for hair care & cosmetics). If you have either of these items please send to the office. Many thanks.

Olivia
Middle School Art Teacher

MS Lunchtime Activities
The Middle School has an exciting line up of lunchtime activities this year. Students, please check the noticeboard for more information and if you want to participate make sure you sign up!

Here is the program:
Tuesdays: ‘No Homework Club’. No need to sign up, just come and catch up on your work in the library.
Wednesdays: Make a short doco film - this will be for the duration of the year.
Thursdays: All things Japanese
Fridays:
Term 1: Performing Workshop - stand up comedy and drama intensive
Term 2: Public speaking
Term 3: Drawing - learn different styles
Term 4: Latin dancing
What a great opportunity to try something new!

Leonie
Middle School Learning Assistant

Middle School Swimming
The year has started in a whirl for Years 7 - 10 sports classes, as they headed out for the first of four swimming lessons in the lead up to the tribal and interschool swimming carnivals. Students have been broken up into groups of eight and separated into girls and boys so they can focus on developing individually, helping them become more competent swimmers.

Students had a great time at the first lesson and the swim teacher provided by Lilydale pool did a great job. Thank you to the MECS leadership for investing significant funds into the sports program to allow these new opportunities for students.

Luke
Secondary Sport Coordinator
The Year 12 students and Senior School staff headed up to Oasis campsite last week on Tuesday and Wednesday to kick off the big year ahead with the Year 12 study skills camp. Over the course of the two days students took part in a variety of sessions about VCE, ATAR, exam revision techniques, time and stress management, as well as a helpful talk by Jacqui on mindset. There was also the opportunity for some fun activities such as archery, flying fox, pool and games, with even a time for a little bit of pampering, professional masseuse and all.

On Tuesday night Oasis put on a beautiful dinner for the students and their mentors, after which they sat down to set out goals and plans for the year.

Overall, it was a great camp to help the Year 12 students gear up for the joys and challenges of the year ahead. An extra special thank-you to Sharon for all the work she put into organising and running the camp.

Some comments from the Year 12 students:

‘Great camp! I feel like it gave me motivation to start the year… I feel like I know much more about how to manage school.’

‘Massage was exactly what I needed.’

‘Exam techniques was helpful in learning new ways to keep study interesting.’

‘I had a lovely time with my mentor and the food was exceptional.’

‘Fun time shared with classmates.’

‘A great camp and very helpful.’

‘Time management session was valuable because I think it is the hardest thing.’

‘The mindset session was really helpful!’

Emma
SS Coordinator
### Car For Sale

### Free Parent Seminar
The impact of pornography on young people has been described as an emerging public health crisis. What can parents do? The issue will be addressed in a free seminar for parents hosted by Independent Schools Victoria on Wednesday 15 March 2017, from 6 pm to 8 pm. Hugh Martin, a psychotherapist and founder of the Man Enough program, will provide expert advice and lead the discussion.

The seminar - the first of The Parent Seminars at ISV program - will be held at the ISV ofices at 40 Rosslyn Street, West Melbourne, and light refreshments will be served. ISV is close to public transport, and there is plenty of parking.

To register, send your name to Student.Services@is.vic.edu.au with the words ‘Parent Seminar’ in the subject line.

### Found
A Pandora ring was found on the Martyrs Bus.
Also found at school was a Mooroolbark Flashes Basketball medal and some crystals in a plastic container.
Please see the main office if you think any of these belong to you.

### MyTime Group
If you have a child with developmental delay, autism, a disability or a chronic medical condition you are invited to attend Mount Evelyn MyTime, Tuesday mornings, 9.30-11.30am in the Early Years Centre at Yarra Ranges Special Developmental School, 20 Burdap Drive, Mount Evelyn.

MyTime groups are a place where parents can share with and learn from one another in a relaxing social setting. Some sessions involve guest speakers to provide information about local services. You can bring preschool aged children with you - they will have activities. For session dates and information contact Janice on 0408 356 197.

### Accommodation Required
Phil and Anita, mature, quiet and responsible couple are seeking granny flat or similar affordable accommodation with view to stay 2 years. Current lease expires March 12. Garage preferred but not essential for storage of some items and one car. Can provide references if needed. Please call Phil 0449 575 849 or after hours Anita 0410 591 516.

### Car for Sale
Looking for your first car? Quality and safety at a good price. 2009 Hyundai Getz. Easy to drive auto, registered until August 2017. Only done 130,000 km. RWC. Yours at the great price of $4,995 Only selling because we need to update to a family car. Ring Pete 0478 417 178.

### Calendar
2017 Term 1 Week 1: 30 Jan - 5 Feb
**Monday 30 January**
First Day of Term 1

2017 Term 1 Week 2: 6 Feb - 12 Feb
**Tuesday 7 February**
Years 7 & 8 Sport Swimming Program
**Wednesday 8 February**
VCE Music Excursion
Foundation Information Evening 7.30pm in the PUMP Room
**Thursday 9 February**
Years 9 & 10 Sport Swimming Program

2017 Term 1 Week 3: 13 Feb - 19 Feb
**Tuesday 14 February**
Year 11 & 12 Basketball Day
Years 7 & 8 Sport Swimming Program
**Thursday 16**
Year 9 City Day Excursion
Years 10 Sport Swimming Program TBC
JP Information Afternoon 2pm in the PUMP Room

**Friday 17 February**
Whole School Assembly 10am Gym
Pre-assembly Morning Tea for parents from 9am

**Saturday 18 February**
Working Bee including BBQ Breakfast 7am-1pm

2017 Term 1 Week 4: 20 Feb - 26 Feb
**Monday 20 February**
Year 7-10 Tribal Swimming Carnival
K4 Connect Morning Tea 8.45am

**First Working Bee**
Saturday 18 February, 7am-1pm
Starting with Breakfast

Notices sent home this week and on Website

- Foundation Bush Telegraph Term 1
- Middle Primary Newsletter Term 1
- Primary School Drama Semester 1 Letter
- Martyrs M14 Bus Timetable
- Years 7 & 8 Swimming Lessons Letter
- VCE Music Excursion Letter
- JPB, JPE & JPW Timetables 2017
- Senior Primary Newsletter Term 1
- Speech Therapy Permission Letter
- Years 7 & 8 Newsletter Term 1
- Years 9 & 10 Swimming Lessons Letter