

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
August 2006

Celebrating the Inspiration Continuing the Commitment 1907-2007

January 6th, 2007 marks the 100th anniversary of the opening of the first “Children’s House”. It is a time for celebration and renewal of our own commitment to this God-given way of educating.

The greatest learner in each environment is the guide – always learning something new, always observing. And we continue this learning by observing the children and by reading.

One way to “renew” our commitment is to return to the books by setting up a reading program for the year. Keep a book in the glove compartment of the car – for all of those inevitable waiting times. Keep a book in the bathroom. Keep a book in a purse or backpack. Keep a book handy and if you are able to read five pages a day, in a year you will have been able to re-read most of the Montessori canon:

The Absorbent Mind,
The Discovery of the Child,
The Secret of Childhood,
The Child in the Family,
Dr. Montessori’s Own Handbook,
The Child in the Church, and
Montessori, Her Life and Work

And you will still have a few days left in the year to start on **The Montessori Method.**

Reading five pages a day will transform you and your environment as you find nuggets and insights and inspiration. (Even if you only read three pages a day – you’ll cover more than half the list.)

The 100th anniversary is also a good time to commit to attend a Montessori seminar. Even though Montessori is individualized education, it is lived out in community. It is from the community that the children also draw strength and success. And Guides need this community too!

The national conference for the Christian Montessori Fellowship has been set for **July 26th – 28th, 2007**. It will be a great celebration. And all through the year, we will be celebrating with regional seminars all over the country. Check the website for information

www.christianmontessorifellowship.com

Bringing the Celebration and Commitment together

It seems we have little time and even less money to meet all the wonderful opportunities presented to us. So we have created a celebration program to kick off this wonderful centenary year.

First, we have created “Monty”, the Montessori bear (You can see him on the web site www.crossmountainpress.com) Monty proudly bears a quatrefoil on his chest and celebrates 100 years of Discovery 1907-2007. Monty is part of a collection from the Beary Thoughtful Co. (www.bearythoughtful.com) that offers a wide variety of gift bears for every occasion. What better occasion than the 100th anniversary of Montessori!

A small Montessori school (less than 40 students) in west Texas did a quick two week campaign (during the summer no less) and raised almost \$1000 to send their staff to a training seminar. The director reported that it was so successful and so well received that the parents are even wanting to do it again this fall.

Our second celebration item is a T-Shirt commemorating Montessori’s “Follow the Child”. These will be wonderful walking billboards attesting to a century of discovery. Can you imagine the impact on your community when hundreds of Montessori students help proclaim the celebration? Whether they wear them on the 6th day of every month (The first Children’s House opened on January 6th.), or every Friday, or the whole first week of January, they will be a living testimony to the enduring blessing of Montessori’s inspiration.

Third, if you want a nice warm feeling in the celebration (and one that will continue on for years), we have created a mug with our familiar quatrefoil. The quatrefoil must be like the secret handshake – only Montessorians seem to know what quatrefoils are. Welcome to the club! Mugs will make great gifts.

Fourth, we have created a banner (34”x64”) to proclaim the anniversary

message of “Follow The Child”. The banner is brilliantly colored with the Montessori “World”, the flags of the world, and the children of the world. The banner printed on the finest Salvadorian cotton is not only a beautiful banner celebrating 100 years of Discovery but is a veritable piece of artwork. (And you can buy extras to take to the beach.)

The Past and the Future

Every child should be a Montessori child. And as we celebrate this wonderful anniversary, we have an opportunity to help our communities “discover” this unique way – not only to teach and to learn – but to live. And in gratitude for the legacy we have been given, we can take this opportunity to make Montessori education even more widely known, embraced and celebrated.

Cosmic Education

Our national conference in San Antonio each year presents a challenge to meet the needs of a varied group of teachers, schools and situations. It also presents the challenge of balancing the practical and the needed theoretical education. Most of us received little training in the significant Christian foundation of Montessori. And it is a challenge in a secularized world to bring this other side of the coin forward. Christian Montessori is not something “new”. It is what it was intended to be – “Cosmic”.

The only way for Montessori to be truly “Cosmic” is for it to embrace the Creator of the Cosmos. Cosmic education is physical, emotional, mental **and** spiritual. Montessori seeks to embrace (and nurture) the whole child.

E.M. Standing, Montessori's biographer says in the introduction to *The Child in the Church*, "Montessori herself admitted to the present writer on more than one occasion that in the working out of her own educational ideas she learned much from what she called the "pedagogical method" of the Church. Furthermore, she put on record that – as one of the results of her experiments, particularly in Barcelona - her own method could only find its fullest expression when applied to the teaching of the Catholic faith. In fact, she was convinced that this new method was, by a peculiar and providential concatenation of circumstances placed in her hands for the advancement of the Kingdom of God through its application to teaching the truths of the Catholic faith."

Our challenge as Montessorians is to become, not only the best practitioners of the art, but the living embodiment of the Spirit that inspired Montessori – the very spirit of God that embraces the child and the world. Montessori education is a call to become what God intended for each of us to be – totally at one with Him, totally His – that is Cosmic.

National Conference 2006

Our desire is that each of you will experience the blessings that come from attending the national conference. Our goal for the Centenary Year is to have at least one representative from each school – that is why we are initiating our celebration program to raise funds for teacher education.

Let this year's attendees share with you why **this** conference needs to be on your calendar for next year.

"I prayed for God to prepare me for the coming school year. To change what needs to be changed in me or my classroom environment. To fill me to overflowing with his love and nature and the tools I would need to better minister to my class. God met me at the door.

Cindy Creel, Shreveport, LA

"I always leave here both convicted to do better in the classroom and inspired and equipped to make it so!"

Carolyn Ely, Lewisville, TX

"The conference has helped me connect "Christianity" and "Montessori" together."

Katie Tseng, Poway, CA

"It was fun! The days went by so fast because we all were enjoying learning with each other."

Kathy Lowery, Shreveport, LA

"I've been to other Montessori conferences. They were informative and enriching. However, I have experienced all of these at this conference but more importantly my spiritual being has been uplifted, inspired and edified."

Christine Jenschke, Fredericksburg, TX

"This conference is an **absolute necessity** for the Christian Montessori teacher."

Cindy Bussey, Shreveport, LA

(Attending her 6th conference.)

See you next year!

July 26th – 28th, 2007

Creativity

Creativity is a hallmark of God-breathed inspiration. Genesis introduces us to God as The Creator. And it is this creative function that occasionally takes a hit in our fabulous Montessori environments. With such beautiful materials, with so much to learn (with parental expectations for that learning) allowing our children to experience creativity becomes a challenge.

Barbara's early education professor in college said, "Make sure there is an easel in the classroom. Most children, after preschool will never get the opportunity to experience that again." True – but sad.

Easels, collages, clay, pasting and coloring all smack of day care. (I don't need to press the point.) But if you want your children to experience and release their God-given creativity, you will have to make a great effort to balance this need of the child against the academic expectations of the parents.

And what about our creativity? How do we express it in our environments and in our lives? Creativity is a function of God's personality. And we are made in that image. Don't let the world (and the busyness of life) rob you of the great joy of creation. What are your gifts and talents? And how might you use them in your environment to the enrichment of everybody?

Our lower El teacher liked to knit. She taught her students how to knit (and a few parents too!). The students would knit caps to give away at Christmas time to disadvantaged children. The twenty some students (and a few parents) knitted 134 hats one year. More than one lesson was taught.

Celebrate your creativity!

Regional Conferences 2006-2007

September	30	Chicago
October	14	Charlotte
	21	St. Paul
	28	Open
November	4	Ann Arbor
	11	Cincinnati
	18	Los Angeles
January	13	HI
	20	Corpus
	27	Shreveport

Registration Fee	\$150
Early registration (three weeks in advance)	\$125
CMF members	\$25 credit

Contact: Edward Fidellow
210-698-1911
22630 East Range
San Antonio, TX 78255
Fidellow@swbell.net

Conference CD's

The Icon of Faith: Looking at the child as God sees him.

Classroom Management: "Maybe another day." Words used to help a child manage his own behavior and other insights.

Personalities of Children: A delightful understanding of what makes different children (and adults) tick.

Stress: We've all got it. Dealing with it in a positive way.

Cost: \$9.95 each or \$35 for all four

The Secret of Childhood 8 CD's \$75
A book review and study from its Christian spiritual roots and applications.