**February 2011**

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<td>Week 2</td>
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<td>Helen - Director/Principals meeting at CSO</td>
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<td>Called to Serve Mass</td>
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<td>Swimming</td>
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<td>Entries close for Blandford Horse Sports</td>
<td>5.30pm P&amp;F meeting</td>
<td>10.15am Official opening of BER projects</td>
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<td>Andrew Chinn visit</td>
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<td>Clean Up Australia Schools Day</td>
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<td>Summer Liturgy Gungal 6.30pm</td>
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**REFLECTION**

**Thanksgiving:**
Father, You give us glimpses of heaven in ways we can understand:
An act of kindness, a child’s innocent laughter, the scent of spring.
Thank you for the many ways in which You communicate Your love and care for us.

**Prayer:**
Lord, You are my light and my life.
As I awaken at the break of day, I know You are there. Invisible to the eye, untraceable to the finger, in the silent dawn.
I am comforted by Your love and concern for me. Thank You for Your surrounding presence. Amen.

**Coming up this term . . .**

- **7th Mar** - Blandford Horse Sports
- **9th Mar** - Ash Wednesday
- **17th Mar** - Parish/School Dinner
- **18th Mar** - St Joseph’s Day Mass
- **23rd Mar** - Pupil Free Day
- **23-25th Mar** - Kia-Ora Music Camp
- **25th Mar** - Seniors Concert
- **30th Mar** - Healthy Harold visit
- **8th Apr** - Last day of term
- **22nd Apr** - Good Friday
- **24th Apr** - Easter Sunday
- **25th Apr** - ANZAC Day
- **27th Apr** - Students return
As we begin our school year in 2011 we thank God for the wonderful opportunity to be in the very small percentage of the world’s population who are able to access quality education. It is important that we make the most of this gift and that all of us: students, teachers, parents and community do all that we can to develop this opportunity. It seems to be an all too regular reality that in the first newsletter of each year we pause to pray for those schools and communities who have suffered tragedy over the holiday period. There are families around us who are suffering the effects of the unusual wet period during our recent harvest. Many schools have returned to heartbreak after so many road accidents and drownings as well as devastating floods, bushfires and cyclones around Australia. We are also conscious of the plight of the people of Egypt and other parts of the world who are suffering from political unrest and natural disasters. Our prayers and thoughts go out to all people who are suffering at present. There is a very worthwhile article included in this newsletter outlining how to discuss all these tragedies with your children. Please take time to look at this.

A special welcome to our new students and their families—
Year 1: Kade Attenborough
Year 4: Britnee Attenborough
Year 6: Kyle Mudge
We wish you a very long, happy and productive association with our school.

Teacher Education is an ongoing process. Miss Angie Sullivan and Miss Wendy Thomas attended training in Newcastle yesterday to help them plan a balanced Literacy Program for their classes. Thank you ladies for your effort.

The annual Called to Serve Mass is being celebrated in Newcastle this evening. Many of our teachers will join their colleagues in the Cathedral to celebrate all that is good in our Catholic Education System and to pray for God’s blessings for the new school year. We may be a bit blurry eyed on Wednesday morning!!

Thank you to the Cronin family who watered all the pot plants over the holidays. We appreciate your efforts. A special thank you to John Cronin – Class of 2010 who returned to help out at our recent working bee.

Congratulations to Sally and Michael Hagley on winning the Merriwa Citizen of the Year award at the Australia Day celebrations. Michael and Sally have shown great generosity in their efforts for the P&F and other activities at our school as well as their work for the VRA, Little Athletics, Little Sprouts, Merriwa Bookies and other organizations in town. We are very proud of you both and believe that this was a very worthy award to recognise your commitment to the people of Merriwa.

Newsletters are sent or e-mailed home every second Tuesday. This is our primary means of communicating to parents. Please ensure you read the contents carefully each fortnight. We are continuing our efforts to save paper and help preserve the environment and would like to email the school newsletter and other correspondence to as many families as possible. If you have email facilities, please send your details to Sally at admin@merriwa.catholic.edu.au

Office hours: Our school office is open Monday, Tuesday and Thursdays. For all enquiries when the office is not attended please leave a message on the answering machine and the teachers will check this at lunch and recess times and before the buses leave in the afternoon.

Student absences need to be registered with the school in the morning before school commences. This is to ensure your child’s safety. Leaving a phone message is the best way to do this as teachers are not always able to check their emails before school. If the answering machine picks up between 7.30 and 9.00am it means the teachers are not near to the phone. It does not mean that there is no one here so please leave a message for us.

Parent Information Evening: Tomorrow at 6pm – 7pm in the Mary MacKillop Room. This meeting allows all parents to learn about their children’s class routines for this year, what they will be learning, what the homework expectations are, how the classes will be managed, how you can help your children, opportunities to assist in the classroom and expectations of students. There will also be the opportunity for you to ask questions. There will be supervision and an infants friendly DVD running in the Kindergarten room if you would like to bring your children along. There will not be the provision for outdoor play at this time.
as we cannot provide adequate supervision. Older children are welcome to sit and read if the DVD is too young for their liking!

Regional Swimming Carnival: On Wednesday 9th February some students from St Joseph’s will be participating in the Upper Hunter Regional Swimming Carnival. We wish these students the best of luck and know that they will represent St Joseph’s with pride and display great sportsmanship.

Opening School Mass and Official Opening of the BER project is on Thursday 17th February. Please RSVP as soon as possible.

Members of the Upper Hunter Conservatorium of Music will be visiting our school next Wednesday 16th February between 12.00 and 1.30pm to demonstrate some of the musical instruments currently being offered for students to learn to play. Parents are welcome to attend.

Our Year 6 Leaders will be attending a Leaders Day at Lochinvar on the 22nd February. This event helps the students to reflect on their role as school leaders and challenges them to make a positive difference in their school. We wish them a stimulating and exciting day.

Clean Up Australian Schools Day on Friday 4th March, will again see the children of St Joseph’s contribute to community wellbeing by cleaning up a part of the town. We look forward to having parents help us this year. More details in the next newsletter.

Blandford School Horse Sports - Monday 7th March 2011 at Murrurundi. Children aged 8 or older as at 31 December 2011 are eligible to compete. Entry fee is $20.00 per rider. Entry forms are available from the school office - email admin@merriwa.catholic.edu.au - or phone Sally on 6548 2035.

National Solar Schools Program: Our school has been successful in obtaining funding from the Australian Government’s National Solar Schools Program. We will be using this to install solar panels which will harness energy from the sun and feed it back into the electricity grid. Over 2,000 schools submitted an application in the 2010-11 funding round and approximately 1,200 schools were successful. Applications were competitively assessed against three criteria: value for money, environmental benefit and educational benefit. The grant will give our school a head start in tackling climate change and conserving Australia’s precious non-renewable resources.

Have a great fortnight and remember I am only a phone call away if you have any questions about our school or your child’s education. Working together we can achieve great things.

At St. Joseph’s we are continually focusing on the Gospel values and try to live them out in our everyday lives. Throughout the year there are many opportunities for students and parents to participate together. In the next couple of weeks we have two events at which we would love to see as many parents and friends attend. The first is our Opening School Mass at 9am 17th February. At this Mass we will Celebrate the beginning of another year at school and ask God to bless us all on this special journey. The second event is a visit from our friend Andrew Chinn, who has visited our school previously and is holding a concert on 1st March. Please mark both these dates on your calendar.

Andrew Chinn Concert: Andrew is an Australian religious songwriter and singer. Andrew’s songs, such as “These Hands”, “Rainbow” and “Together As One” are used in classrooms and liturgies around Australia, New Zealand, USA and Canada. Parents, parishioners and friends are warmly invited to be a part of the celebration of faith and fun. There is no charge for adults. The concert will take place in St. Anne’s Church, at 10:00am. We look forward to seeing you there.

NUT REMINDER!

We remind all families that due to the severity of peanut allergies, this is a NUT FREE SCHOOL, and as such no foods containing any type of nuts can be brought to school. This includes nut based products such as Nutella and snack bars. Please observe this rule at all times for the safety of our students and staff.
Help your children make sense of natural disasters

As adults we all want our children to live carefree lives and keep them from the pain and even horror of tragedies such as natural disasters. In reality we can’t do this.

The Queensland floods and the Victorian bushfires continue to wreak incredible havoc on so many people’s lives and will no doubt leave an indelible imprint on our collective psyches. These two natural disasters will be brought into our living rooms via the media over the coming days and weeks.

As adults we all want our children to live carefree lives and keep them from the pain and even horror of tragedies such as natural disasters. In reality we can’t do this.

So what is a parent, teacher, or other caring adult to do when the natural disasters fill the airwaves and the consciousness of society? Here are some ideas:

1. **Reassure children that they are safe.** The consistency of the images can be frightening for young children who don’t understand the notion of distance and have difficulty distinguishing between reality and fiction. Let them know that while this event is indeed happening it will not affect them directly.

2. **Be available.** Let kids know that it is okay to talk about the unpleasant events. Listen to what they think and feel. By listening, you can find out if they have misunderstandings, and you can learn more about the support that they need. You do not need to explain more than they are ready to hear, but be willing to answer their questions.

3. **Help children process what they see and hear, particularly through television.** Children are good observers but can be poor interpreters of events that are out of their level of understanding.

4. **Support children’s concerns for others.** They may have genuine concerns for the suffering that will occur and they may need an outlet for those concerns. It is heart-warming to see this empathy in children for the concerns of others.

5. **Let them explore feelings beyond fear.** Many children may feel sad or even angry with these events so let them express the full range of emotions. They may feel sadder for the loss of wildlife, than for loss of human life, which is impersonal for them.

6. **Help children and young people find a legitimate course of action if they wish.** Action is a great antidote to stress and anxiety so finding simple ways to help, including donating some pocket money can assist kids to cope and teaches them to contribute.

7. **Avoid keeping the television on all the time.** The visual nature of the media means that images are repeated over and over, which can be both distressing to some and desensitizing to others.

8. **Be aware of your own actions.** Children will take their cues from you and if they see you focusing on it in an unhealthy way then they will focus on it too. Let them know that it is happening but it should not dominate their lives.

9. **Take action yourself.** Children who know their parents, teachers, or other significant caregivers are working to make a difference feel hope. They feel safer and more positive about the future. So do something. It will make you feel more hopeful, too. And hope is one of the most valuable gifts we can give children and ourselves.

Children’s worlds can be affected in ways that we can’t even conceive of so adults need to be both sensitive to children’s needs and mindful of what they say and how they act in front of children.

In difficult times, it is worth remembering what adults and children need most are each other.

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Preparation for New Missal. A FRESH LOOK AT THE MASS

During 2011 a new translation of the Roman Missal will be introduced into all parishes across Australia and the English speaking world. Our region has decided to prepare for this by also offering a series of workshops on the Mass during February. We have invited Sr Carmel Pilcher, who has specialised in the study of Eucharist, to come back to the Diocese and lead this course that will focus on the Mass and our participation. This is a good opportunity to come along and reflect on the Eucharist with fresh eyes. You might be surprised what you discover, and when the new texts are introduced you will be ready.

Sister will make four presentations at St Mary’s Scone Meeting Rooms - all session begin at 7.30pm

Session 1 The People of God gather for Eucharist Wednesday 9th Feb
Session 2 The People of God are nourished by the Word Wednesday 16th Feb
Session 3 The People of God offer Christ’s Sacrifice Wednesday 23rd Feb
Session 4 The People of God go forth to live the Mass Wednesday 2nd Mar

[Scone was chosen because it offers the most convenient place for the maximum number of people]

However it is hoped that Sister will visit Merriwa and Denman several times during the month.

Pulpit Talks during February

The three priests in the Upper Hunter Region have decided to each prepare a Homily on one aspect of the Mass and then deliver that Homily in each of the Mass Centres of the Upper Hunter Region.

Weekend 12th & 13th Feb
Fr John Woods will be celebrating Mass at Denman & Merriwa - (Homily) History and Participation in Liturgy
Fr Des Harrigan will be celebrating Mass at Muswellbrook & Aberdeen – (Homily) Offerings
Fr James Lunn will be celebrating Mass at Scone & Murrurundi – (Homily) The History of Liturgical Change

Weekend 19th & 20th Feb
Normal Parishes [each priest delivering the Homily he has and will give at all the other Mass Centres]

Weekend 26th & 27th Feb
Fr John Woods will be celebrating Mass at Muswellbrook & Aberdeen
Fr Des Harrigan will be celebrating Mass at Scone & Murrurundi
Fr James Lunn will be celebrating Mass at Denman & Merriwa

A similar series of workshops on the Mass held last August in the northern part of the diocese and was attended by more than 400 participants. They went away with a deeper understanding of the Mass and its relevance in their lives, and to spread the good news to their family and friends.

The Combined Churches of Denman invite you to their Summer Liturgy which will be held on Sunday Evening 27th February 2011 at St Anthony’s Church, Gungal. 6.30pm for 7.00pm. This will be followed by a ‘bring and share meal’. Also please bring chairs. Could the parish nominate a reader for the occasion. Tables will be provided for the meal.

St Anthony’s is celebrating its centenary this year.
Welcome back to all the families, old and new and we hope that you are ready for a fun and exciting year.

Our first meeting for the year will be held on Wednesday 16 February in the Mary MacKillop room. We will be starting at 5.30pm sharp and will finish no later than 7.30pm. We encourage your attendance at these meetings.

The Parents and Friends Association is your voice for the school, it is where you get your chance to have an input into the social, spiritual, educational, and yes even some fundraising for the overall school community and ultimately for your child. The members of the P&F are all of us involved with the school, not just those people who have taken on roles on the various committees.

For those of you who are new to the school and to remind the rest of us here is a list of some of the events that the P&F helps with throughout the year:

- **Mother’s Day Luncheon**, this has become a tradition within the whole community and is eagerly looked forward to by all. A coordinator, committee and volunteers cook and serve lunches. In the past there have been up to 120 paying guests that the Luncheon has served and we have held this at the School of Arts and the CWA Rooms.
- **Mother’s Day Gift stall**. This is a long held tradition and the children especially enjoy it. The P&F purchase some small gifts which the children are able to buy for their mothers and other special ladies in their lives. The gifts are not expensive and are not compulsory to buy. Helpers on this event would be required to man the stall and perhaps help the children to wrap their gifts. This would be a great opportunity for some of the dad’s to come in and help the children do something nice for their mums.
- **Street Stalls** have also been a long held tradition in this town and generally we try to hold one a term. For the stalls we rely on donations of cooking, plants, produce, craft. Generally there will be raffle tickets and a 100 Club, of which tickets may be sent home, at the stall. The profits from the last street stall of the year has always been given to the Sisters of St Joseph in Merriwa. They contribute so much to our school and this is one of the ways that we show our appreciation.
- **June Long Weekend – Festival of the Fleeces**. We have held a barbecue on the Saturday morning of the weekend where we serve breakfast through till lunch. The day is run on a roster basis and as usual the more helpers we have the less work any one individual has to do. This is a busy day but it is one of our few opportunities to raise funds from outside the school community as there are so many visitors in town for this event.
- **Special Canteen days** are held throughout the year for interschool events. Some of these are our combined athletics and swimming carnivals with St Joseph’s Denman, our Netball Gala Day where many schools from across the Hunter attend. On these days our volunteers are essential as we have so many meals to prepare.
- **Cleaning of the St Joseph’s Aberdeen school bus**. This may seem a strange fundraiser but it is in fact one of our largest annual sources of income for the P&F. Each year we are paid over $5500.00 for the cleaning. Each weekend we rely on volunteers to clean the bus inside and out, this takes at the most two hours of your time and when all the families help out it is a once a year event. To break it down it means that on average when you clean the bus you contribute around $130 towards fundraising.
- **Father’s Day breakfast**. This is another tradition that St Joseph’s has done in the past and the children enjoy seeing their dads and pops at school. We have a barbecue breakfast in the school grounds before class and afterwards the dad’s stay, if they can, for a liturgy and to read with their children. Some helpers towards setting up barbecue and serving is appreciated on this day.
- **Father’s Day Gift Stall**. This is similar to the Mother’s Day Gift Stall and is well received by the children.
- **Special masses** are held throughout the year, like the Grandparents mass, where the parish is invited afterwards for a cuppa and a plate of food to share. We need cooking and some helpers on these days.
- **Clean up days**. These are held infrequently. It may be because we have had a holiday break and the school could do with a tidy up, or because we have a special event coming up and we want to look our best. Help on these days is always welcome and the old saying of many hands makes light work is especially true on these days.
- **Fete**. Every second year the school holds their Fete. As last year was our turn you will all be pleased to know that you get a year off this delightful task.
These are most of the events that as a P&F we hold throughout the year. There may be others held, and while we do need your help throughout the year we realise that we all have our own lives to live and family events. It is perfectly understandable that not everyone can help all of the time, but any offer of help you can do is more than welcome.

We also have social events throughout the year. The Parish School Dinner is a fantastic night of dining and some form of entertainment. It will be on Thursday 17 March, so naturally a St Patrick’s Day/green theme. Bush dances have been popular and are a fun way to come together and relax. In the past we have had morning and afternoon teas with the emphasis on having fellowship together without the arduous task of fundraising. Admittedly with everyone’s busy lifestyles these days and people working so much these get together have become a little harder to organise, perhaps this year we can try and make more of an effort.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held on Wednesday 9 March. Although it mightn’t sound like a social event, it is a great way to become more involved and meet some new people or reacquaint yourself with some of the ‘old’ people. The next newsletter will have more details on the AGM.

In case you are wondering the current executive committee of the P&F are as follows:
President: Jayne Cronin 65482264
Vice President: Shane Constable 65482867
Secretary: Yvonne McNaught 65482842
Treasurer: Clare Martin 65488510

Hopefully we haven’t bombarded you with too much information and we look forward to seeing you on Wednesday 16 February at our first meeting for the year.

Jayne Cronin

February P&F Meeting
16 February 2011, 5.30pm - 7.30pm
St Joseph’s School

AGENDA

1. Open time:
2. Opening prayer:
3. Attendance:
4. Apologies:
5. Minutes of last meeting
6. Business Arising:
   * AGM (date & place)
   * C & A Application
   * Wish List
   * Dec/Jan Bank Statement
   * Kalolane Statement
   * Gazal Statement
   * Merriwa Hardware Tax Invoice/Statement
   * Lwreid Catalogue
   * Lwreid letter
   * Coal & Allied respond to donation
   * 2 x Letter/catalogue
7. Correspondence In:
8. Correspondence Out:
9. Treasurer’s report:
10. Canteen report:
11. Uniform report:
12. Street Stall report:
13. Bus Cleaning Report:

SUBCOMMITTEES

GENERAL BUSINESS

* Calendar of the yearly events
* Slushy machine
* Community Dance (date/place)
* Money raised/spent last year
* Portable shades and portable sound system (C & M Applic)
* Bus Shelter
* Prioritize wish list
* Wood covering on verandah
* Air-conditioning for new class room
* Final figures from fair

Date of next meeting:

Close meeting:
Here is a refresher for everyone all about how our canteen operates!

- Our canteen operates each Wednesday of term (unless we are having a special event on another day e.g. Grandparents Day).
- We run a healthy canteen and our menu choices are made up using these guidelines. Our school has a very strict - No Nuts policy.
- Children are able to purchase ice blocks only at lunchtime on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Please see the attached pricelist for ice blocks and drinks. There is no snack food sold at the canteen. All of our new students will have their buddy and/or teacher to help them make their purchases; we would like all students to have a positive canteen experience!
- At recess, donated afternoon tea is shared amongst all of the children at no cost. The goal is to introduce all of our children to healthy food alternatives, although if you are concerned your child will not try anything, you may need to send them in some recess. The afternoon tea platters are free to all of our children.
- Each family in the school is invited to take a turn at donating the afternoon tea and some suggestions are outlined below.

We would love for you to join our happy helpful group of wonderful canteen helpers!

Here is the procedure:

- Menus are sent home - please fill these in and attach to a lunch bag (we are trying to reduce waste so a lunchbox / lunch pack or a paper bag is a good option – please no envelopes or zip lock bags as this makes extra work for the volunteers) and return to school on TUESDAY. The orders are tallied on Tuesday afternoon and the ingredients are ordered. (If anyone forgets to send their orders in on Tuesday, send them in Wed morning and the canteen will endeavor to help out. Sometimes it may not be possible to supply exactly what your child may have ordered).
- On Wednesday the volunteers arrive around 9 am all of the ingredients needed for the days menus will be already delivered. Check through any late orders and start prep and/or cooking. The lunches need to go out at 11.15am, so there is no rush and plenty of time to enjoy a coffee and chat. When the lunches are ready they are put into the classroom baskets and the children will come to collect them.
- Once the lunch baskets have gone, there is a bit of cleaning up and then the kids come to buy (ice blocks). Then we finish off, mop floor and count money etc. The afternoon tea is prepared and put into the fridge ready for the 5/6 kids to serve at recess break 1.30pm.
- On most days the great canteen helpers are leaving school around 12 noon. So it’s a great morning out and the children love to see parents at school.
- Mums, Dad’s and grandparents have helped out in the canteen over the years and really enjoyed their time at our great school. Some volunteers also opt to stay on and help with reading or activities in the afternoon if they have the time.

Ideas and suggestions for afternoon tea:

- Fruit – any kind, apples, oranges, nectarines, strawberries, grapes, bananas, mandarins, rockmelon, and watermelon are always popular.
- Cheese, crackers, dips, vegies for dipping, custard, yoghurt, popcorn, fruit loaf, etc.
- Please remember NO NUTS.

We are seeking volunteers for our canteen, please consider coming in for a morning so that together we are able to provide a fun, educational and healthy canteen for all of our children. Any time you have any enquiries or suggestions please feel free to ring me on 65482992 or leave a message for me at school.

Warmest Regards,
Megan Moore

AWARDS

Congratulations to our award winners for Week 1:

All children received an award for the fabulous way they have settled into the new school year with cooperation and a positive attitude.

CANTENE ROSTER
Volunteers required!!!

Canteen will commence on Wednesday 16th February and not tomorrow as previously advised.

BUS ROSTER
A roster for the cleaning of the Aberdeen bus will be issued shortly.

Bus Roster Raffle for 2010 was won by the Hagley Family. We hope you all enjoyed the beautiful Christmas ham donated by Alexander Downs.

THANK YOU . . .
to the Cronin and McNaught families who have given up some of their valuable time to clean the Aberdeen Bus.