Dear Parents and Friends,

Office Manager - Administration

I am delighted to announce the appointment of Mrs Amanda Peek as our new Front Office Manager - Administration. Amanda comes to us with 14 years front office management experience from an independent school in Darwin, NT. Amanda’s first official day at St Matthew’s will be next Monday, 16 February. She will work on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday each week from 8.30 am - 4.30 pm. I know you will join me in warmly welcoming Amanda to our community—please feel free to pop into the office to say hello in the next week or so.

Meet the Parents Notification

Notification slips about individual times for Meet the Parents Meetings were sent home today. If you have not received your slip (check your child’s school bag carefully!) please phone the front office. If you still need to make an appointment time, please also phone the office.

These meetings are not Parent Teacher Interviews. By the time they meet with you next week, the teachers will have only taught your child for 10 or so days, so really only have a snapshot of each child’s capacity. This meeting is for YOU to do the talking! The class teachers want to know your hopes and goals for your child, any concerns you have and to build the good relationships between home and school so necessary in educating children.

During the meetings, parents are welcome to leave their children in the library where they will be fully supervised. However, parents must sign children in and out of this service which is provided only for the duration of your meeting. It cannot be used as a babysitting service for children in the period straight after school should their parents have a later appointment.

Swimming Carnival

What a great success our Carnival was on Tuesday! The sun came out and helped make the day a wonderful sporting and social event for the children. Every child was able to participate to the extent of their swimming abilities, and we saw some super speedy swimming stars emerge! We were particularly pleased with the initiative of inviting Year 1 to the carnival.

Days like the swimming carnival only happen with your support. Thank you, most sincerely, to the many parents and grandparents who volunteered their time to help us on the day. Your efforts at time Keeping, running, recording, writing and your good humour really contributed to the success of the day. Thank you also to the teaching team who organised the day and ensured its smooth running on Tuesday; Miss Rachel Fish, Mrs Millie Leonard, Ms Tegan Bew and Mrs Alison Ewyk. Splendid work, team!

Opening School Mass

You are all warmly invited to our start of year school mass at 9.30 am tomorrow morning. As well as welcoming in the new year, our Year 6 Student Leaders will be presented with their leadership badges, and this semester’s Student Representative Council (see page 2) will also receive their badges. We will also take this opportunity to say farewell to our dear Mrs Helen Wilks, whose final day at St Matthew’s will be tomorrow. Come and join us to pray Helen into her new adventure!

Start of School Year Social

SAVE THE DATE!!! Every member of our school community is invited to come to the Community Council Start of Year Social Afternoon on Friday 27 February from 3.30 to 5.00 pm. It will be a great opportunity for the kids to have a play, for you to meet all the teachers in an informal setting and to keep building our wonderfully inclusive and supportive community. The Community Council will provide a sausage sizzle and some afternoon tea snacks.

Happy Valentine’s Day

Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never ends.

1 Corinthians 13: 1-6
Student Representative Council Semester 1 2015

Congratulations to the children in Years 3–6 who have been nominated by their peers to be on the Student Representative Council (SRC) for Semester 1 2015. These students will be presented with their badges at the Opening School Mass tomorrow, Friday 13 February at 9.30 pm: Year 3 Blue Elijah Logan and Zoe Brown, Year 3 Maroon Elisha Narmuai-Bright and Patrick Douglass, Year 4 Blue Philippa Walker and Lachlan Wilson, Year 4 Maroon Riley Brown and Jessica Pine, Year 5 Blue Alessio Gambale and Grace Hanley, Year 5 Maroon Alexander Dionissiou and Jessica Sly, Year 6 Blue Olivia Wilson and Tom Dionissiou, Year 6 Maroon Charlie Hollings and Audrey Worthington. The SRC will meet each week with Mrs Syliva Campbell, REC, with the role of providing a ‘voice’ for the children at St Matthew’s, as well as assisting with organising student fundraising events throughout the Semester.

Morning ‘Drive Through’ Procedures
Parents/carers who use the drop-off zone in the morning are asked to follow a few simple rules:

- Drivers access the car park turning in from Stutchbury Street via the entrance closest to the Junior Playground and leave via the exit at the bottom of the netball court ramp.
- Three cars can use the drop-off zone at one time.
- Do not stop in the middle or at the back of the zone if there are no cars in the front space/s. Move to the front of the zone.
- Drivers must stay in their cars as getting out to open doors or the car boot will cause traffic delays.
- Please move on promptly without overtaking cars in front.
- Children should be ready to get out on the kerb side of the car (the left hand side of the vehicle) preferably with their school bags in hand. Children are at risk of being injured if getting out on the right-hand side of the vehicle into the traffic coming through the staff car park.

Drivers, please take care when driving around our school. Your children are our most precious resource and we need to keep them safe. When driving through our carparks, stick to **10 km p/h**.

I ask our God of all blessings to be with you and your families in the coming week, and to bring blessed love into your hearts for Valentine’s Day on Saturday.

Brenda Foley
Principal
brenda.foley@cg.catholic.edu.au
Welcome back to the new 2015 academic year. I trust you had a wonderful time during the summer holidays and found some time to relax and enjoy being with your children. I look forward to getting to know all our new students and families as the year progresses.

Chickens
Our chickens have returned from their Christmas break at the Branns (Sarah, Year 1) and the Morrisons (Hannah, Year 1). We were all amazed to see how much our new black hens, Bilbo and Darth Vader, had grown! Thank you to both the Brann and Morrison families for looking after our chickens so well over the holiday period. It was very much appreciated.

Don’t forget you can buy some of our wonderful fresh eggs at the front office for $3 a half dozen. All proceeds go towards looking after our chickens.

Over the next three years we are taking on the project of becoming a KidsMatter School. The first component of the KidsMatter project and our focus for this year is ‘Positive school community.’ In a positive school community, every face has a place, every voice is valued and everyone has something to contribute.

All children need to feel that school is a safe place where:
- people care about them
- their needs for support, respect and friendship are met
- they are able to get help to work out problems.

To assist us in creating an action plan for this focus area all families will soon be receiving a small survey to complete to assist us in creating an even more positive and inclusive school community and in turn develop:
- a shared understanding of why this is so important to mental health and wellbeing
- a common language for talking about it
- a shared focus on planning for improvement.

Student Behaviour Protocol
One of the ways we help to create a positive school community is the way we treat and respect one another. Although we are very fortunate at St Matthew’s to have a great group of students who on the whole look after and care for one another really well. This only happens if we all play our part in abiding to the rules and values that are central to our School community.

Over the next few weeks I will be mentioning and revising some of the key elements of our Behaviour Protocol Policy and I ask that you discuss these with your children. Our positive Behavior policy is founded on three rules which also form the basis of class rules that are negotiated in each class at the beginning of the year and reinforced with reminders throughout the school terms.

These rules help us achieve our aims and support our agreed values:
* We show courtesy and respect for others.
* We allow students to learn and teachers to teach.
* We care for the environment in which we work and live.

The full policy and Behaviour Flowchart is available on our school website.

Parent Information Session
Please read the information later in the newsletter re an informative parent information session, ‘How to Speak with Your Children about Sex.’

Thanking you for your support,

Cathy Talbot
Assistant Principal
Good News

Prayer Space
We have continued to develop our Prayer Space at St Matthew’s as we believe this initiative reflects the importance of providing space and time for students to experience a variety of opportunities to engage with prayer in different ways. A prayer space is a context where hopefully students will find they can pray any prayers (or none) and find acceptance, affirmation, kindness and reassurance. Some instructions and materials needed can be found on the table at the Prayer Space. This year the area takes the shape of a tree to integrate our school focus for the 2015—Help those in need and your gratitude will grow. Linked with our school focus is the scripture quote from where we draw our reflection from scripture—"It is more blessed to give than receive” Acts 20:35. We are looking forward to seeing our prayer space grow and develop throughout the year as we all are invited to take the time to offer our prayers to God.

MJR—Making Jesus Real by being grateful
Those two little words—’than k you’ (or "thanks" if you want to be quick about it) can mean a lot. Or, depending on how you say them, they can mean almost nothing. Just like "How are you?” or "I love you," "Thank you" is a phrase that can hold great weight or be totally meaningless. Here are some ways to show you really mean it!
Write a note of thanks  Make time for someone
Say it in public     Return a favour
Give a smile or a hug  Be happy
Take a picture     Pay it forward

Lent 2015
PROJECT COMPASSION SUNDAY
This year the first Sunday of Lent falls on 15th February 2015. As Lent begins, on Ash Wednesday next week, we are signed on the forehead with ashes, a reminder that we are in this world for a relatively short period of time. Our principal purpose in this life is to grow in the deep knowledge that God loves us unconditionally — and to allow that understanding and love to flow in us, and through us to others. Christians are called to live in a different way — as Jesus spells out for us in today’s Gospel: ‘Do not worry about your life and what you are to eat, nor about your body and how you are to clothe it. … Set your hearts on the kingdom of God first — and all these other things will be given you as well.’ Less concerned for ourselves, we see people as Jesus sees them. Every single person alive today is precious in the eyes of God, with the right to live a life full of meaning and purpose.

This Sunday is recognised by the Church in Australia as Project Compassion Sunday. It brings us to recognise that we are Gospel people, carrying the mind and heart of Jesus Christ into today’s world. Project Compassion is a way of bringing unconditional love in a tangible way to people who lack the basic resources of life. Caritas Australia draws its inspiration and energy from the revelation of God’s love. As we become aware of some of the physical needs of our brothers and sisters, Caritas gives us one way to respond, turning our Project Compassion contributions into well-designed programs.

The theme for Project Compassion 2015 is “Food for Life”. Food is essential for all life, yet many of the world’s poorest people do not have food security. That means they live from day-to-day, uncertain of how to afford or how to access their next meal. Without food, the rest of life is impossible to contemplate: how can you plan for the future or educate your children when you fear you will be hungry? As Pope Francis says: “It is a well-known fact that current levels of production are sufficient, yet millions of people are still suffering and dying of starvation. This is truly scandalous.”

Project Compassion 2015 explores how Caritas Australia is helping the world’s poorest people establish sustainable food, walking with them as they free themselves from the burden of food insecurity and develop new, improved income streams for a better future.

Yours in Truth and Love

Sylvia Campbell
Religious Education Coordinator
sylvia.campbell@catholic.edu.au
Lent 2015 begins on Wednesday, February 18.

We celebrate Lent, not only at church, but at home too.

With your Mum or Dad, set up a ‘sacred space’ in your home - a place in your house which reminds you of Jesus, and which helps you to pray.

Suggestions:
Your sacred space might be as simple as a small table or shelf displaying a bible and a candle. Adorn your sacred site with different symbols during Lent: e.g. a purple cloth and a crucifix during Lent, a palm on Palm Sunday, some nails or a crown of thorns (e.g. twisted sticks/metal) on Good Friday. You might like to add a statue/picture that is dear to you, or a photo of someone who is in your heart/prayers.

Say a prayer together at your sacred space. A suggestion follows:

Dear God,
Thank you for dwelling in our home. Help us to grow as a family in your love, day by day, and especially during this season of Lent. Amen.
Our homes are holy ground. They are the dwelling place of the faithful, where Christians live and love on a daily basis. If you don’t already have one, you might like to establish a ‘sacred space’ in your home: a focal point for gathering and praying with symbols of our Christian faith. Here are some ways to enhance your home’s natural ‘sacred sites.’

1. Start with a table top
Your sacred site might be as simple as a small table or shelf displaying a bible, a candle or a crucifix. Your sacred site can be suitably decorated during the year to mark special feast days, seasons and celebrations: a nativity crib at Christmas, a palm on Palm Sunday, photos of deceased loved ones on the anniversary of their deaths, the baptismal candle of your newborn. Adorn your sacred site with symbols of life from your garden: a green branch, a single hibiscus, a few petals or gum leaves. Involve your children in the task of maintaining the sacred site.

2. Where we ‘break bread’ as a family
The family dining table is more than a place of physical nourishment. It is where families gather to nourish one another emotionally and spiritually. Our experience at the family dining table has a lot to do with our understanding of the Eucharist. Mark your dining area with a cross, a painting of the Last Supper or an image of the Holy Family. Some families hold their nightly prayer around the dinner table after the meal. Add a festive table decoration to mark a liturgical season. A purple table cloth during Lent; gold or white trimmings for Christmas and Easter; red foliage and a large candle for Pentecost.

3. Quiet prayer nook
Create a quiet prayer haven in a part of the house where traffic is low (e.g., an attic space; a corner of a bedroom). The more inviting the space the better as it will encourage you to come and sit with the Lord regularly. Include a chair or a bean bag, a lamp and a drawer for holding prayer books or a spirituality magazine. Mark this space by displaying a bible and a candle. How about an icon on the wall as a powerful image inviting contemplation.

4. Conversation corner
This sacred space is for precious moments shared with family members and dear friends. It’s a place to catch up on each other’s lives, discuss difficult decisions, share a burden or revel in a joy; a place to pray, to challenge one another, to support. To create this sacred space you need: a couple of comfy chairs, a small tabletop for holding coffee cups, a drawer or shelf to hold a prayer book. If your conversation is long distance you will need a phone or skype access. Mark this space with an image of a favourite saint, or a photo of a special person who supports you in faith.

5. A loving passage
Ever thought of the entrance of your home as a sacred site? It’s the spot where we kiss each other hello and good bye, the starting point for hospitality, a place of warm handshakes, greetings, farewells. In what way might you mark this sacred site in your home?

6. Dad’s turf
Take care not to over-feminize family prayer spaces. They need not be all candles and flowers! The backyard toolshed or workbench is a reflective haven for some men; a holy place where the masculine spirit is rejuvenated. One handyman marks this space with a wood-carving of Joseph the carpenter. A chair in the corner encourages visits from his children who love to chat with their Dad while he works.

7. Easter garden
Children love this one. The Easter Garden is a delightful way to celebrate the risen Jesus. And, as the Easter season lasts for seven weeks, there’s plenty of time to enjoy it. To create this sacred site, make a clearing in the garden. Build a ‘tomb’ out of a few large rocks. Come Easter Sunday roll away the stone, lay a white cloth over the stone, add pots of green, white or coloured foliage. For a change of routine, hold family prayer time in your Easter garden. On a crisp clear morning or at dusk this is a magical place to spend time with the Lord and one another.

More ways to mark a sacred site
- Holy cards
- A card from a ‘soul mate’ in faith
- A child’s prayer-drawings
- A framed copy of a papal blessing
- A rustic cross made of sticks or rough timber
- ‘Easter water’
- Photos of special people who enrich our lives and support us in faith
- Family photo album

Ways to show reverence in a sacred site:
- Prayer
- Praise
- Forgiveness and compassion
- Affection
- Blessing
- Deep listening

Helpful Hint
Television! It is a blessing but it can also intrude upon a family’s sacred spaces. Try some house rules. E.g., Establish TV-free zones: no TV during certain hours. Turn it off during meal times. Don’t make the television the living room icon (e.g., don’t give it the most prominent position). Choose programs wisely and discuss the values presented with your children. Avoid mindless ‘veging out’ in front of TV; it’s like junk food to the mind. Establish similar house rules for computer games and internet habits.
Music Matters

Tuesday
8.30 am – Ukulele
Lunch – Choir

Wednesday
8.30 am – Flutes, Fyfe and Recorders
Lunch – Band

For more information please contact
Susan Curbishley Mon-Wed
susan.curbishley@cg.catholic.edu.au

Seminar for Primary School Parents

How to Speak with Your Children about Sex

Family Life Educator John Shay from Cairns Diocese will run a seminar for parents of primary school children.

7-8.30pm Tues 24th Feb.
Rheinberger Centre, Yarralumla.
Cost $5 donation at the door.

Young children are growing up in a sex saturated culture and government education guidelines now mandate sex education in school from early primary school up. The Church respects the rights of parents as the primary educators of their children especially in the area of relationships and sexuality but many parents feel ill equipped.

John Shay works for the Cairns Diocese running workshops to better equip parents in this area. He will be in Canberra for one evening only.

Happy birthday wishes to

School Banking 2015.

Account Opening Day

This year’s School Banking program is taking your child on an intergalactic mission to learn smart savings habits with the Dolarmites.

For more information on getting started, get to your school’s Account Opening Day.

Date: Monday 23 February
Time: 8.30 am
Location: K/1 Playground

Note: Please bring your driver’s license for identity verification.