Celebrating Music

Jacob plays at the last Music Recital for this year.
Things aren’t always as they seem

It’s that wonderful time of year again in which we celebrate the birth of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. I’m a bit hesitant to share the following reflection about Christmas (from Luke 2:1-7) because it may make you uncomfortable, however it illustrates that so much of our understanding of the world and our faith is shaped by our culture. It shows us that things aren’t always as they seem to us.

Our traditional view of the Christmas story has Mary and Joseph arriving in Bethlehem, Joseph taking his wife to the village inn only to hear there is no room – except for a stable. We’ve become quite familiar with this scene, but it probably isn’t accurate. By reading the biblical text with some cultural and archaeological evidence we discover that adjustments are needed in our thinking.

In the first place it is unthinkable that an ancient Near East peasant culture would have failed to help a relative due to give birth. Second, we have leapt to the conclusion that Jesus was born in a stable only because of the mention of a manger – a feed box; yet for thousands of years and even in many places in the world today, mangers and the animals that use them are found within houses. Third, the Greek word (kataluma) translated as “inn” is not an inn at all, it is an upstairs guest room (the biblical scholar Kenneth Bailey has demonstrated this – you can google it if you like). So in Luke’s story, when he says that there was no room ‘in the inn’ (Luke 2:7) his point is that in the particular house that Joseph and Mary approached, the guest room was already occupied. This meant that Mary had to stay in the main part of the house and give birth in the room that had both the family and the animals on the ground floor.

While this reconstruction of the facts may change how we view the Christmas events, to me the great thing is that it reminds us that Father God ensured that his son was born into the world surrounded by family. Jesus is right there in the middle of an ordinary humble extended family right from the word go. And just as Jesus was there, we know that through His Spirit he is right here in the middle of the MECS family, in the middle of your family no matter how humble the circumstances.

May you enjoy celebrating Jesus’ birthday with new eyes this year.

The landscape, facilities and resources have improved significantly over the last 40 years, but the most important elements remain unchanged.

Reflecting back, my school years may have been very enjoyable – maybe too enjoyable. I realised that I was not the best student, and regret being a bad influence on my fellow students and making life for the teachers much more difficult than it should have been (reading my old reports I was often referred to as the class clown and a bit of a ratbag – don’t tell my mother!). But I recall that the teachers were not only interested in my academic education, but they were interested in me as a person, in my development as an individual, and my personal faith. They were more than teachers, much more, they were mentors and role models. MECS was more than just a school, and it actively prepared me for life as a Christian well beyond MECS. I didn’t just learn science, which is now my vocation, and other academic pursuits, but I learnt life skills with Christ at the centre.

Returning in 2003 brought back a lot of memories. There was the new, such as the library, the playground equipment and of course the great new science labs. But there was also the old and familiar, like the old shack, the oval where I had lost a lot of blood, sweat and tears, the old principal’s office that I had once helped the principal break into, and even some of the same teachers. In 2012 I also had the pleasure of returning when my mother held her 70th birthday party in the MECS staffroom. I got to see the new gym, and the almost complete kindergarten buildings.

The landscape, facilities and resources have improved significantly over the last 40 years, but the most important elements remain unchanged. The ethos, the fundamental aim of Christ-centred education, remains. As I now seek to educate my own tribe of children in Adelaide I reflect on my education and hope that my own children are as fortunate as I was. I am thankful to God that MECS gave me, and many others, an excellent education and a foundation for Christian life as an adult, and pray that it continues.

I am married to Helen and have 4 kids, James, Hannah, Eliza and Genevieve. We currently live in Adelaide, where I am a Senior Lecturer in Biochemistry at the University of Adelaide, and both lecture and run a research laboratory.

Daniel
Past student, Class of ’85
**Farewell to Chris**

After 24 years of faithful service, our Registrar and Office Manager Chris is leaving at the end of the year. Chris has been a fundamental part of keeping the school ticking along smoothly in a variety of roles during her many years with us, and she will be greatly missed. Chris has felt God calling her into new horizons, and is looking forward to the opportunity to explore God’s will for the next chapter of her life.

We farewell Chris with much sadness and wish her and her husband David every blessing as they enter this next phase.

Gerry
Administration Manager

**Working Bee December**

Where has the year gone? It seems unreal that we have held the last of six working bees for 2013. All this work has contributed to making MECS look so fantastic with its well-maintained buildings and grounds.

We had a great day on Saturday, with beautiful weather and a great breakfast of eggs, bacon, sausages, rissoles and toast washed down with coffee or orange juice or both.

What did we do? The guys did a great job digging stump holes for a new deck in the primary Creation Garden. We cleaned the buses, blew all the paths and asphalt areas, did weeding in the garden, cut timber into sole plates for the stump holes for our new deck, cleaned up the theatrette, raked the playground mulch and picked up sticks, raked the fitness track, and some guys went up to the Ranges TEC Farm and helped tidying there. We had a great day chatting and a great morning tea of scones and cream put together and served by the wonderful Susan. It’s great having a parent whose children have left MECS coming along to help cook brekky and serve morning tea. A big thanks to all who have come along to working bees this year. Have a safe and merry Christmas and we shall see you all at our working bees next year.

Peter & Steve
Maintenance

**MP Maths Shopping**

The bellow of competing shopkeepers could be heard in the Middle Primary classrooms this week as the students took part in their hands-on maths lessons on money. The classes were split into groups of ‘customers’ and groups of ‘shopkeepers’. The customers had the task of planning a class Christmas party for 25 people with a strict $60 budget for each group, remembering to include food, drink, entertainment and decorations. At the same time the shopkeepers had to choose what items to sell, create a shop front and make sure they catered for a wide range of demands.

As it came together on the last maths lesson of the week, with $60 (of MECS’ finest fake money) in eager hands and the sounds of Ali’s enticing call of “Fresh Apples, $1.05 a kilo!” the students threw themselves into the task wholeheartedly.

What fantastic learning (and some ripper deals!).

Ali
Middle Primary Coordinator
MUSIC Notes

Congratulations

Congratulations to Tamarra on being awarded Honours for her recent Third Grade ‘Piano for Leisure’ exam and to Sophie for her B+ in Fifth Grade ‘Piano for Leisure’. Great results for Tammy and Sophie and for their piano teacher, Libby, too!

Kerrie
Instrumental Tuition Coordinator

MECS Notes

Important Canteen Notice

Friday 13 Dec will be the LAST Canteen for 2013.

If there are any people that might like to join the volunteer team for 2014, I would LOVE to hear from them.

Sheryl
Canteen Manager

Student Medical Forms

Please return your child’s Student Medical Emergency Update Forms to the front office by the end of this term.

If you would like to be part of the 2014 MECS Family Directory, please return your form for this also.

Corrie
Administration Assistant

Congratulations to Marg

Recently Marg (long term member of the MECS community, and current Grandparent) received the Sir John Reid Community Service Award, awarded by the Rotary Club of Melbourne. The award honours someone devoted to the community for a lengthy period, without remuneration. Marg was recognised for her 30 years of volunteer work at Open Doors counselling service, her many years, together with husband John, of marriage preparation and enrichment courses and her time spent in Uganda with HopeBuilders.

Congratulations Marg!

Heather
Newsletter Editor

Primary Christmas GT - Mon 16 Dec

The final Christmas GT will take place in the gym on Monday 16 December, 9.30am.

Preps will deliver their beautiful Nativity play (who can resist a Prep as an angel or sheep?). There will be the singing of Christmas Carols, including our favourites ‘Away in a Manger’ and ‘Hark the Herald Angels’, and of course the obligatory singing of ‘Aussie Jingle Bells’.

Liesje Wilson will be farewelled with tears, stories, laughter and bucket loads of love!

Friends and family are invited to attend and join in this wonderful event.

Please note the change to the starting time to 9.30 am (to allow Preps to get into costumes).

We look forward to saying our goodbyes to 2013!

DI
Primary Coordinator

Friends of MECS

Stationery Thanks

A HUGE thank you to all those who helped on packing days and sales day. All the bags were packed by 9.10am on the Thursday morning. Well done, I think we broke a record there!! Thank you once again.

Evelyn

Middle School Second Hand Book Sale

Attention all Middle School Parents & Students

Second-hand books are offered for sale each year on the two stationery pick-up days. This year we will be selling the Year 7 Pearson Mathematics book and the English book from Year 9.

If you want your child’s text books (as detailed on the list below) to be sold through the school, here’s what you need to do:

1. Please write your child’s name clearly on the inside front cover (this allows us to refund the monies to the correct people).

2. For Year 7 Maths please leave in specially marked box after Maths on Friday 13 December. For Year 9 English please leave the books in a specially marked box by Friday 6 December 2013. Both boxes will be located in the classroom.

3. Alternatively books may be handed in at the Main office in a clearly marked bag.

We will have some books for sale at the first stationery sales day on 10 December otherwise your name will be placed on a list so that one can be put aside for you to collect on the second sales day on January 30 or in the first week of school next year.

Books are priced according to their condition (approximately half of their new price). Any books that came with a CD included in the back, need to have the CD with the book otherwise the price will be reduced. Friends of MECS retain 15% of the sale price.

1. Sale price is deducted from your school fees in the new year.

2. Cash payment will be available early in Term 1 (dates to be announced).

If your books are sold there will be two Options for payment:

Please be advised we will no longer be sending cheque payments and books that are not sold are held over to be sold the following year.

If you have any questions, please don’t hesitate to contact me on the following numbers: 9736 2690 or 0425 821 947.

Evelyn
Stationery Coordinator

Books accepted for Sale

Macquarie School Dictionary

Guidelines for Referencing and Bibliographies

NIV Bibles (as sold by school)

Pearson Mathematics (Year 7)

Move into English 3 (Year 9)
MECS Authors Part 2

‘Girlwise’ by Sharon

Girlwise is the new series of books published just recently by MECS teacher and author Sharon. These books were written especially for young girls aged 6-12 years. There are two books in the series so far: “Girlwise - A Girl’s Guide to being ‘YOU’” written especially for girls to help them discover their unique value and gifts. The second book ‘Girlwise - A Girl’s Guide to friendships’, covers all those tricky friendship issues that affect girls throughout their Primary School years and provides helpful advice and strategies. Both books are in full colour with lovely illustrations and practical activities that girls can do.

Each book is $12 or a MECS special of 2 for $20.

A percentage of all books will be donated to Jinja Christian School in Uganda towards books for the children. Books are available at the MECS Office for the next week. You can also view the books and sample pages online at www.sharonwitt.com.au.

‘The Ephesus Scroll’ by Ben

In 93 AD, Loukas, the son of a wealthy Christian trader, is entrusted with a scroll to read in seven churches in Asia Minor. However, the scroll sparks rebellion wherever he goes and the Roman authorities attempt to track him down. All Loukas wants to do is complete his mission and get back to Ephesus and his fiancée, Iounia. In 2005 AD, Dima and Natasha, a young Russian couple from St Petersburg, come across a stone box with a scroll inside, apparently found in Ephesus by Dima’s great-great-grandfather. The scroll is a complete – and early – copy of the book of Revelation. How did this scroll come to be found in Russia? Has it come to light at this very time for a reason?

The Ephesus Scroll, written by Ben, is an exciting historical novel with interlocking timelines that simultaneously explore the questions “What did the book of Revelation mean to those who first received it?” and “What does it mean for us today?” The paperback is available from Koorong.com; the ebook is available through Smashwords.com and Amazon.com.au. For more information, check out www.ephessusscroll.com.

Heather
Newsletter Editor

Orientation Day

There were a lot of excited students yesterday as they anticipated Orientation Day. All new students starting at MECS in 2014, together with our current students, went to the class level they will be in for 2014. The teachers had prepared some great activities to help the students adjust to school and their new year level. It was a terrific success with lots of smiles and excited children. One parent reported “they had a blast and cannot wait to start at MECS next year.”

If you did not collect your school stationery yesterday, the second pick up day is Thursday January 30 from 9am to 12pm in the Senior School. Schoolwear can be collected and ordered the same day but in the main Canteen - under the Library.

We are looking forward to an exciting 2014 school year!

Amanda
Community Relations Officer

MECS Notes

Primary Class Lists for 2014

Class lists will come out on Wednesday 18 December with the school reports and School Magazine.

There is a lot of thought, time, effort and prayer that goes into these lists. Significant consideration goes into getting the right mix of students and class teachers. MECS teachers together with the Coordinators make these decisions. Pertinent information is considered but due to the complex nature of putting together classes the final decisions rest with the school.

Diane
Primary School Coordinator

What is EMA?

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) is a Victorian Government payment to families on a low income. It provides financial assistance to support their children’s education up to the age of 16.

To be eligible for the EMA your child must be under the age of 16 and enrolled at school. You must be a parent or legal guardian of the student and you must hold an eligible Health Care Card (HCC), or Pensioner Concession Card (PCC), or Veterans Affairs Gold Card. If you are a foster parent to the child you will also be eligible.

These criteria must be met on Tuesday 28 January 2014 (Eligibility Day). You must submit an EMA application to the school by 28 February 2014 (Census Day).

The EMA payments are:

• $200 for parents of eligible Prep students
• $150 for parents of all other eligible primary school students
• $300 for parents of eligible Year 7 students
• $250 for parents of all other eligible secondary school students up to the age of 16. (A pro-rata amount is payable for students turning 16 in 2014).

How to Apply: Contact the school office now, to obtain an EMA application form.

Act Now: Apart from the benefit for families on low incomes, it is vital to MECS that all eligible people apply for the EMA. Why? Over 50% of the funding we receive from the Victorian Government to operate the school is based on the number of families and their students who receive the EMA. The State government uses the EMA numbers as an indirect way of measuring the socio-economic position of a community and increases funding accordingly.

For more information contact Alison in the office or go to: http://www.education.vic.gov.au/school/parents/financial/pages/ema.aspx
Prep Big Night Out

The Preps were very excited last week in the lead up to their Big Night Out on Friday. We went to Montrose Adventure Park, visited the frog bog, played games on the oval, had a barbecue dinner in the staffroom and changed into pyjamas before singing and reading about teddy bears.

It was really lovely to see how well all of the children played together and participated in each of the activities that would be similar to going on camp. It turned out to be a beautiful, sunny afternoon. We were blessed with some great help from the bus drivers, to seven Year 6 buddies and the amazing Cheryl and Peter. Thanks to all of those who helped to make this time so special.

Rebekah
Prep Teacher
Last Wednesday we had our final Instrumental Recital for 2013. It was a wonderful evening of music and song from our soloists and a few groups. Students from our whole school community were involved (some for their debut performance) and it was great to have the encouragement and support of our audience of family and friends.

Special thanks to Alexander and Brenton who were our hosts and to Karen for providing supper. It was also an evening to thank our Instrumental Staff for all their hard work and dedication. Well done to all involved!

Annora
Music Performance Coordinator
Blackberries for Sale
Apple season is now finished but our lovely apple man will do one more delivery of blackberries for us this year!
On Monday 16 December he will deliver preordered Crimson Blackberries at the special price of $9 for 500 grams.
All orders need to be made at the school office by 10am Friday 13 December 2013.

Book Launch
Author and Illustrator Kayleen is having a book launch for her new book ‘Without Me’ at Mount Evelyn Station House Community Reading Room 12 December 4.15-5.30pm. Prizes, activities, book launch special prices and Bookaburra!

Mount Evelyn Community Wishing Tree
Donations of packaged food and gifts would be much appreciated and will be distributed by Lilydale and Districts Rotary. Drop off points (by Mon 23 Dec) at Mount Evelyn and Districts Community Bank in Wray Cres, Mount Evelyn Post Office in Station Street and Jobo Design on York Road.

Room for Rent
A room is available for rent in a large 2 storey house in Lilydale. Please phone or text for further information.

MECS Chooks Need Help
Our chooks have been enjoyed by the students all year, laid many spotted green eggs, and provided excellent manure for our garden.
BUT, they do need some carers in the holidays.
Are there any families who would like to either take the chooks home for a week or two, or come to school every few days to top up their feed and water, as well as collect eggs? The feed will be in the chook shed.

The weeks are:
Week 1: Sat 21 Dec - Fri 27 Dec 2013
Week 2: Sat 28 Dec 2013 - Fri 3 Jan 2014
Week 3: Sat 4 Jan - Fri 10 Jan 2014
Week 4: Sat 11 Jan - Fri 17 Jan 2014
Week 5: Sat 18 Jan - Fri 24 Jan 2014
We would greatly value your help in this!
If you feel that you could help, please email Liesje.

Have you looked at the MECS website on your smartphone or tablet device?
There has been lot of work behind the scenes on our MECS website to make viewing easier on handheld devices.
Keep up-to-date with notices, newsletters, school calendar and general school information from your mobile phone or tablet/handheld device.
www.mecs.vic.edu.au

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

Newsletters and notices are available on our website:

2014 Diary Date
On Sunday 9 February 2014, we will be having a commissioning service for our new Principal Narelle Sketcher followed by a community BBQ.
More details will follow, but book the date now!