

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship
March – April 2006

National Conference July 27 – 29, 2006 San Antonio, TX

The Icon of Faith

God gives us the child as an icon, a model of what faith is in its purest and most simple form.

In Luke 18:16-17, Jesus says, “Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth; anyone who will not receive the kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it.”

To begin to understand how the child becomes this icon of faith – this representation – we need to explore what the kingdom of heaven is and how we enter into it.

In Matthew 13:47, Jesus tells us, “Once again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a net that was let down into the lake and caught all kinds of fish. When it was full, the fishermen pulled it up on the shore. Then they sat down and collected the good fish in baskets, but threw the bad away.” This is a remarkable lesson of life that children are adept at – throwing away the bad and keeping the good. How many adults do you know who continue to feed on the bad experiences, the injustices, the disappointments, the betrayals of years ago. And refuse to throw them away.

Children are “smarter” spiritually. They know by instinct to throw out the bad and keep the good. That is why children are so free to forgive. And their lavish forgiveness, just like God’s (in fact, it is God’s forgiveness) is what should make us even more careful not to offend these little ones. (Jesus says it is better to have a millstone tied around your neck and be thrown into the sea rather than to offend one of these little ones.)

They are so quick to forgive that we are often not careful about our actions because they will just forgive us again and again.

Is this not the lesson they teach us? (How many times should I forgive? Seven times? Jesus replies, Seventy times seven.)

Their forgiveness doesn’t mean the offenses don’t hurt. But failing to forgive makes the offense hurt and hurt and hurt and go on hurting. Intuitively, spiritually, children know how to collect the good in the basket and throw the rest away – and that is a little bit of heaven.

Membership

Your support of the fellowship is needed. Join today!

The Blessing of the Pass

Now, that sounds like the blessing of the tuna fleet. But one of the best practices that we found effective was the use of a “pass”. We used them inside. We used them outside. We used them for safety, for order and for control.

Invariably, when you go outside, some one needs to go (and go inside). When you have a hand full of children on the playground, it is easy to not remember (I wouldn’t want to say forget.) that you have a child in the restroom. That is where the pass becomes a blessing. When we headed outside, the teacher would pick up the pass at the door. Our pass was a plastic slinky wrist band. When a child needed to go inside, the pass was transferred to the child’s wrist. And when your wrist band didn’t return in a timely fashion, you were reminded to look for your lost sheep.

The wrist band, (it could be a pass on a necklace) also helps by allowing only one child at a time to go inside. The pass also helps remind you (when the second child has to go) that you have someone inside.

We also used a pass for our atrium. Our pass was a cross on a necklace that hung at the entry to our atrium (which was a corner of our classroom). The pass was a method of order and control but in this case was also a special reminder of the special place they were entering.

Quote

“Much have I learned from my teachers, more from my colleagues, but most from my students.” Talmud: Ta’anith 7b

250 Plus Christian Montessori Schools

I talk to schools all over the country looking for those who are involved in the Christian spiritual nurturing of their children. And we have just passed the 250 milestone. We have defined broadly what a Christian Montessori school is: a school using a Montessori approach and involved in the Christian spiritual nurturing of their children. There is tremendous diversity in the approach of Christian training. Some schools are liturgically oriented, others are evangelical, some are charismatic, some are mainline but all of them want to nurture children spiritually.

Some use the Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, others Godly Play. Some use other religious curriculums, some just tell Bible stories and sing songs. Some go to mass, some go to chapel but each school is nurturing their children.

However, Christian Montessori schools represent about only five percent of the Montessori population of just under five thousand schools. When you consider that there are over 30,000 schools, well over 100,000 day care centers, and over 290,000 day care homes we are a very small slice of the world – but a very important slice.

There are many educators and caregivers that know there must be a better way to nurture and educate children than the method they are using. They just don’t know that it has a name – Montessori.

Our challenge is to run the very best school we can, so it not only serves our children well, but acts as a model for others. The purpose of the Christian Montessori Fellowship is to help and

encourage this great stewardship of our **method**, our **children** and our **faith**.

The ultimate challenge in school (and in life) is to not lose sight of what is important. Look back at the bold words. Successfully doing what we are called to do does require us to be great practitioners of our art. When we successfully do that, we do follow the child. We need to be encouraged to follow the child all the way to the ultimate goal for the child – which is eternal.

The most wonderful people I know are Montessorians whether they are Christians or not. The one significant difference for Christian Montessorians is that our teaching not only has temporal benefits for our children but it must also have eternal benefits.

It is wonderful (and needed) to have an excellent school but our focus ultimately has to be beyond the horizon of time. Every six months or so I get a call from someone who runs a traditional Montessori program and they ask about how to turn it into a Christian program. It is fairly easy to run someone through the steps but it takes great courage to walk those steps.

The first thing I say is that you have to be convinced that you can't go on any longer without being able to share Jesus with your children. When you find yourself at a point where you want to tell the true meaning of Christmas and Easter, when you want to pray with your children and minister to families then you are ready.

Second, any change to school (hours, tuition, philosophy) requires that you give parents adequate time to make the decision whether to stay or go. This is a basic courtesy.

Third and fourth go together. For parents you were a great (secular) school on Monday but come Tuesday when you announce you want to be a great Christian Montessori school, they are not sure of you anymore. This is where you have to reassure people that what made you great on Monday is what will continue to make you great on Tuesday – your relationship to God.

People are wary of religion but are attracted by faith. Too many people have had bad experiences with religion. It is sometimes necessary to reassure people that we are not out to convert them. (Conversion is God's business, we are just the light bearers.)

Assuring parents that very little changes is true. You are not doing three hours of Bible study with their children. The great work of the Montessori classroom continues on. However, it is those moments where God enters into your classroom with a prayer, a kindness, a word aptly spoken and a Bible story at circle time that adds something to a wonderful environment that now makes it an agent for eternal change.

“But we have such a diverse population.” everyone tells me. And so we all do. In our Christian school we had Jewish, Moslem, Hindu children etc. What parent doesn't want for their children the virtues of bravery like David, Wisdom like Solomon, and the faithfulness of Daniel?

Yes, invariably, you will lose some parents. People don't like change. However, you will also add parents because of the Christian spiritual emphasis. You will also keep many of your same parents (who may not be interested in spiritual things) because of your reputation and relationship. Many

people also feel that a little “religion” is okay for their kids, as long as you’re not trying to make them priests or nuns.

Are their financial considerations in your decision. Of course there are. No one wants to disrupt their economic life. But you have to weigh what is most important to you. When the pressure to share the Gospel from within you overtakes your concern about economics, then and only then, is God asking you to get out of the boat and walk on water. Nobody (but God) can make that determination for you.

Also remember, that when your school does begin to make a spiritual impact on your children (and their families) you will find people who become uncomfortable. And you will have to entrust those to God because He is the source of their discomfort and not you. And you can pray for them.

The goal of the Christian Montessori Fellowship is to walk with you and encourage you on this great adventure, so that together we might encourage thousands of others to follow this unique path of education and life that has been gifted to us – Christian Montessori.

Heads of School Seminar

The Ten P’s at the Heart of Management

Come share three days with other heads of schools. Gain new insights into the challenges of creating the finest schools possible.

April 20 -23

May 8 – 11

Every Weekend in June and July

For more details, visit us at

www.crossmountainforum.com

Cross Mountain Press

Visit our website

www.crossmountainpress.com to check out our book for parents “Getting Your Money’s Worth”. The more parents know and appreciate what happens in the environment, the more they will be able to support both their child and the environment.

The Lakemont Toddler handbook is also available as well as Montessori CD’s.

Montessori Myths

The normalized child is perfect

I think the myth about the normalized child has two parts. For outsiders, the normalized child is for all purposes a unicorn – a mythical figure. The description of a normalized child defies description within their frame of reality. Yet, when they visit a Montessori environment they are taken back in disbelief by the “new creations” operating in front of them. Now what is funny, the guides are taken back by the lack of perfection in these “new creations”.

How many times have we all experienced visitors to the classroom who are positively overwhelmed by what they see, while we are thinking this is really a bad day.

Normalized cannot mean perfect. Normalized, in part, means a child who operates with respect, in regard to himself, others and the environment. It is a child capable of purposeful activity. One who can choose wisely among alternatives. They know the ground rules of life. They are the ones who become the teachers of their classmates. They become self-sufficient.

We need to be encouraged about the child who turns the corner on normalization, realizing that they are making progress to becoming independent learners.

Quote

“To be a teacher in the right sense is to be a learner. Instruction begins when you, the teacher, put yourself in his place so that you may understand what he understands and in the way he understands it.” Soren Kierkegaard

National Conference Agenda Theme: The Icon of Faith

Topics include

Classroom management
Personalities of children
Secret of Childhood – book review
Stress
Hands on Bible – Toddler, Preschool, Elementary
Details – They Matter
And More

Why “you” should attend!

1. It’s not “another” conference.
2. Montessori conferences are always presented well, this one is presented completely.
3. Christian Montessori is not presented as a marriage of Montessori and Christianity. It is presented as a non-divorce of Montessori and its spiritual foundation.
4. Montessorians are the most wonderful people in the world. The people at the conference have an added dimension to their personalities. You will make new friends.
5. Whether you are liturgical, orthodox, sacramental,

evangelical, charismatic or other, you’ll find a kinship at the conference.

6. You’ll find excellence in Montessori presented and best practices displayed.
7. You will find encouragement for the spiritual work that is being done in your children.
8. You will go home enthused, excited and inspired.
9. There is not another conference like it.

National Conference Cost and housing details

Conference cost
\$350 (\$325 if paid by May 1st, an additional \$25 discount for CMF members. Conference includes 3 lunches, morning and afternoon breaks and Saturday dinner,
Location
Menger Hotel
1-800-345-9285
www.historicmenger.com
Lodging costs \$119.09 (tax included) per night
Double or single
Rates good if you register by June 27th
Alternate Hotel
Crocket Hotel (across the street from The Menger \$99.24 per night (tax included)
1-800-292-1050

Regional Conference

April 29, 2006
Children First Christian Montessori
School
10 Jersey Ave
Metuchen, NJ 08840
(732) 635-1300
For info call 210-698-1911