



REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL ANNUAL SERVICE OF WORSHIP

4th December 2023

Main Auditorium, Hillsong Convention Centre

Principal's Address:

*'My Truth', 'Your Truth', or
'The Truth':*

What lexicon should our children
learn at school?



REDEEMER BAPTIST SCHOOL

incorporating

The Hills Regional Skills Centre



Annual Service of Worship

and

The Principal's Address

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Hillsong Convention Centre

Monday, December 4th, 2023

The Bible, the written word of God, is more precious than anything else in the world. It is the instrument the Spirit uses to awaken and nourish faith. It generates hope and it promotes and expounds love. Life as a disciple is life lived under the direction of the word of God in the power of the Spirit.

—Mark Thompson, *Moore Matters*, Spring 2023

We put the weight of defining the world on our shoulders, and it's heavier than we ever imagined. The self is not big enough to define the truth.

—John Stonestreet and Shane Morris, *Breakpoint Daily*, November 2023

God's intervention is not logical. It is only inexplicably real, awesome, and true.

—Dr Melvin Cheatham, *Come Walk with Me*, 1993

These modern beliefs—that we must all be committed to equal rights and justice but that there are no God-given moral absolutes—undermine each other. Modern secular education teaches every child that they must be true to themselves, not letting family, community, tradition, or religion stand in their way. Then it calls for justice, reconciliation, and benevolence, all of which are basic forms of self-denial.

—Timothy Keller, *The Prodigal Prophet*, 2018

‘My Truth’, ‘Your Truth’, or ‘The Truth’: What lexicon should our children learn at school?

A new British crime drama series, *Beyond Paradise*—located in a small coastal village on the west coast of Devon, England—was released this year. It’s named after its prequel which was based in the paradisaical French Caribbean island of Guadeloupe. Interspersed with comic relief arising from the innate clumsiness of a brilliant detective, there are various crimes to solve including theft of a precious work of art, missing persons and burglary. In one episode there is a series of three fires that appear to be connected. No one is hurt but there’s a lot of damage to property. Spoiler alert. As it turns out, the first fire was lit by the daughter of the local fire brigade chief. Knowing what her daughter had done, the fire chief lights the next two fires to make them look like the first. When the detective works out what has happened and comes to arrest mother and daughter, the mother vehemently tries to close the case with these words: “We all have versions of the truth, stories that we tell to protect the ones that we love. I’m telling the truth, my truth, and I’m not going to change a word of it. I set all three fires.”

That’s a convenient definition of truth, don’t you think? I’ll believe whatever I want to believe and I’ll live my life in accordance with that belief. At some point that’s sure to land me—or someone else—in trouble, because my belief doesn’t match reality. Or it will be impossible to live ‘my truth’ because someone else’s ‘truth’ is different from ‘my truth’ and these two versions of ‘truth’ simply can’t coexist.

In real life this year, General Angus Campbell—Chief of the Australian Defence Force—was a keynote speaker at the Australian Strategic Policy Institute conference in Canberra. The theme of the conference was *Disruption and Deterrence*. General Campbell said that we are in “an extraordinary new era characterised by both knowledge and uncertainty”. He was speaking not just about the potential benefits and serious challenges posed by generative AI systems (such as ChatGPT) but also our “post-truth world where perceptions and emotions often trump facts”. Campbell is concerned that “our tech future may accelerate truth decay” thereby “undermining the trust that binds us”. This is his summary of the consequences of truth decay for national security.

Uncertainty erodes our traditional understanding of deterrence by undermining our calculus of capability, our assurance of credibility, and our clarity of communication. Uncertainty is the bedfellow of timidity, the perfect foundation from which others may win without fighting.

Big words. Important concepts. Put simply, if we as a culture are uncertain about what is true then we have no reason to fight for what is right for ourselves or for the next generation. Campbell concludes: “the search for wisdom remains our best path to navigate the global commons”.

School curriculum: a contested space for truth

The curriculum for school children is now (and probably always has been) a contested space for truth. It’s not only the content taught in the classroom but also the understanding of who our children are as human beings (their anthropology) through what is permitted, encouraged, or required at school. So, on the one hand, a paper in the *Australian Educational Researcher* (November 2023) states that “the ineradicable truth” of 60,000 years of “lived and practised knowledge systems” must inform “truth telling” in curriculum deconstruction and pedagogy. In other words, this appeals to the imperative of ‘truth’ to change everything that is taught and to change how we teach it. But whose ‘truth’ is it? On the other hand, research published by the Institute of Public Affairs (also November 2023) states that a third of all subjects available for teacher education students at Australian universities are “woke ... Critical Social Justice” subjects which assume that “most human interaction in society is underpinned by oppressive power structures based on group identities, such as race and gender”. This compares with only 10% of available subjects on literacy or numeracy. A teacher writing for *The Spectator* (March 2023) makes this recommendation: “Rather than acting as political thought police, our teachers should be imparting knowledge while encouraging critical thinking and instilling a love of lifetime learning. We should let teachers teach.”

In a UNSW Business Think publication entitled ‘How to live your truth’ (July 2021), a highly successful UNSW Business graduate (Sheila Vijayarasa) explains how her career path took her from being a corporate executive to listening to her “gut feelings” and following her “inner voice” to the “truth in her heart”—which, for her, was speaking to dead souls as a psychic. That’s her business model. The UNSW webpage then says that Sheila “was finally living her truth”. She is now a corporate mentor and author of *Brave: Courageously live your truth*. Her book encourages women to “step into an authentic life”. Sheila’s approach to ‘truth’ appears to be celebrated by UNSW! This is a dark end in the ‘live your truth’ road!

Live Your Truth and Other Lies

There is a striking contrast in the American podcast *Breakpoint Daily* (September 2023) as it summarises the theme of Alisa Childers’ recent publication, *Live Your Truth and Other Lies*.

*Slogans like ‘You are enough’, ‘Authenticity is everything’, ‘Put yourself first’, ‘It’s all about love’, or ‘God just wants you to be happy’, commonly redefine words like **love** and **hate** and **happy**. What’s left is a modern-day ‘tower of Babel’ (or ‘Babble’) situation where those with the most social media followers are granted authority and assumed to have expertise on life and how to live it.*

Childers—a former recording artist with the award-winning group ZOEgirl—has identified that a child’s lexicon (their meaningful words or phrases) is a core issue of importance for parents and educators in the contest for them to live by ‘the truth’ (not ‘my truth’ or ‘your truth’). We believe that, if a child takes the opportunity to be informed and empowered by ‘the truth’, then they will have the capacity to live with confident humility in our culture that sometimes oppressively demands conformity to ideas about family, morality, or religion; ideas that would have been considered exceedingly strange by any previous generation.

What truth do we want our children to discover at school? A subjective version of ‘my truth’ that fits what they want to do or who they want to be right now? Or the unverified version of ‘your truth’ currently pedalled in popular culture and presumed to be true because it seems like most people believe it? Or ‘the truth’, however unpopular or inconvenient, truth that stands the test of time because it is in accord with the Creator and His creation?

The British author George Orwell, who penned his prophetic novel *1984* in 1948, said this in an essay published in 1946: “When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer.” At this time, in our generation, the phrases and definitions that become our children’s lexicon—the words they use to describe and guide their lives—this unwritten wordbook in their hearts is of crucial importance to who they will become.

Now I could focus my report this year on issues that educators and governments have been acting on, like the movement away from ‘open-plan classrooms’ in NSW public schools because they produce too many noisy distractions for efficient teaching and learning. This design fad was never a good idea and never adopted by Redeemer. Another issue identified by UNESCO in its 2023 Technology in Education Report is that “proximity to a mobile device was found to distract students and to have a negative impact on learning”. So, from 9th October this year, students in public high schools across NSW must have their phones turned off and out of sight at school. Another good move. But again, Redeemer never accepted the cultural push for students to have mobile phones at school.

A lexicon of unchanging truth

But instead of these topical corrections to poor education policy, I've identified the positive opportunity for students to build a lexicon of unchanging true truth—as opposed to fluid versions of 'my truth' or 'your truth'—at school. So what I've identified is the importance of language, thinking, reasoning, communicating; through K–12 and across the curriculum.

Now this year there has been an uncommon unity in concerns expressed about worsening levels of Australian students meeting literacy benchmarks at school. The Grattan Institute analysis of the 2023 NAPLAN results reveals that:

- 1 in 3 Australian students failed to reach expectations in numeracy, reading and writing (the corresponding figure for Redeemer is approximately 1 in 10); and
- more than 40% of Year 3 and Year 9 students fell short in grammar and punctuation (the corresponding figure for Redeemer is less than 8%).

I received two letters from the Lord Mayor of Parramatta this year congratulating Redeemer for being listed in the top 50 Primary and Secondary schools in NSW. In his letters, the Lord Mayor said: "Schools like yours are the lifeblood of our community, so thank you for your continued contributions to our City." These letters were addressed to me but they are congratulating the achievements of every student, every teacher and every parent here this evening. Congratulations on another year of wholehearted effort and achievement!

I must add that, from a pedagogical viewpoint, what lies behind this success in literacy and numeracy—success that we celebrated earlier tonight in the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards, the NSW WriteOn Competition, the Australian Mathematics Competition, the NSW Investigating with Mathematics Competition, and the Australian Maths Talent Quest—a key factor in this success is our 20+ years history of WRAP literacy (a Writing Approach to Reading) which includes direct, explicit instruction in phonemic awareness, grammar, text types, comprehension, writing and metacognitive strategies. For the sake of students in all schools, it is pleasing to see that some of these WRAP principles including phonics, phonemic awareness and explicit teaching are now being endorsed by education departments across the country. In October this year, the Sydney Morning Herald reported that the Secretary of the NSW Department of Education was encouraging public schools to boost their results by using explicit instruction.

This WRAP method of instruction is an important step towards having sufficient literary competence to build a lexicon of true truth. But it's not just the technical

competence to understand that's important. It's also having a foundation, a bank of true truth by which the next input of information can be assessed.

Sense or Nonsense

Consider this classic poem that's studied in schools and universities across the world. It's translated into about 60 different languages. Why is it so important?

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:
All mimsy were the borogoves,
And the mome raths outgrabe.*

Can you guess what's coming next? You could look ahead and get the answer. But I'll give you a hint: it's *Jabberwocky*. Here's some advice from a mum or dad to their son.

*"Beware the Jabberwock, my son!
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun
The frumious Bandersnatch!"*

There's more to the poem. You can read it all in Lewis Carroll's novel, *Through the Looking-Glass* (the sequel to *Alice in Wonderland*). And if you still don't understand what it means, then you could get some help in the novel from Humpty Dumpty as he explains it all to Alice.

What was Lewis Carroll (his real name was Rev Charles Dodgson) trying to say in his now famous poem that is studied all over the world with careful linguistic analysis? What's the hidden meaning behind all those made-up words? And the answer is, according to another great English author G K Chesterton, probably nothing! This was "Nonsense for Nonsense' sake". Chesterton goes on to marvel that anyone "would ever have attempted to take it seriously". Then he concludes, and this is important:

Men may be told to listen, and in a sense even made to listen, when a man of adequate authority is talking sense. But we cannot be made to listen to a man who is talking nonsense; it sins against the whole spirit and atmosphere of the occasion.

In the context of all the information that's available to our students—including AI-generated information or misinformation that has the capacity to write essays for our students without any personal contribution of thought or effort—I believe it's really important that we are teaching school students to discern the difference

between sense and nonsense, what deserves our serious attention and what should be laughed off as ridiculous. Sometimes some of the pronouncements in our culture sound like another verse in *Jabberwocky*, full of made-up nonsense which should have been excluded from serious thought with the benefit of a few thousand years in the bank of cultured education.

Don't get me wrong. *Jabberwocky* has a great place in literature as imaginative fun. But its nonsense statements cannot contribute to our lexicon of truth. Not only that. The consequence of adopting nonsense statements as though they are real ('my truth', 'your truth') is a life that is in discord with reality and therefore is ultimately unpleasant to watch, unpleasant to listen to, unpleasant to be in—a life that never reaches its full potential.

I've talked of our WRAP approach to teaching literacy as an important reason why our students are proficient in literacy as demonstrated in external testing. But let's look at the foundation of our School's approach to teaching English. Then, I think you'll see why Redeemer teachers have worked so tenaciously to ensure that our students are given the tools not only to become capable readers but also to be able to distinguish between sense and nonsense. Then they can build a lexicon of truth, enabling discerning comprehension as they explore literature and contributing insightful reality as they create their own literature.

Our rationale at the beginning

Earlier this year, our first English teacher—the wife of our founding Principal—at the blessed age of 89 was promoted to eternal peace and joy with our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. In the early years of Redeemer, well before WRAP was in anyone's mind, Elizabeth Cannon wrote a rationale for the teaching of English at Redeemer. As I read it, perhaps you'll understand why our staff work towards the best in literacy across the curriculum for every student, not only through WRAP but also with the assistance of our visiting speech pathologists. This rationale was written for our 1987 inspection by the NSW Department of Education. On the day of the inspection, the inspector spent hours poring over this rationale and the English program that followed. He was intrigued and blessed (and later became a blessing to Redeemer as he gave us, that day, the name of a respiratory physician who would give Elizabeth Cannon more than 30 years of health with us after a life-threatening respiratory arrest on one of our School camps).

The rationale begins with three quotes.

- *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God.”* (John 1:1–2)

- “One word of truth can outweigh the whole world.” (Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn)
- “A ‘word’ is a unit of language, the shortest thing we say or write.” (Definition) [I must add, to be technical, this definition is now a little outdated as a morpheme is now recognised as the smallest unit of language.]

The rationale continues with a reflection on these three quotes with regard to educating students at Redeemer.

Redeemer Baptist School from Kindergarten to Year 12 seeks to create a view of the ‘word’ in each student which reflects a belief in the first quote [in the beginning was the Word], agreement with the second quote [one word of truth can outweigh the whole world], and a regard for the definition as rather shallow.

- *A word may be mere print and deserve to be disregarded.*
- *A word may be mere function and deserve to be organised.*
- *A word may be mere colour and deserve to be seen for its beauty.*
- *A word may be mere sound and deserve to be heard for its vibration.*
- *A word may be mere texture and deserve to be fingered until the silk be felt.*
- *A word may be mere perfume and deserve to be savoured or sneezed at.*
- *A word may be a mere meal when it falls on hungry ears.*

But a ‘word’ in Christian understanding must be mere dynamite. It patterns itself after the Word of God, Jesus Christ, who spoke the worlds into being. So the ‘word’ for the Christian must also be creative, bringing into being that which was not in existence before, whether it be a healed wound, an understanding grasped, or a prevailing injustice destroyed.

If there be the highest evolutionary process, therefore, in the teaching and learning of language it is simply this: a steady rise in the ability to engage the heart and spirit of a student with pen or tongue to produce powerful and creative text at any stage of his or her technical competence. This is the distinctive process we encourage. This is the confidence in language which, after expression, leaves a man or woman at peace. This confidence is possible at any stage of competence or maturity and can be outworked in any genre.

The document continues with a Christian worldview with regard to imagination and different genres of literature (including discussions about nurturing beauty, gaining a literature set, modern literature, and Australian literature). It’s worth reading!

Deliberate abuses of the English language

About 20 years ago, Kel Richards was the guest speaker at Redeemer’s Annual Service of Worship held in the Sir Ian Turbott Auditorium (Western Sydney University). Kel Richards is a wordsmith: he was an ABC radio journalist, he’s written 59 books, and he contributes a regular column about the meaning of typically Aussie words and phrases in Australian Geographic. Earlier this year, Kel Richards addressed the Sydney Institute on the “deception and repression” in four distinct categories of words in contemporary Australian culture that reflect Orwell’s ‘Ministry of Truth’ in *1984* or ‘doublethink’ in *Animal Farm*: weaponised words, weasel words, empty words, and uncontested words. Richards concludes:

“21st century linguistic swindles and perversions are not (for the most part) happening by accident or unintentionally, rather, they are deliberate abuses of the English language for malicious purposes.

What can we do? First, call out linguistic frauds that are practised on us. Secondly, take great care that we ourselves never fall into the same linguistic cesspool. And, thirdly, we can ensure that the swiftness of the magician’s glib words never fool us!”

Similarly, in a reflection on Stanford University’s language guide restrictions, Dr. Kevin Donnelly AM (ACU) states: “Instead of freedom of expression and impartial debate, we now live in a world where language has been corrupted to enforce mind control and group think”.

In the context of linguistic frauds and strange restrictions, I pray that Redeemer students will have a lexicon of truth that enables them to speak with confidence and clarity even when the culture leans toward promoting the uncertainty of untrue truth claims.

In an article in the Weekend Australian in July, Dr Ben Jensen (founding Director of Learning First and consultant to NESAs) identified different elements needed by students to develop and mature in their reading. In addition to core literacy skills such as phonics, Jensen refers to research that shows that “students’ background knowledge in science, history, culture and other fields determines reading comprehension more than whether students are good or poor readers.” This is because comprehending a text requires that we “process both its explicit and implied information” and to do that we need background knowledge. This is why, at Redeemer, we have a content-rich curriculum including a broad range of core subjects heading up to the HSC—English, Mathematics, History, School Music, Chapel—as a foundation for understanding what constitutes a good life in this

good world that God has created, that is, through the lens of a Christian Worldview in Education.

And so we come back to this idea of students gaining from their schooling the opportunity to build a lexicon of truth whereby the Word who is the truth becomes the measure by which all other claims to truth are judged, adopted, derided, expelled, challenged, or cherished. That is our goal. That is what we aim to give your children through their education here at Redeemer Baptist School.

Student achievements in 2023

On their way to building a lexicon of truth, Redeemer student achievements this year have been amazing!

Australian Mathematics Competition

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): AMC Prize
- *Dante Jiang* (Year 6): AMC Prize; Peter O'Halloran Medal

AAMT National Mathematics Talent Quest

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): 1st (Australia)

MANSW Investigating with Mathematics Competition

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): 1st (NSW)
- *Gehna Ammangi* (Year 7): Highly Commended
- *Dylan Sun* (Year 3): Highly Commended

Australian Mathematics Olympiad

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): Bronze Award

Australian Training Tournament (Mathematics)

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): High Distinction

CSIRO Bebras Australia Computational Thinking Challenge

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): Honour Roll

Australian Informatics Olympiad

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): Gold Award

French-Australian Regional Informatics Olympiad

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): Bronze Award

Oxford University Computing Challenge

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): Perfect Score

STANSW Young Scientist Awards Prizewinners

- *Karmichael Candra* (Year 7): 2nd Scientific Investigations Physics (Years 7–8)
- *Thaddeus Candra, Joseph Hodgson* (Year 4); *Dylan Sun* (Year 3): Equal 1st Scientific Investigations (Years 3–4)
- *Thaddeus Candra* (Year 4): 1st AARNet Use of Technology Award
- *Dylan Sun* (Year 3): 1st AIP Most Outstanding Physics Award

Regeneron ISEF (International Science & Engineering Fair) 2023

- *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11): selected by AUSSEF to represent Australia

Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards

- *Metin Yalaki* (Year 6): 1st in Australia LA primary
- *Mina Zhu* (Year 4): 2nd in Australia LA primary
- *Christopher Herbert* (Year 9); *Shlok Mehta, Akshitha Praveen Kumar, Tanay Ram* (Year 8); *Gehna Ammangi, Samara Thapa* (Year 7); *Olivia Chen* (Year 6): Highly Commended
- *Peiyan Zhang* (Year 6), *Aaron Li* (Year 4), *Justin Cannon* (Year 3), *Lester Liu* (Year 2): Commended
- *Redeemer Baptist School*: National Schools Award, Primary

NESA WriteOn Competition

- *Dante Jaing* (Year 6): Gold award
- *Samuel Cannon* (Year 2): Gold award

Premier's Reading Challenge

- *George Eweda, Benjamin Fahd, Joshua Fahd, Elena Habibzadeh, Dorian Ndonga Empesa, Michael Yangdong*: PRC medals
- 30 platinum awards; 48 gold awards
- 388 students completed the challenge

HTA History Mastermind

- *Elyse Jones, Edbert Joseph, Samuel Nallapati, Peter Pei, Akshitha Praveen Kumar*: Year 8 semi-finalist medal winners

Harmony Day Poster Competition

- *Joseph Um* (Year 7): Highly Commended

NSW School of Languages

- *Yerim Lim* (Year 11): Korean in Context, 1st in course
- *Sarah Widjaja* (Year 11): Indonesian Continuers, 2nd in course
- *Darren Candra* (Year 11): Indonesian Continuers, 3rd in course

Minister's Awards for Excellence—Community Languages Schools

- *Aide Lee* (Year 5): Chinese (Mandarin)

HSC 2022

- Distinguished Achievers in Construction, Mathematics Advanced, Music, PDHPE
- 100% of students offered enrolment at university

Western Sydney University Dean's Merit Lists

- Alumnus *Mary-Anne Poyitt* (Year 12, 2018): Science

Bedford College

- *Ruth Burns* (HSC, 2020): Baptist Churches of NSW & ACT Bedford College Student of the Year Award

Mathematical Association of NSW (teacher award)

- *Jenelle Seaman*: Ann Thomas Service to the Association Award

Teachers' Guild of NSW

- *Phillip Bailey HFTGN, Jenelle Seaman HFTGN, Stuart Garth HFTGN*: Honorary Fellowships

Swimming

- SWISSA event: *Unish Shrestha* (Year 8), *Niushka Shrestha* (Year 9), *Yoon Choi* (Year 11) were age champions and Redeemer was the champion school.
- AICES event: *Unish Shrestha* (Year 8) won 1st in 100m freestyle, 2nd in backstroke, 3rd in butterfly; *Torrance Liu* (Year 7) won 3rd in 50m freestyle.

Cross Country

- SWISSA event: *Mannya Peace* (Year 7), *Unish Shrestha* (Year 8), *Cara Zhong* (Year 9), *Adrian Burns* (Year 10), *Victoria Sultana* (Year 11), *Aaron*

Tjhin (Year 12), *Jerusalem Akele* (Year 12) were age champions and Redeemer was the champion school.

- ASISSA event: *Lucy Tazewell* (Year 3, 2nd place), *Bonnime Brannan* (Year 3), *Sophie Tazewell* (Year 4, 2nd place) qualified for CIS.

Athletics

- SWISSA event: *Zahra Dinkciler* (Year 7), *Unish Shrestha* (Year 8), *Deeya Angurala* (Year 10), *Dorian Ndongo Empesa* (Year 9), *Adrian Burns* (Year 10), *Victoria Sultana* (Year 11), *Hee Chan Yoon* (Year 12), *Jerusalem Akele* (Year 12) were age champions and Redeemer was the champion school.
- ASISSA event: *Maayon Sudarshan* (Year 6), *Kriti Verma* (Year 5), *Sophie Tazewell* (Year 4, 11 years girls age champion), *Lucy Tazewell* (Year 3) qualified for CIS
- Parramatta Athletics: *Sophie Tazewell* (Year 4) & *Lucy Tazewell* (Year 3) were age champions
- AICES event: *Michael Yangdong* (Year 10) qualified for CIS

Team Sports

- SWISSA girls tennis champions: *Pal Patel* and *Keturah Kamalendra* (Year 9)
- SWISSA boys cricket champions: *Rithvik Kumar* (Year 9) captain

Archery

- *Darren Candra* (Year 11): ranked #1 under 18 barebow archer in Australia (May 2023)

NSW Fencing

- Roberta Nutt Shield medals: *Braden Chen* (Year 5), 1st in under 11 & 3rd in under 13

English, Mathematics, Science and Digital Technology conducted by ICAS; Mathematics conducted by the Australian Mathematics Trust; Computational Thinking conducted by CSIRO; Australian History conducted by the History Teachers' Association; Australian Geography conducted by the Royal Geographical Society of Queensland

- 29 High Distinctions: *Anubhav Ammangi* (Year 11; ICAS Science, Bebras Computational Thinking, Australian Mathematics Competition); *Kyle Kwan & Shawn Rajaratnam* (Year 10, Geography); *Jordan Joseph & Peter Pei* (Year 8, Geography); *Karmichael Candra* (Year 7; Bebras Computational Thinking, Geography); *David Yang* (Year 7; Geography, Australian History); *Gehna Ammangi* (Year 7, Geography); *Chelsea Ma* (Year 7, Australian

History); *Dante Jiang* (Year 6; ICAS English, Mathematics, Digital Technology; Australian Mathematics Competition; Bebras Computational Thinking); *Jeremy Liu, Tiya Maharaj, Nicholas Xu* (Year 6, Bebras Computational Thinking); *Maayon Sudarshan* (Year 6, ICAS Mathematics); *Haricharan Venkatasubramanian* (Year 6, ICAS English); *Derrick Lin* (Year 5; Australian Mathematics Computation, Bebras Computational Thinking); *Lavinia Liu, Sam Ma* (Year 5, Bebras Computational Thinking); *Allan Liu* (Year 4, ICAS Mathematics); *Damon Yuan* (Year 4, ICAS Science).

- 123 distinctions & 263 credits

Many students starred in excellent productions, including: Kindergarten's *Just the Way You Are*; the Preparatory School's *Jungle Doctor's Fables*; Junior Drama Club's *Chariots and Champions*; and Senior Drama Club's *Five Children and It*. The autumn and spring concerts of the RBS Strings Group in Sargood Hall were appreciated by all.

The Redeemer school community continues to reach out to other communities in need as we teach our students the importance of perceiving the needs of others and, if possible, helping to meet those needs personally.

Redeemer's Outreach in 2023

- Year 10 students led the school community at Gala Day and other events to raise \$34,492.03 for a charitable project at *Hope Church* in Condobolin. Supported by volunteer licensed tradesmen, students and teachers spent five days in Condobolin creating a meeting place in the grounds of the church with: firepit, sandpit, paving, shade cloth, outdoor furniture, turf and a new fence.
- Redeemer students contributed 308 shoebox gifts to be delivered by *Samaritan's Purse* to children in vulnerable situations across the world.
- *Mitchell Youth Leadership Forum* was supported by Redeemer.
- The *Refresh Summer Camp* for students was supported by Redeemer.
- Redeemer hosted the *Burnside Annual Reunion* for ex-Burnside children including the 40-year reunion of Khmer refugees.
- Redeemer conducted heritage tours for community groups at the North Parramatta (Burnside) campus and the Castle Hill House campus.
- Sargood Hall was the venue for a public lecture series delivered by Regent College Professor and Bible Translator, Dr George Guthrie.
- The Principal completed a summer course at Regent College (Canada) and met with the President, Academic Dean and professors to strengthen

relationships that contribute to staff engaging in professional development through Regent College.

- Students completed professional placements at Redeemer from: *Excelsia College, The University of Sydney, Christian Heritage College (Morling College), Alphacrucis University College.*

New and Refurbished Infrastructure in 2023

- All-weather paths laid to connect classrooms and offices.
- Restoration upgrade of: Reid carport, Robertson grandstand, security gates; the heritage perimeter fence on Pennant Hills Road.
- Upgrade of bus fleet replacing two Volvo B10M buses (about 40 years old) with two new Volvo (Irizar and Volgren) coaches—and installing *BusMinder* (digital safety, security and accountability systems) on each bus.
- Additional property purchased to increase Camp Long Beach accommodation facilities and extensive maintenance works to existing facilities including: roof repairs, electrical, plumbing, communications, internet, grounds.
- Wi-fi access, security and classroom IT resources were renewed in various classrooms around the North Parramatta campus.

The Lord Mayor's recognition of excellence at Redeemer in 2023

Dear Principal Cannon

*On behalf of City of Parramatta, I congratulate you on **Redeemer Baptist School's score of 98 in the Better Education's list of top 50 High schools in NSW.***

At the meeting of City of Parramatta Council on 6 November 2023, Council unanimously resolved:

*MATTER OF URGENCY MOTION: TOP 50 HIGH SCHOOLS IN NSW
(Councillor Humphries and Councillor Davies)*

- *That the Lord Mayor write to the Parramatta LGA High schools listed in the top 50 Schools and congratulate them on their achievements.*

*Parramatta is the heart of greater Sydney. **Schools like yours are the lifeblood of our community, so thank you for your continued contributions to our City.***

Yours sincerely

Cr Pierre Esber

Lord Mayor, City of Parramatta Council

Dear Principal Cannon

*On behalf of City of Parramatta, I congratulate you on **Redeemer Baptist School's ranking 13 with a score of 100 in Better Education's list of top 50 primary schools in NSW**. At the meeting of City of Parramatta Council on 23 October 2023, Council unanimously resolved:*

*MATTER OF URGENCY MOTION: TOP 50 PRIMARY SCHOOLS IN NSW
(Councillor Humphries and Councillor Garrard)*

- That the Lord Mayor write to the Parramatta LGA primary schools listed in the top 50 Primary Schools and congratulate them on their achievements.*

*Parramatta is the heart of greater Sydney, with over 21,000 students in primary schools across the LGA. **Schools like yours are the lifeblood of our community, so thank you for your continued contributions to our City.***

Yours sincerely

Cr Pierre Esber

Lord Mayor, City of Parramatta Council

Becoming who we are meant to be

***Do not be deceived.** Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down to us from the Father of lights, who does not change or cause darkness by turning. By His own will **He brought us into being by the word of truth**, that we might become His prized possession.*

(The Bible, James 1:16–18)

Christmas is an amazing festival of celebration in Sydney. There's the lighting of that huge Christmas tree in Martin Place. There's a six-metre-tall Christmas decoration bauble outside the Convention Centre in Darling Harbour. St Mary's Cathedral will soon be covered with bright lights and gloriously vivid Christmas animations. Every evening there'll be homes throughout the suburbs with celebratory eye-catching displays. And many of you at home will try to replicate in your lounge rooms something of the unimaginable glory of God shining around an angel as he announced—on that first Christmas night—the birth of the Saviour who is Christ the Lord! And the great Carols by Candlelight event in Sydney's Domain with all its glittering splendour can only be a pale reflection of that multitude of angels praising God's great glory in an outback paddock as they announced His goodwill to men on earth through Jesus Christ.

All of this is celebrating the Word who became flesh and dwelt among us. And the gospel that tells us that Jesus is the Word who was from the beginning with God, also describes Jesus as: light, living water, true bread come down from heaven, the good shepherd, the way, the truth, the resurrection and the life.

We all know the power of words to tear up and destroy. We are being told by experts to protect our children from AI chatbots which, appearing to be human, have the potential to lure them into unethical and harmful situations. Also, research tells us that the messages received by children through social media often harms their mental health. Even those promoting the benefits of ChatGPT and other forms of AI in education also warn that the associated misinformation makes it more difficult for children to separate fact from fiction. But even without social media, we know the words that have been used by us all to hurt others and we know the words that have been used against each one of us with the intention of harming us. We all know the relationships that have been painfully forever separated by words.

But there is a lexicon of one living word who can heal our souls and restore our path in life toward the glory that was always meant to be our eternal destiny as humans made in the image of God. His name is Jesus. And when the Word of Jesus becomes alive in our hearts then we are born again into a life that is truly worth living. He is the good and perfect gift from our Father in heaven for us. In His name we are set free to pursue all that is true, honourable, just, pure and lovely in this world.

This glory to God through Jesus Christ in each one of us is our desire for every one of our Redeemer students: past, present and future. I pray this Christmas that every one of you will experience the peace, joy, love, happiness, forgiveness, healing, blessing, rescue, hope and kindness that can be yours in Jesus Christ. He is not only the baby born in Bethlehem but also the Saviour who died for us on a Roman cross outside Jerusalem, and the glorious Lord who rose from the dead. And He now lives forevermore to conquer death in all who will believe in Him and trust Him as Lord. To God be the glory forever and ever. Amen!



Valete —Year 12

Jerusalem Akele
Isabella Burns
Jerolin Conteh
Jacob Dinkciler
Noah Eldick

Alvin Fan
Abhinav Jala
Dinura Jayakuru
Aishwin Jeyandrabalan
Erik Kudaya-More

Nikolas Nissan
Bhavik Sharma
Aaron Tjhin
Arda Yagci
Hee Chan Yoon

