

The Cobbler

Ephesians 6:15

The Newsletter of the Christian Montessori Fellowship

February 2008

National Conference

San Antonio

July 31st – August 2nd

Looking Back

Looking Forward

Looking to Eternity

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The Purpose of the Christian Montessori Fellowship

I Corinthians 10:31, "Whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God."

We have fallen into the habit of dividing life into secular and sacred. We have made a dichotomy where God makes none. We separate faith from every day life, and that which is secular from that which is "holy". The truth is – everything is holy. We find that hard to believe. Let's take a "base" example – going to the bathroom. Holy? Consider the cartoon where someone is knocking on the bathroom door saying, "My God,

are you still in there?" Holy? Yes, if you consider "your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit." And the care of your body is essential for your ability to function as a parent, parishioner or professor. Optimal well being is necessary for the ability to carry out what God calls you to. I hate to talk about weight etc (especially since I've just eaten some extra Girl Scout cookies) but our physical well-being is part of our spiritual being. There is no dichotomy in God's world.

And so the purpose of Christian Montessori education is not just to "educate" but to transform. Dr. Montessori wrote that many have likened normalization to conversion. And the transformation we observe in the child is truly miraculous. This normalization/conversion brings the child back to a state of what we were intended to be from before the Fall. And in a Christian Montessori school where we emphasize the physical, social, emotional **and** spiritual, we have an opportunity to make that normalization/conversion complete.

The first purpose of the fellowship is to **redeem** this inspired way of nurturing children. Dr. Montessori's insights (breathed from God's own heart) like all truth can be used without its Christian spiritual moorings. Our first purpose is to bring us back to this original intent. Dr. Montessori said that this method was placed in her hands for the advancement of the Kingdom of God. Our first goal is to place Montessori in its proper historical and spiritual setting. And to assure that the following generation knows the whole truth.

Our second purpose is to **support** you and **encourage** you in your daily spiritual journey. St. Paul writes, "Don't be weary in well-doing." for good reason – well doing is often wearying. The daily ministry you have to young children is not accorded the respect and remuneration of being a college professor but the truth is your impact is far greater and lasts a lot longer. You are present at the creation and unfolding of the personality of the child. You get to assist, you are an essential mid-wife to this new life (and personality) being discovered by the child. God has entrusted you with a monumental privilege (and responsibility.) We are here to encourage your ministry to children.

The third purpose of the fellowship is to help each of us become the very best Montessori teacher we can be, to be a continual **call to excellence**, to be a continual call to refinement of our gifts and talents.

The fourth purpose of the fellowship is to **network** all those who seek to follow God in this particular way of ministering to children. Montessori education is so engrossing that it leaves us little time to look beyond our

environments and schools to even know what others are doing in our community. We are here to foster that community.

Fifth, we act as a **point of information** for people who are interested in Montessori. We are a connecting point for the greater Christian Montessori community.

Sixth, we provide a **market place** for Montessorians wanting jobs and schools needing teachers.

Seventh, we create **materials**, written and visual, to foster and enhance the work that you are doing.

Eighth, we have created a unified **training program** for new teachers that will encompass not only the traditional Montessori areas of training but will make sure that the Christian spiritual emphasis is not diluted or deleted.

Ninth, by holding **regional and national seminars** we provide for the ongoing inspiration and instruction for each of us to be the very best Montessori teacher that we can be.

Tenth, we hold a **management forum** for heads of schools (and those that want to start schools) to share the insights and wisdom that is needed to run an on going successful program.

Eleventh, we are committed to **creating Christian Montessori schools** all over the world. There are thousands of Christian schools in the country that know that there has to be a better way to educate and we want to introduce Montessori to them. There are needs all over the world for Christian Montessori schools. People right now are asking for help in Africa, Asia, and Europe. We will use this means of education to spread the Gospel.

Twelfth, **educating parents**, both as to Montessori and good parenting, is a

vital need. We encourage and provide resources for this significant challenge.

And thirteenth, **we are here** for you! You are not alone in this monumental task of challenging and changing a generation. We need each other to fulfill the calling that God has given us individually and corporately.

Celebrating Valentine's All year Long

God sends us many wonderful Valentine's telling us how much He loves us. He sent Jesus who is the very heart of God's love. God gave us the Bible to remind us of how much He loves us. He daily gives us magnificent sunrises and sunsets, flowers and food, health and friends to remind us of how special we are and how much He loves us. And God gives us Montessori education as a unique Valentine present for us and our children.

What is it about the Montessori environment that transforms both children and adults? It certainly is not red rods or golden beads or all the unique materials. They are wonderful tools to use for learning but they are not what make Montessori transforming.

I Corinthians 13, as it defines the actions of love, holds a key to understanding the mystery and the miracles that we so often see in our environments.

I Corinthians 13:4-8 **Love is patient.** It is that patience which is a defining attitude for a Montessori guide. "Wait patiently" is a common scriptural encouragement. Dr. Montessori's admonition is for us to observe the child – which is a call to patience rather than immediate action.

Love is kind. This is observed in Montessori schools both parochial and non-parochial.

Love does not envy is an attitude fostered in the children. Instead of envy we get cooperation and mutual support. **Love does not boast**, again boasting is an action that is not common in the environment given the amount of cooperative work.

Love is not proud. There is often a sweet humility about our environments. The children's accomplishments are accompanied by an unself-conscious attitude of their achievements. Their "pride" is not proud but present in a child-like humility.

Love is not rude. Grace and courtesy reign in our environments. Grace and courtesy are the first steps of learning to love. To love is to put someone else's well-being before your own. What is remarkable is that the courtesy is extended by adults to children. Such courtesy speaks to their value and the esteem they are held in. They then learn how to extend this courtesy to each other – and to value each other. Rudeness does not value and does not speak of valuing.

Love is not self-seeking. Teaching is not about the teacher – it is about the student. The teacher is truly a servant – a guide.

Love is not easily angered. Anger comes from unmet expectations. It comes from demands unfilled. The birthing process of the personality (which is what this whole concept of education is about) is not served by anger nor helped by anger. Anger has no place in the presence of the miracle of the self-discovery the child experiences.

Love keeps no record of wrongs. Everyday is a fresh start, the beginning of a new discovery.

Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. In Montessori it is never how many you get wrong but how many you get right and get right and right. The emphasis on what is right instead of what is wrong releases the child's spirit to attempt greater and greater feats – because the emphasis is never on what is wrong but on what is right – the truth.

Love always protects. It is the gentle unfolding of the child's personality that is cocooned in both the prepared environment and the prepared attitude of the guide. That which is so delicate, so prone to be marred, disfigured or deviated is protected by principle and practice.

Love always trusts. Trusting in the God-given unfolding of the child instead of the precipitated actions of an anxious guide is a continual challenge. And it is only by experience that we begin to see what we have believed.

Love always hopes. Hope is more than wishful thinking. Hope is active belief, active dreams, active encouragement.

Love always perseveres. That is the lesson for both the student and the teacher. Nothing is accomplished without perseverance. It is the baseline of life. It resides at the heart of mastery. It is at the soul of excellence.

Love never fails. Unfortunately our human experience does not match God's unfailing love. Yet the power of this unfailing love is present in the environment fueled by this inspiration breathed into the method. Dr. Montessori wrote in the "Absorbent Mind", "Love and the hope of it, are not things one can learn; they are part of life's heritage... This force that we call love is the greatest energy of the

universe. But I am using an inadequate expression, for it is more than an energy: it is creation itself. I should put it better if I were to say: 'God is love.'"

God's inspiration (and His love) are present everyday in this wonderful environment. His very heartbeat – of how much He loves our children (and us) - is present in the unfolding of this unique way of teaching and living. Truly, we have Valentine's all year long!

Practical Life How Essential?

Montessori has built a sterling reputation as an educational system that turns out independent, accomplished learners. And yet Montessori's real value is the development of the personality and the character of the learner. We now live in a society that values talent and accomplishment over character. (There is no other way to account for movie stars and sports figures.) And yet God values character (as part of faith) above all else.

Our challenge as Montessorians, while our students pursue academic and intellectual excellence, is not to miss the essential "success" ingredient of life - character. Parents, by and large, are not interested in character training. (The question of what we need to do to educate parents is another whole topic.) Nobody enrolls and pays you because of practical life. Parents (and some staff) would be just as happy if you skipped over practical life and got to "the good stuff."

But in the end, it is practical life that delivers the "real good stuff." Even though practical life was originally involved with real practical life – washing dishes, sweeping, polishing etc,

to a degree these “exercises” are anachronistic – out of place, incongruous in the present age. Children do few of these exercises at home. We have dish washers, washing machines, vacuum cleaners and maids. And no one at home has the time to allow a child to accomplish these tasks. So what value is practical life when we have so much good stuff to get to?

It is remembering that the “indirect aims” of practical life have always been greater and of more lasting significance than the direct aim of washing a table or polishing silver. Practical life is the embracing of the heart of Montessori education. Montessori is a deliberate slowing down of the life process to its essential core. Practical life is that introduction. Practical life’s first premise is that we are able to take care of ourselves – the first steps of controlling our environment. However, if we only consider control of the physical environment we lose sight of the indirect aims and the lasting benefit.

Every child can master the elements of practical life. They are natural mimics and great practitioners of doing what you do and not what you say. Practical life is the first steps of success of not only physical action but of emotional well-being. As adults our anxieties arise from what is outside of our areas of control. Over-controlling people are preemptively dealing with the question of anxieties. This real or perceived lack of control contributes to much adult discomfort.

Children enter life powerless without the experience, tools or ability to navigate life. And it is Practical life that begins to give them the beginnings of skill, control and confidence. They move from being helpless to being able to

operate their world. It is these skills and confidence that mark Montessori children positively for life. Many adults, never having been given these opportunities, are plagued through life with lack of confidence (and its attendant anxieties).

As great a benefit that the skills and confidence are, Practical life gives one even greater benefit – **self-control**. Practical life exercises help the child to bring his body into control. Day after day, exercise after exercise – walking the line, the silence game, washing dishes, washing clothes - the child is learning self-control. The mastery of self-control starts with the physical long before it can be applied to the intellectual, emotional, social or spiritual. Self-control is self-discipline. And self-discipline is a major life key to success, contentment and happiness.

Practical life is the foundational structure for all that is to come. Practical life is “the good stuff”. On practical life training is built all of the enduring achievements provided by the program and method. There are no short cuts to self-control. All successful Montessori education is based on self-discipline and self-motivation. And it is this discipline that is fostered early in the mimicking stages that are present with the sensitive period for practical life.

No one wants to pay you big tuition dollars for their children to wash dishes. “They can wash dishes at home.” parents will tell you. What they won’t tell you (but you already know) is that the child will not have the opportunity to wash dishes at home because it takes too much time, creates a mess and parents don’t have the patience for it.

We need to educate parents (and remind ourselves) that the success and

happiness that they want for their children is found, developed and mastered through the exercises of practical life. The **self-control** needed for practical life pays its compounded dividends later in math, language, science and in life.

Get me a scrub brush!

Training Program Progress

We will begin our first training program starting June 22-27 with our introductory seminar “**Christian Montessori 101**”. Full details of the training program are on the website www.christianmontessorifellowship.com This is a wonderful opportunity to train new staff and assistants.

Function of Words and The Word God . . .

Applications for the Elementary
Classroom

Don Barber
Newfields, NH

In the first part of this series we considered how it comes as no surprise that language is a gift from God. Therefore, when you look closely at the different parts of speech, aspects of God’s handiwork are apparent. Likewise, the lessons Montessori developed to introduce elementary children to the parts of speech can lead us directly to understand qualities of God.

In the first two articles in this series the focus was on each member of the noun family. In this article we turn our attention to the verb family.

Part 4 – The Verb

As with all elementary lessons, part of Dr. Montessori’s design is to leave an impression. The goal of elementary verb lessons is to provide a child with experiences that demonstrate that the verb is action and energy - one cannot see or sense verbs, rather they are something that one can do! They are actions that can only be done in the present and then they are gone. Verbs always involve doing something. Students also come to the realization that without verbs there is no motion in anything. So, unlike the noun, which is symbolized by the stability of a triangular based pyramid (and requires significant energy to budge from its place and will not continue moving when pressure is stopped), the verb is symbolized by a sphere (which will go into motion and stay in motion from a mere tap!). The lessons firmly establish in the student’s mind and body that the verb is energy.

With the impression established, Dr. Montessori realized that the best spherical object in the world to represent the idea of energy is the sun. It is a perfect representation. The sun is not only an energy source in itself, it is also the source of energy for the planet! Therefore, the sphere is colored red to remind us of the intensity of the sun.

The practical application here is that the sun gives life to the world. Without its energy, life and action on the planet could not exist. Similarly, the verb gives “life” and action to words. Not only do these lessons demonstrate how verbs animate nouns, but later on in the grammar curriculum, when studying sentence analysis, students will see that the verb, as the central component of a sentence, gives “life” to a sentence.

Similar to the noun family lessons, the spiritual application is the blink of an eye away - the verb animates a noun, the sun gives life to the world, and the Son of God gives life to the world (John 3:16). Through Jesus, God gives both spiritual life and physical life! Jesus offers us spiritual life through His redemptive work on the cross. Jesus provides physical life through creation. Consider John 1:1. Jesus is the Word and “through Him all things were created and have their ‘be’ing.” In the Psalms it is often mentioned that at God’s Word things were created. God spoke the world into existence through the Word, through Jesus. Once again the power and wonder of language are evident.

This demonstrates that the ultimate purpose of language is not for humans to talk with each other. Instead the purpose of language was to create the entire universe!

Here it is good to recall that while Adam named the things God created, God created those things through the creative energy of The Word, Jesus. So while nouns are the jurisdiction of people as a means of ordering the world, verbs are the jurisdiction of God as both the means of creation and evidence of life within the creation. It is probably no accident that God’s name is I AM - the ultimate verb! Because He is the great I AM, everything else in creation “is.”

Part 5 – The Adverb

After finishing the adverb lessons, a student is left with the understanding that adverbs affect how an action occurs. While the adverb has the ability to limit the verb, it does not make sense without the context of a verb. Therefore, its shape is similar to that of the verb (a

sphere) but is smaller and less dramatic in color (orange).

Through the adverb lessons, a child learns that adverbs tell how, when, where, and why actions take place. The practical application is that adverbs are like timers, letting us know how, when, where and why energy is being used.

There are at least two spiritual applications that come to mind. The first is that God is in charge of the timing and purpose for everything. Ecclesiastes 3:1-8 is a good reminder of the truth that, “there is time for every purpose under heaven.” The story of Jesus healing the man blind from birth is another example. The purpose and the timing of his healing were to bring glory to God.

A second spiritual application is that God knows our hearts (Acts 1:24). While adverbs can give some insight into why and how things happen, those insights may not always be the real reasons. We can and often do fool ourselves if our hearts are not focused on God. God, on the other hand, is aware of our hearts and our motivations. Like David, we should be people “after God’s own heart.” He desires that we be people “after God’s own heart.”

Regional Seminars

Registration Fee	\$150
Early registration (two weeks before)	\$125
Early Registration for CMF members	\$100

All registrations should be sent to the Christian Montessori fellowship.

Seminar agendas are found on line at www.christianmontessorifellowship.com Under regional seminar title

February 22**Amarillo, TX**

Southwest Montessori Preschool
 4515 Cornell St.
 Amarillo, TX 79109
 Vicky Mashburn
 (806) 359-9826
 Agenda 3

March 1**Dallas, TX**

St. James Episcopal School
 9845 McCree Rd
 Dallas, TX 75238
 Loree Birkenback
 (214) 348-1349
 Agenda 2

March 8**Atlanta, GA**

Cross of Life Montessori School
 1000 Hembree Rd.
 Roswell, GA 30076
 Kim Coleburn
 (770) 475-3812
 Agenda 1

March 29**Seattle, WA**

Kidus Montessori School
 834 18th Ave.
 Seattle, WA 98122
 Dee Stephens
 (206) 720-0523
 Agenda 2

Memorabilia**Continuing the celebration**

The first century of Montessori education has been celebrated. We now enter the second century. However, we

still have a number of items available to keep the celebration going.

!00th Anniversary T-shirts were \$20, now \$10
 !00th Anniversary Sweat Shirts were \$25, now \$12.50
 !00th Anniversary banners (beach towels) were \$30, now \$15
 “Monty” Bears were \$10, now \$5.

All of these are still great gifts and will continue the celebration.

Visit our website

www.crossmountainpress.com to order

Prayer Requests

Samantha Sims
 ilpswich
 Suffolk
 UK

Sam has a Montessori pre-school and is taking the next step to open an elementary program. Sam writes, “It feels very scary but also exciting... and now it seems that God is saying the time may be right. “ Please keep Sam in your prayers.

Pray for protection for Albert and Signe Omari in Kenya during this time of unrest.

Pray for Barbara and I as we go to the studio each week to record the training program,

Membership

We need your support as we develop programs and materials for the Christian Montessori community. Please join today!

Management Seminar

Heads of schools and people who want to start schools will benefit greatly from this three day seminar scheduled for April 6-9, 2008 in San Antonio. Visit the website for more details.

www.crossmountianforum.com