

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
September 2006

National Conference
Celebrating 100 years of
Montessori Education
July 26 -28, 2007
San Antonio, Texas
“Celebrating the Inspiration
Continuing the Commitment”

“You” are the Christian
Montessori Fellowship

Christian Montessori Fellowship is not an organization. (Occasionally my desk attests to that fact.) Yes, we do have a structure, a legal structure (501(c) 3, non-profit). And we do many things that organizations do – we communicate, we meet, we help, but Barbara and I are not the Christian Montessori Fellowship – YOU ARE.

Even if you’ve never joined the “Fellowship” (and we do need your support) you are a member of the fellowship. This is a world wide fellowship of people who have a devotion to God and a particular calling to exercise that devotion in using the Montessori method to nurture children.

Each of you are standard bearers of this most remarkable way of living and learning. The people in your community see both your Christianity and your Montessori sensitivity in how you live, love and teach. Most of the time, you are the only testament and the only encounter that many people will ever have with Christian Montessori. And

your success in effectively living out your calling brings both honor to God and healing to your children.

E.M. Standing, Montessori’s biographer, says that all her life Montessori “entertained the idea that the formation of a new religious order might be the most appropriate means for the carrying out of her work”. (From the introduction of the “Child and the Church”)

In one sense, you are that new order. And the Christian Montessori Fellowship is there to provide fellowship, connectivity and encouragement to this far-flung ministry.

With out you, there is no fellowship. You are the backbone (heart, soul and even the gizzard) of this great movement. But the reality also is, that without the Fellowship there is no one to connect you to others who are endeavoring also to realize the fullness of the Christian message in Montessori.

Your lives (and hands) are full in just the day to day operations of your school. Just like you are called to run your school, we have been called to encourage, strengthen and to help you in every way possible. Paul writing to the Philippians (2:20) “I have no one else like him (Timothy) who takes a genuine interest in your welfare.”

That is now our calling – to take a genuine interest in your welfare. But not just in your welfare but in all the children you teach and all the lives you influence and in the rest of the world that

has not heard the good news of the Gospel or the good news of Montessori.

We regularly receive calls from families looking for Christian Montessori schools, from schools looking for staff, from teachers looking for schools and emails and calls from people wanting to start a Christian Montessori school. And just as often requests for information on Christian Montessori training.

In this celebratory year, in appreciation of the gift of Montessori, that someone shared with you, would you consider three commitments. The first, obviously is to what you are already doing – becoming the best Montessori teacher that you can be and having the best school possible.

The second, is a commitment to share what you've learned. Your insights, your experiences are helpful to beginners and seasoned teachers alike. None of us live long enough to experience it all. We need to learn from each other. (The definition of experience is when we learn from our own mistakes, wisdom is when we learn from the mistakes of others.) We need to share. One of the best ways is by networking. This happens readily at regional conferences and certainly in great detail at the national Christian Montessori conference.

Now, I'm going to be parochial (which is pretty normal for a Christian organization), as wonderful as national Montessori organization conferences are; and as much as I've learned and appreciated them, none of them will focus on the Christian spiritual foundation of what you are doing everyday. If you can go to all of them that will be a wonderful blessing to you and to your children. However, if you can only go to one – plan on going to the

Christian Montessori Fellowship national conference. In addition to excellent Montessori training, you will receive the kind of spiritual encouragement that will empower and transform your environment and your life. Lofty words and ideals? Yes, but absolutely true. How do I know? Because the same inspiration that illuminated the heart and mind of Dr. Montessori is available to each of us. Montessori is more than an educational method, it is tapping into the very heart of God for what He wants for His children.

Each of you have things to share and the Christian Montessori community needs to hear your wisdom. Remember, the wisdom comes through us not from us.

The third commitment, we ask is that you support the work of the fellowship. Your attendance is one measure of support but so is your membership. To be able to help others, both here and around the world, to access the truth of Montessori is a major undertaking – and we can't do it without you.

We now reach almost 1000 Montessorians in 14 countries. Out of 4000+ Montessori schools in this country we have found over 275 Christian Montessori schools. We are a small band but with your help can grow to be able to bless even more children with the wonderful experience of Montessori.

I'm including an email I received this month from Kristina Vecpuise in Latvia. (Montessori children can actually find Latvia on a map.) Kristina's letter deeply touched me. We have so many Montessori riches at our fingertips here and trying to determine how we can best share those is a challenge worthy of a hundredth anniversary celebration.

Letter from Latvia

Hallo, Dear Barbara and Edward
Fidellow

There has been a time since I'm looking for alternative way of teaching my 4 youngest children - 2 boys and 2 girls.

Now I have been home schooling my 10 years old son Varis for 4 years. He is very smart boy, but the way he studies is a lot different from our regular schools. I was able to teach him at home because he has schizophrenia, but I would want to do it if he was perfectly well too. Our teachers can't believe he knows so much and "studies" so little. Despite we live in a Latvian society in the Latvia he talks and reads English better than our students at high school.

This year I will start home schooling my 7 years old son Adam. In this post communism system I almost had to let him go away of our family – since he is hard hearing and autistic the special medical and teachers commission wanted to send him to a special education school for "slow in mind" children. Now I have one year to prove I can teach well my son of my own and that he can progress „even" by staying at home.

I have been dreaming for years about my own Christian school, but I never did something about it outside my family. I always was sure there is something totally wrong in the method we are used to teach our children and to let others to teach us. I was sure I need to develop my own method, but now I realized, thanks God! there has been Mrs. Maria Montessori before even I was born!

So very recently I read a good initiation book about Montessori children' home by Helen Helming, a German Montessori teacher, and now I'm very much fond in Montessori teaching. I want to know us much as possible about it, and I'm sure I will love it.

Since I live in a small country town house surrounded with 15 hectares of land that belongs to me and I also own three big old stile stone buildings, I want to establish a Montessori school here. May be it needs to happen a little later after I learn to know how exactly in details this Montessori teaching method has to work, but may be you are ready to help me to understand things I need to start doing now. I really have a great wish to do it.

For quite a long time I was "digging" the web to find an online Montessori teaching school, but there is almost none providing an official teachers diploma. The ones I found in Portland Oregon and in Norway are very VERY expensive. The fee they are asking per year of studies is half or more of my families' incomes.

So realizing I never will be able do the school on my own or to find a support organization in Latvia I started to look for some "creasy" Christian organization in the web. After I read your goals for your organization I did close the computer immediately and didn't open it till now. It was too hard to believe that you might be an answer to my prayers and not just a dream.

So here is my very direct question to you:

WHAT DO YOU SUGGEST I

SHOULD DO TO GET YOUR
ASSISTANCE AND HELP IN
TEACHING MY OWN CHILDREN
AND STARTING TO DO
SOMETHING ABOUT THE
MONTESSORI SCHOOL FOR OTHER
CHILDREN TOO?

Sincerely
Kristina Vecpuise

“Tautiesi”, Satiki,
Saldus, Latvia LV-3873
phone 371-26952979

How do we as a Christian Montessori
community support and help Kristina
and all of the other Kristina’s of the
world that need our help?

Observation

Yogi Berra was purported to have
said, “If you look you can see a lot.” The
big word there is “if”. One of the
fundamental tenets of Montessori is the
emphasis on observing.

It may be an American phenomenon
or a 21st century phenomenon – or
maybe even universal – but we just don’t
have the time. There is too much to do.
However, without observation, we’re
very much like the classic entrepreneur –
“Ready, Fire, Aim”.

Without observation, we turn
Montessori into a formula instead of a
living, breathing way of nurturing
children. Without observation we tend to
fulfill that old saying, “To the man that
has a hammer, every problem looks like
a nail.” Observation allows us to
individualize and customize our
response to the child.

For those who have taught
traditionally, observation meant

watching the teacher interact with the
class. While in Montessori the emphasis
is on observing the interaction of the
child with his environment.

Observation is tough, disciplined
work. And in many ways is not possible
to teach. Montessori in her 1913 training
course said, “When you visit a Casa dei
Bambini to observe the children, you are
working and laboring to learn something
which I do not give, which an assistant
does not give, which no one else gives.
If you do not possess this capacity, this
sensitivity which permits your learning
the intimate facts which the children
reveal without warning anyone as to
which is an important thing or which is
worthy of claiming attention, then this
sensitivity, this capacity of observation
is the labor which you must accomplish
in yourselves.”

She also says, “Who can ever prepare
one of you to observe these phenomena
properly? You alone can prepare
yourselves to observe as the children
must develop themselves by their own
experience.”

She also states, “You well know that
the teacher in our method is more of an
observer than a teacher, therefore this is
what the teacher must know, **how to
observe.**”

Sharon Hundley shared the attached
guidelines for observation with us. They
are guidelines (and only guidelines) to
help you to develop your own ability to
observe.

We all ask the same question, “How
will I know if I’m observing right?”
And there is a good answer.

**“I am observing right if I learn
something.”**

Your membership is vital to
the work of the fellowship.

Observation

Assignment #1 One Child

A. Daily

1. Write and observe everything the child does in the class, make accurate time notes next to notes.
2. Make notes as to the child's physical description
3. Get with the teacher to note any pertinent family or health notes or background information that would be helpful to your observation
4. Make daily summaries and conclusions based on the 6 topics given in the weekly summary.

B. Weekly Summary

1. Work
 - a. Time devoted to work with each material
Time devoted to passive work, observation
Time devoted to disruptive activities
Time between activities; what type, how much
 - b. Sequence of activities - order
 - c. Number of tasks completed each day (or worked on - especially applicable if older child)
 - d. Type of work done
 - e. Work habits—(impossible to note in one day's observation)
 - f. Progression of difficulty (easy to hard. etc.)
 - g. Note any repetition (within a task; of a task)
2. Movement
 - a. Whole body, stance, gait: large motor
 - b. Hands, fingers, small motor, muscle
 - c. Evidence of orderliness
 - d. Exact movement, attention to detail
3. Development toward independence
 - a. Who directs or chooses what percentage of the time; how is this connected with the concentration the child uses when working with that particular material.
 - b. Percent of time spent working alone; with teacher; near teacher; with other children.
 - c. Is child an observer or participant in group work? How is this connected to the concentration level?

4. Social Behavior

- a. Contacts with other children:
 - 1. Who initiates contact?
 - 2. Accepted or rejected by other children?
 - 3. Percent of time spent with younger, peer and older children
 - 4. Response to contacts made by other children to child
- b. Contact with adults
 - 1. Does child seek help from adult, other children?
 - 2. Does child avoid adults?
 - 3. Is child positive to adult contact?
 - 4. Does child need, accept, reject affection?
 - 5. Does child want, resent, need contact with adults?
- c. Need for social contacts.
 - 1. What motivates a social contact?
 - 2. Is child helpful in the class?
 - a. Independently
 - b. After it has been suggested:
 - c. Only after direct command has been issued?
- d. Manners
 - 1. Ability to get along;
 - 2. Social grace and courtesy lessons being applied to class behavior;
 - 3. Self-discipline emerging?

5. Obedience Level

- a. Does not understand what is expected or understand but chooses not to obey.
- b. Understands what is expected: has the knowledge: obeys if watched or asked: obedience does not come always from the inner will.
- c. Self disciplined: has knowledge and follows the rules from inner ability to direct own will.

6. Evidence of Concentration (Draw conclusions only after completing the first 5 areas of observation.) Note the following:

- a. Length of time spent working with the different materials (note which materials the child worked with the longest and shortest)
- b. What type of work produced the most concentration? The least?
- c. Who directed the work?
- d. Who chose the work?
- e. What time of day was it done?
- f. Any other pertinent insights, e.g., was it within the normal sequence that the child had established or out of sequence?
- g. What time of day is the child best able to concentrate? Least able to concentrate?

Assignment #2 Two children

Same format as first assignment except following 2 children through the week.

Try to choose 2 children who have both contrasting as well as similar situations.

Examples. 2 girls, one 3, one 5 years old

Two 4 year old children; one brand new, one began in the class at 2 and a half

Assignment #3 Lessons

A. Daily. Lessons Given by the Directress

1. What was the lesson (name the material or activity).
2. To how many children - formally, brought to watch the lesson
3. Time of day given
4. Length of time spent
5. Result after teacher left the area where lesson was given.

B. Daily: Lessons given by any other adults (use 5 points above)

C. Lessons by Children

1. Note material
2. Who, if anyone, directed one child to teach the other?
3. Who gave the lesson? To whom? Note whether "teacher" was older, younger or peer.
4. What was the immediate result after the initial lesson was presented?
5. Any other pertinent insights.

D. Weekly draw CONCLUSIONS

1. Percent of Time spent on:
 - a. individual lessons
 - b. small group lessons
 - c. collective (whole class) lessons
2. Note patterns:

What time of day are individual lessons given: small group lessons; collective lessons.

What type of lessons are given to what age groups, in general (from what area of the classroom - practical life, sensorial, language, math, etc; individual, small group, collective; note whether formal or informal new or representation, etc.)
3. What amount of time given on new lessons, follow up, representations, formal, informal?
4. Note any pertinent insights regarding how the child receives the knowledge.
 - a. Teacher to child (direct)
 - b. Teacher with child watching
 - c. Child to child

- d. Child with another child watching
5. How was lesson followed up?
 - a. Teacher observing child work independently or very close by.
 - b. Informal follow up by point of interest or note of helpful information, etc.
 - c. Complete representation.
 - d. New and further dimension of same material.
 - e. Next step in sequence of activities after the material originally given.
6. Note any pertinent insights on lessons given by other adults.
7. Note how repetition was encouraged.
8. Note what effect who chose the lesson had on concentration.
9. From the above points, draw conclusions about children working with that material after the initial lesson.
10. Are lessons interrupted? What effect does this have?
11. If movement or grace and courtesy lessons are given, note the time of day, to how many children and what effect it has on the class later that day, the next day; on the individual children involved in the lesson.
12. How are lessons involved in the class management process?
13. How are the lessons of the teacher related to independent work?

Assignment #4 Sensitive Periods

- A Are the children working with materials appropriate to their sensitive periods?
 - 1 Chose several that are and follow their work.
 - 2 Choose several that seldom work with materials appropriate to sensitive periods.
 - 3 Choose several that work within the framework of their sensitive periods some of the time.
- B How do the children work (concentration level, etc.) in relation to their sensitive periods according to the 3 above groupings?
- C Who chooses the work related to sensitive periods (teacher, child, another child)?
- D Other comments. Conclusions.

Assignment #5 Preparation for Class Management

This is planned for a two week period of observation and practice teaching.

Week One: Do a complete observation on each child in the class. If, for example, there are 30 children in the class, try to observe 6 each day and do a daily summary on each child at the end of that day. Make careful notes as to:

- A. Work: pattern of, care in, level of concentration, use of materials, appropriateness to age level and sensitive periods, choices made, etc.
- B. Movement: large and small muscle, coordination, level of control under child's will.
- C. Social Behavior: relation to other children and adults.
- D. Obedience: level
- E. Note any other particulars that affect the child's work and/or movement, social behavior, obedience. This might include medications taken, changes in the family structure (divorce, new job, recent move, new baby, etc.), physical/mental or emotional handicaps, etc.

Week Two: Begin working with the children as the supervising teacher directs. Make any additional notes on each child's summary as appropriate. Begin organizing the children into 3 groups:

- A. Those who need to be very close to the teacher, under constant direction.
- B. Those who need to be close to the teacher, under occasional direction, coming into close contact at times, but able to work independently for some time.
- C. Those who can have freedom in the room, can work independently for most of the morning and can manage without or with only occasional direction.

Christian Montessori Fellowship

Membership Application

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Telephone _____

How long have you taught? _____

School _____

Level you teach: _____

(Mark all that apply.)

Are you a: teacher _____

administrator _____

owner _____

other _____

What is your church affiliation?

Interests

What is your interest in Christian Montessori?

To teach in a Christian Montessori school

To start a Christian Montessori school _____

To transform an existing school _____

To be a better teacher where you are now

Not sure at this time _____

Are you familiar with hands on Bible curriculums (Godly play, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd)? Yes ___ No ___

Do you have an interest in being a regional representative for CMF? _____

Are you in a position to host or help host a regional CMF seminar?

Host _____ Help _____

Membership Benefits

1. Discounts at conferences, seminars and forums.
2. Membership certificate
3. Free advertising in the Cobbler
4. Discounts from selected vendors
5. A nice warm feeling knowing you are not alone and are not the only one seeking to return to the true spiritual roots of this unique education.
6. Your membership will help you, and many others, to serve your children better in Christ's name by providing opportunities for fellowship, learning and encouragement.
7. We have found a "pearl of great price" and your support of the Christian Montessori Fellowship will help spread this "good news" so many more children might truly be nurtured intellectually, physically, emotionally and spiritually and come to know the Good Shepherd personally.

Join and support the fellowship by making your check for \$25 payable to: The Christian Montessori Fellowship or use your Visa, Master Card, American Express, or Discover.

Credit card number _____

Exp. Date _____

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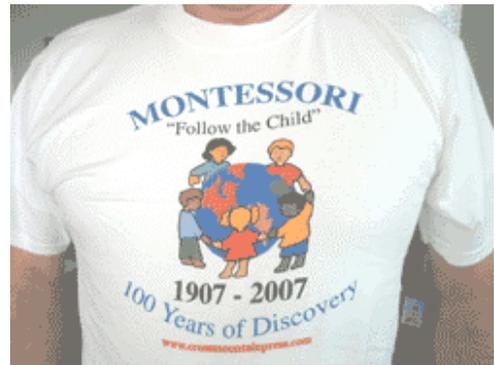
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Total Students Enrolled: _____

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Terms & Conditions: This confirms that it is our intention to conduct a Cross Mountain Press fundraising sale during the dates specified. We understand that all personal checks will be made payable to our organization and we in turn will make payment to Cross Mountain Press. We acknowledge that all sales are final; also that the order is to be pre-paid.

I have read, understand and agree with the General Terms and Conditions listed above and have authorization to sign on behalf of my organization.

Signature _____

Date _____