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# Principal's Annual Report

St Emilie's Catholic Primary School

Tania Thuijs

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# Principal's Report

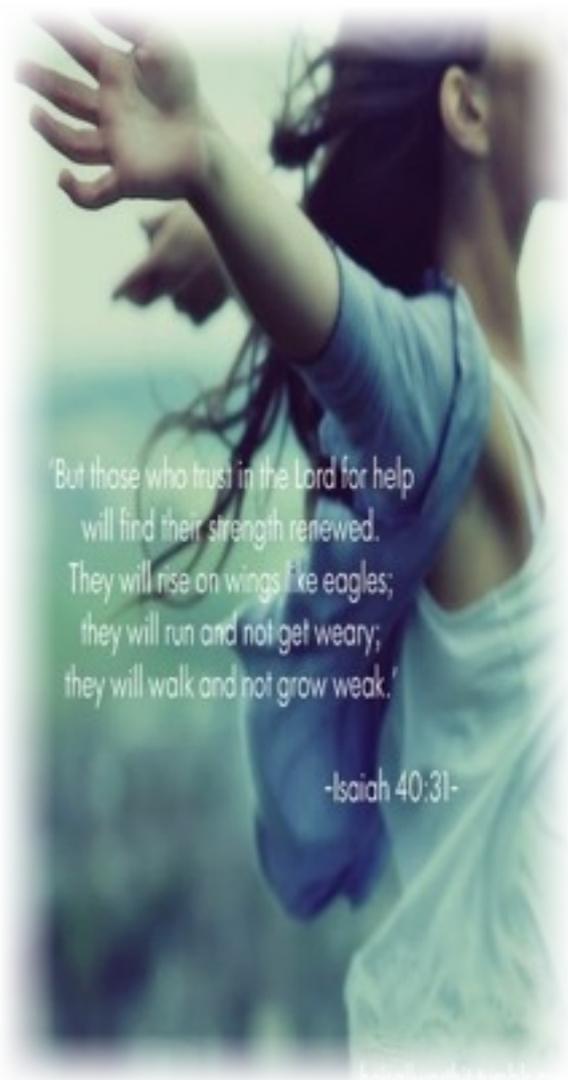
Board's Annual Community Meeting 2012

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Good evening everyone and thanks again for making the time to come along - your presence is very much appreciated.

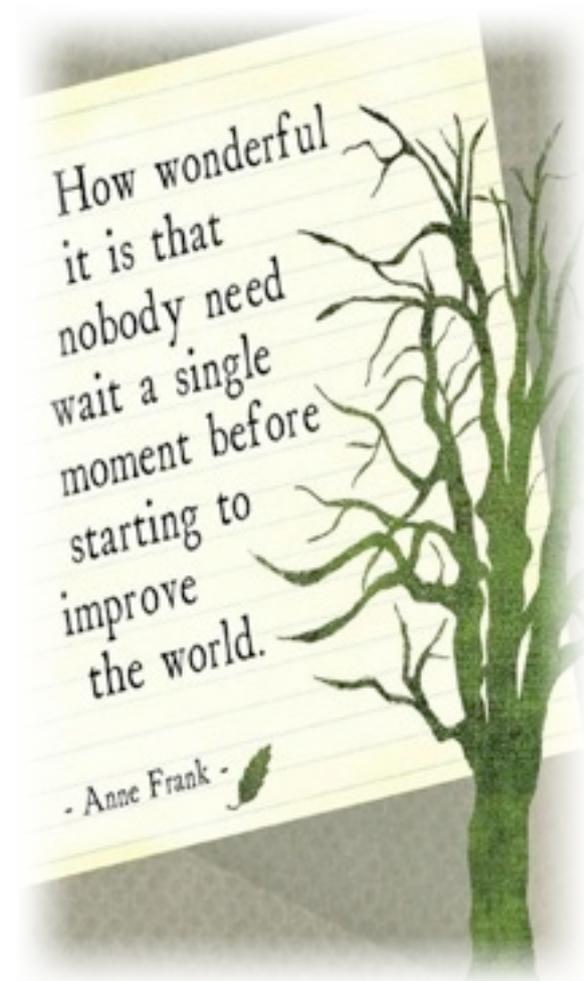
As your newly appointed school Principal this year, I am very pleased to say that making the move to St Emilie's has been a wonderful decision and I have thoroughly enjoyed all that the school year has presented me with throughout 2012.

While change is always a little daunting, from the moment I arrived, the thing that really struck me more than anything else, was how friendly, unaffected and polite St Emilie's kids were. Not a day has gone by, when I haven't been met with a simple hello, a generous smile, a vigorous wave, a genuine 'thank you', or in the Kindy and PP kids case, a very loud bellow from the other side of their play area: 'Hi Mrs Thuijs! What are YOU doing?' And when I tell them I have to do some 'boring stuff in my office', they very generously and eagerly invite me to sit, to play, or to have lunch with them, which is of course the very best thing in the world to do and keeps all other things in perspective!



**Honouring the past...** The magnificent buildings and play areas and the strong professional learning community that exists here among the staff at St Emilie's are testimony to the wonderful work established by Sally and all those who have worked beside her over the last ten years.

I have spent considerable time this year reflecting upon all that has gone on before and I am slowly learning more about the people and the story behind the St Emilie's school and parish journey. I genuinely applaud students, families, staff and leadership teams of the past, for the incredible contribution you have all made to the building of this school over a decade of rapid change and growth.



### **Looking to the Future...**

As a new leader, my goal is to continue to work in cooperation with all of you here, and with the wider community, to build upon all the good things that have gone on before. This involves working with you to clearly identify all the practises, procedures, policies, decisions, values, beliefs and more, that continue to feed, nurture and inspire our community – physically, intellectually, socially, emotionally and spiritually, while at the same time, keeping an open mind as to where we might need or want to head into the future. There is certainly much to look forward to!

Despite the busyness of the daily ebb and flow of school life, the year has been a wonderful time to listen to as many of you as I can – in formal meetings and in smaller informal moments – staff, children and families – about what you have really valued from your time here at St Emilie's so far.

It has also been a special time to discover what opportunities, experiences and directions you believe might further enrich our community, to help it thrive and flourish well into the future.

## **Change is an opportunity...**

A quote has that really struck a chord with me over the years is:

‘Change is inevitable, only growth is optional.’

It is so true that change is inevitable in all aspects of our lives, especially here at school. New shade sails go up; spaces are rearranged; new curriculums are presented; other ideas are introduced; different opinions are offered; other decisions are made; old families leave; new families arrive; old technology leaves; new technology arrives; some staff leave; some staff arrive; kids win some friends and kids lose some friends; governments give funding, governments take away funding ... and so the changes go on...

While ‘change for change’s sake’ is not a wise path for any school or individual to aspire to, accepting that change over time is inevitable, challenges us to reflect upon how open we are to the opportunities for growth, that can come from well thought out and well-managed change.

In other words, if we are staff, parents and parishioners who have a genuine desire to help our children and our community be the very best it can be, and if we have a desire to embrace the idea that an ever growing and ever evolving community which is driven by service to one and our neighbour, is a healthy community, then we are in a better position to discover and harness the gifts of all, in order to meet the diverse needs of those we are called to serve –especially our most precious resource – our children.

## **Championing for children... a sacred privilege ...**

I am passionate about my role as a parent and I am passionate about the opportunity I have as a leader in this school to champion for children. I think if we understand our roles - as parent, teacher or leader, as a most sacred privilege then it really helps us to appreciate the sacredness of our work as parents and educators, and the responsibility we all have fulfilling this role to the very best of our ability.



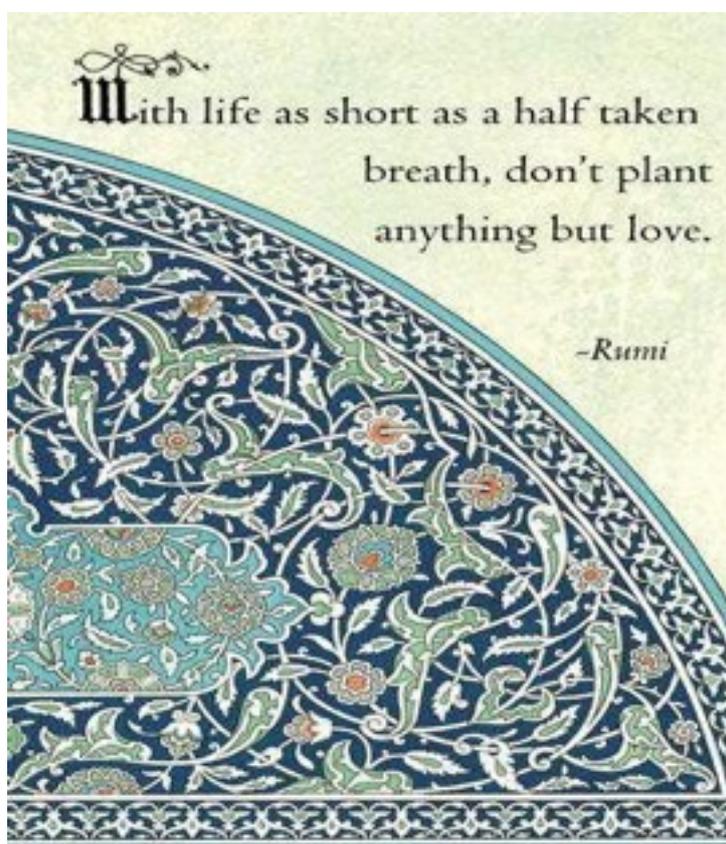
By opening our eyes to God's spirit at work amidst the everyday conversations, decisions, and situations of our lives – at home and at school, we are building our school on a very strong foundation. With our eyes fixed on the face of Christ, all good things will continue to flow.

### **Celebrating achievement...**

This year we have much to celebrate. While most of this success and achievement may not be highly visible from the outside looking in – no new buildings or huge external changes to see, it is in the daily unfolding of school life where we find some of the most exciting and rewarding stories –

children who have learnt valuable life lessons; children who have persisted, practised and finally learnt something they never dreamt they would master; children who have discovered a talent they didn't know they had; children who found their voice; children who have learnt from mistakes; children who saw a need and took the initiative, children who learnt that their ideas were valuable; children who have realised that while it's certainly something to be proud of, it isn't really how smart you are, or how fast you run that that matters the most, but how hard you are prepared to use your gifts and to persist and work hard to achieve your goals, that really counts.

**Celebrating the role of parents... We also celebrate our parents; especially those who continue to make good choices for their children – not necessarily easy choices, but wise choices; parents who really stop and think about their parenting and who try to be a good role model; parents who know the value of being consistent, kind, loving and respectful; parents who know the value of reading a book and having a cuddle; parents who spend time building good relationships with each of their children as individuals; parents who keep material possessions and wealth in perspective and teach their children the importance**



**of sharing what we have with those less fortunate. Parents who work on their own marriage so that their kids can see what it takes to work through conflict, how to forgive and how to build a loving family based on mutual respect; parents who have had the courage to walk away from abusive and destructive relationships; parents who work in partnership with our school; parents who respect and trust school staff; parents who don't gossip or judge staff, other parents or other children, and who are mindful of what children should and shouldn't overhear, watch or have access to at home. Parents who understand that to raise kids of integrity and good character we too need to be people of integrity and good character.**

### **Celebrating our Staff**

It is at this point that I would like to celebrate and say a sincere thank you to all the staff here at St Emilie's, for it is to these very talented, very patient and very professional individuals that we owe our deep gratitude for the many, many hours of dedicated service that they give to your children's education in the very widest sense of the word.

As a parent, you inevitably see through quite a small window into the life of your child's teacher – someone who greets students at the door, possibly you see them conducting a lesson or two if you are a reading helper in the early years, you may have had a chat at a parent teacher interview or Three Way throughout the year, or you may have a glimpse of them in action as a helper on an excursion or parent workshop. But relatively speaking, for the most part, unless you have a close relative who may be a teacher, or unless you are married to one, you will have a fairly limited idea of what your child's teacher actually does each day ( and during early mornings and weekends!)

### **Thanking Teachers**

As a teacher of many years myself, it is indeed a pleasure to be able to honour and thank our teachers here at St Emilie's for the wonderful opportunities they have been providing throughout the school day and for the many hidden hours that they have spent this year – planning and writing programs, seeking out quality resources, thinking about and agonising over how to cater for the variety of student needs in a class of 30 children, marking work, moderating work, writing reports, taking student interests and motivations into account, motivating students, sorting through relationship and friendship issues; supporting parents with a variety of issues ranging from being a listening ear when a marriage has broken down to recommending that they follow up on a child's hearing or speech issues, to assisting them navigate their way through their child's use of social media. They have been continuing to access professional development opportunities in and out of school time; seeking out new

ideas and strategies, refining their teaching technique; working through changing curriculum demands; taking on extra roles and responsibilities; counselling students through the ups and downs of everyday life and much, much more. Yes, while teaching is a highly rewarding vocation, good teaching is a complex, demanding role and I sincerely thank each and every one of the for your individual and collective energy, expertise, professionalism and enthusiasm throughout the year. Our children are in very safe and capable hands and I look forward to supporting and walking closely beside you again next year.

### **Teacher Assistants**

To our teacher assistants – a sincere thank you. Over the years, your job description has changed significantly. Unlike TA's of the past, you are now expected to play an active and 'hands on' role in meeting the needs of each child in the classroom.

Here at St Emilie's I have found – dedicated; proactive; fun loving and professional teacher assistants who keep the needs of the child at the heart of what they do. TA's - you are a credit to our school and we are very grateful for all that you do to promote a quality learning environment.

### **Administration Staff**

A sincere thank you to Helen Retallack, our Admin Officer and to Gillian Norris who works as Finance and Admin Officer.

Both these women work extremely hard to make sure that things ranging from Three Ways to Term Fees run smoothly and seamlessly here at St Emilie's and between them they have many years of experience, expertise and lived wisdom. We are indeed blessed to enjoy their company and their genuine desire to use their gifts in service of our community.

### **Assistant Principals**

My two wonderful Assistant Principals, Clare Moffat and Leon Bolding, are both people of the highest personal and professional calibre and leaders that any Principal would feel very lucky to work beside. While both of them have an eye on developing their careers in other directions into the future, while we are fortunate enough to have them here at St Emilie's, we will certainly appreciate them and use their gifts and talents for the good of our whole school

and parish community. Thank you both for your most wonderful support this year – it has been invaluable and very much appreciated.

### **Groundsperson**

A special and sincere thank you to Glenn Cogger who joined us as our part time groundsperson this year. Glenn has done an absolutely outstanding job this year, maintaining garden beds, fixing the early years pump, laying paving, restoring outside furniture, managing the bush area, and now overseeing the mowing and maintenance of our lawns and ovals. It is a huge job and Glenn brings dedication, knowledge, good ideas, pride in his work and a strong work ethic. Thank you Glenn for the wonderful difference you have made to the aesthetic appeal and the practical maintenance of our outside environment.

### **Staff Marriages**

Next year we celebrate three marriages on staff – Kirstin Meade, Lauren Freeth and Leon Bolding. Now just in case you are confused and think that Leon is marrying Kirstin or Lauren, I can confirm that this is definitely not the case... they are in fact all marrying three ‘other’ very special people, who will be bravely saying ‘yes’ to a life filled with report writing, marking, planning, and all that goes in between! We of course wish you all the very best for this special time in your life and have plenty of marriage tips waiting for you!

### **Staff Leaving**

At this time of year in every school, there are some staff members that for a variety of reasons, we need to say good bye and thank you to and this is always a hard thing, as it is never easy to say goodbye to people we work side by side with and grow to respect and care for. This year we say good bye to:

Mrs Lisa Brooks

Mr Chris Burns

Miss Amy Perinski

and Mrs Cathy O’Brien

Lisa, congratulations on your recent appointment as Assistant Principal at Xavier Catholic Primary School. Your considerable professional expertise and genuine care of students and families over many years working here at St Emilie’s will certainly serve you very well. We

wish you every success and happiness for the future and know that your genuine desire to be of service to others will make you a wonderful leader at your new school.

Chris, while we have only just had you here 'on loan' from Good Shepherd Primary School this year, all you have brought to your Year Five class and to our whole school has been nothing short of delightful! You have worked tirelessly for the good of the children in your care and your happy, friendly, professional and positive personality has been greatly valued by staff, families and students alike. Thank you most sincerely for all you have shared with us in 2012 – we wish you all the very best for the years ahead and look forward to reconnecting with you at the interschool cricket comp early next year!

Amy, you have worked in our school as library teacher, teacher assistant and as class teacher this year – finishing the second semester as Kindy teacher while Julie-Anne Fleming has been on leave. Throughout the year you have adapted to change, been flexible and generous with your time and have worked hard to ensure that your physical classroom is interesting and challenging and the emotional climate has been safe, friendly and supportive. We congratulate you on your appointment to Santa Clara Catholic Primary School and wish you all the very best for the future.

Cathy, thank you for all you have given to our school this year in your role as Teacher Assistant here at St Emilie's. Your dedication, enthusiasm, sense of humour and generosity with children has been greatly valued. We wish you well for the future and look forward to staying in touch.

### **Parish School Partnership**

#### Parish Priests

One of the great strengths of our school is the very positive partnership that exists between parish and school. We are indeed most fortunate to have Father Robert and Father Emmanuel as leaders in our community and we take this opportunity of sincerely thanking them for the guidance and pastoral support they continue to offer us all. We look forward to continuing to nurture this partnership in practical and creative ways into the years ahead.

#### Parish Pastoral Assistant

Sr Nok is a Principal from Thailand who has worked in our school all year as a teacher assistant in classrooms and a pastoral support to children and families. She has done a wonderful job and earned the respect and love of all she meets. Thank you Sister and may your travels back to Thailand shortly be a wonderful time to further the needs of your religious community as well as offer time to reconnect with your own much loved family.

## Seeds Project

The Parish SEEDS project was a wonderful outreach initiative of the Parish this year, and St Emilie's school will continue to support this into the future, by way of a partnership with San Mateo Christian School in the Philippines whose vision is to be a community responsive to the needs of the poor. Our students greatly benefit by having opportunities to reach out to others - especially those in need.

## Sacramental Program

A sincere thank you to the wonderful women who lead the Parish-based, School Supported Sacramental Program here at St Emilie's - especially Lyn\_\_\_\_\_, Veronica Stratton and Clare Moffat. It is a very well-run program with a genuine spirit of cooperation and goodwill. Congratulations on all you have achieved this year and I look forward to seeing this program continue to grow from strength to strength.

## Parents and Friends Committee

The P&F committee play an important fundraising and community building role in our school, and as such are a group of very special people.

On behalf of all of us here, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking those who have served our community so tirelessly and generously all year despite leading very busy lives of their own.

The 2012 P&F committee have been a wonderful group to work with - open, honest, hardworking, organised, proactive, generous and community focused and I have sincerely appreciated their wonderful support.

To Fiona, Taya, and Gayle, a special thank you for taking on the key roles of President, Secretary and Treasurer this year. You told me from the outset that you couldn't stay long, but you certainly gave your very best to the task amidst the demands of family life, study commitments and more, so thank you very much and all the best for the year ahead.

To other committee members and to all parents who have supported the P&F this year so well - whether you served as a Class Rep, organised the back to school gathering or the wine raffle; helped out cooking sausages for a P&F lunch; bought tickets to a P&F raffle; came along to a P&F meeting; supported a morning tea or function; sought out sponsors and more - thank you very much!

To Vini Brehaut and her helpers with the up and coming Movie Night – a special thank you for all your organisation and the many hours that you have given to it. We will be very sad to lose your family at the end of the year but we are very grateful for knowing you and working with you.

### **Student Banking / Scholastic Book Club / Entertainment Books**

To Donna Cummins who, along with her support and involvement in the planning of P&F events, has also run the School Banking this year – many thanks for quietly getting the job done with the minimum of fuss – fabulous!

To Janine Curilli who has calmly and generously managed the Scholastic BookClub throughout the year – a sincere thank you for all your hard work.

To Tracey Martino who administrated the selling of Entertainment books this year – many thanks!

### **Uniform Shop**

To Pat McDonald and Chloe O'Leary – a huge thank you for taking on the running of the Uniform Shop this year. Following on from Helen was always going to be a little daunting however I am pleased to say that you both have done a superb job and are providing a wonderful service in our school – thank you so much.

A special thank you to Pat for organising her husband to make and donate two brand new school banners to be used on sport days and on other occasions. This was very generous of you both and greatly appreciated!

### **School Board**

To Paul Tarzia, our Board Chair, Sharon Janssen, Vice Chair, Emily Noteboom our Secretary, Kylie Caniglio our Treasurer and Gillian Norris who works closely with the Board Treasurer– many thanks for taking on these roles of responsibility this year.

These and all Board members have willingly listened, shared ideas, sought clarification and genuinely worked to support the school arrive at the best possible decisions for the students and families in our school. Their support and their calm, considered opinion has been very much appreciated.

Before we look at our nominations for the positions left vacant on the Board for 2013, it is a government requirement that we publish School Performance Data. Each year this is

published on the website and presented at the AGM. Please spend a few minutes reading the following.

**School Performance Data ( PPT slides)**

**System and School Priorities 2012-2013 ( PPT slides)**