

## *Growing Anti-racist UU's: A Curriculum for Children*

[www.uucharlottesville.org/anti-racist-curriculum/](http://www.uucharlottesville.org/anti-racist-curriculum/)

### **Background Materials for Spirit Play**

#### **Maria Montessori**

Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was the originator of the **Montessori Method** of education for the preschool child and was the first woman to receive (1894) a medical degree in Italy. After working with subnormal children, she pioneered in the instruction of retarded children, especially through the use of an environment rich in manipulative materials. The success of her school led her to question the educational system for normal children, and in 1907, she opened her first Case Dei Bambini in a slum area of Rome. This led to the establishment of many centers based on her method; the first one in the United States was founded in 1912. Montessori believed that education could be defined as the self-development or spontaneous learning of a child in a prepared environment. She developed the ideas of child-size furniture, concrete to abstract materials, and an emphasis on cognitive development and sensory training which are now utilized in most child learning centers.

#### **Important Keys**

The two most important keys to the Montessori Method are the environment and the teacher. The teacher is the link between the children and the materials, prepared and arranged on the shelves by this teacher. But the teacher remains secondary to the children themselves and creates an atmosphere of peace and comfort in the classroom.

#### **Elements**

The elements of a Montessori classroom are:

- 1) freedom: children are free to move about their environment, choose their own activities after the initial lesson, and interact with other children in a respectful and peaceful way;
- 2) structure and order: materials are grouped according to intellectual area and sequenced according to their degree of difficulty on shelves easily reached by the child; no one is allowed to interrupt or interfere with the child's work and the child must return it to its place in the same condition that the child found it;
- 3) reality and nature: all materials are authentic although child-sized and there is only one of each set of materials so that the child is encouraged to learn to wait or to choose an alternative; plants and animals are cared for in the environment.
- 4) beauty and order: well-made materials are arranged in an open and attractive manner;
- 5) the materials which stimulate the child's attention span and encourage a focus of attention in the areas of practical life, sensorial, and academic including mathematical, language, writing, reading, geography, and science;

- 6) development of a community life through mixed ages, children's responsibility for the care of the environment, and the respect shown for their work and others.

### **Jerome W. Berryman—Godly Play**

An Episcopal priest who studied the Montessori Method and its religious implications with Sofia Cavalletti (Catechesis of the Good Shepherd) in Italy in 1971. Since then, he developed the Godly Play approach to Christian religious education with an emphasis on the function of religious language—parable, sacred story, and liturgical action—in the moral and spiritual development of children.

The goal of Godly Play is to teach children the art of using the language of the Christian tradition to encounter God and find direction in their lives. There are **six objectives** that help to meet that goal:\*

- 1) To model how to wonder in religious education, so children can “enter” religious language rather than merely repeating it or talking about it.
- 2) To show children how to create meaning with the language of the Christian tradition and how this can involve them in the experience of the Creator.
- 3) To show children how to choose their own work, so that they can confront their own existential limits and depth issues rather than work on other kinds of problems dictated by others, including adults.
- 4) To organize the educational time to follow the pattern of Christian worship that the Christian tradition has found to be the best way to be with God in community; getting ready, listening to the word of God, responding to God’s word, giving thanks, sharing the feast, and participating in the blessing and dismissal.
- 5) To show children how to work together as a community by supporting and respecting each other and one another’s quest.
- 6) To organize the educational space so that the whole system of Christian language is present in the room, so children can literally walk into that language domain when they enter the room and can begin to make connections among its various parts as they work with the lesson of the day and their responses in art or other lessons.

*\*from Teaching Godly Play: The Sunday Morning Handbook by Jerome W. Berryman*

## **Spirit Play**

A Unitarian Universalist adaptation of the Godly Play and Montessori Methods developed by Nita Penfold D.Min., Rev. Ralph Roberts, and Beverly Leute Bruce. First tested at the Winchester and Milton U.U. churches. A number of other churches are now using the adaptation.

We see the **purpose of religious education** as helping children in living into their own answers to the existential questions, as in Jerome Berryman's work:

Where did we come from?

What are we doing here? What is our purpose? How do we choose to live our lives? What are our gifts? How do we use them?

What happens when we die? Why do we die? Why are we lonely and sad sometimes?

We use the Montessori approach and Berryman's morning-as-worship approach for the structure of the morning. As in Montessori, the key elements are the classroom environment and the teachers. These elements free the children to work at their own pace on their own issues.

- 1) The **Door Keeper** helps the children get ready to enter the classroom as parents drop them off.
- 2) The **Storyteller** leads the circle in the story of the day, followed by wondering.
- 3) Children choose an art response or to work with a story previously heard, helped by the Door Keeper.
- 4) Children clean-up, followed by a feast (snack) with the Storyteller.
- 5) Leave-taking is a formal process of saying good-bye to the Storyteller when parents arrive and children are ready.

**Stories** have been developed in the following categories using current children's literature, myths, and religious stories that cover answers from various sources to the existential questions above. Each set of stories is color-coded or symbol-coded to the shelf for easy access and return.

**Unitarian Universalist Focal Shelves:** Liturgical lessons pertaining to our central story of agreeing to live in community and right relationship, including our central symbol, the Flaming Chalice, also stories of church history, U.U. history and U.U. figures.

**Promises:** Lesson pertaining to our principles and stories illustrating each principle.

**Sources:** Lessons pertaining to the sources of our principles and our faith, including Judeo-Christian stories from Godly Play. On the top shelf will be pitchers with the symbols of the sources on them, including U.U. The pitcher used for the feast juice will be one relating to the story of the day.

**Stories of the Mystery:** Stories relating to the Mystery that some people call God.

**Beginnings and Endings:** Stories from all cultures and science telling of our beginnings and what might happen when we die, including concepts of heaven and hell, and reincarnation. These shelves will include materials on the Universe Story and the story of Earth.

**Sacred Places:** Table containing a Jerusalem Temple, and other sets of blocks representing those spaces religions hold sacred, including a labyrinth.

**Art Shelves:** Contains materials for art responses including paint, clay, paper, crayons, markers, glue sticks, templates for U.U. and source symbols, and easels.

**Cleaning Supplies Shelf and Snack Preparation Shelf:** Child-size materials for clean-up and snack preparation. There is also a hand-washing station, and a station for clean-up from painting.

**Church Corner:** Model your sanctuary space with an altar table, lectern, and those materials needed for ceremonies at your church including child dedications, coming of age, marriage or union, memorial services, flower communion, water ceremony, etc.

**Heroes and Heroines:** People who we admire who relate to our sources such as Martin Luther King, Jr., Gandhi, and Mother Teresa, etc.

**Materials for sale on website: [www.spirit-play.com](http://www.spirit-play.com):**

**Introductory Spirit Play Curriculum**

**Spirit Play Manual**

**Spirit Play: A Typical Sunday** Videotape and DVD available.

**Introduction to the Spirit Play Program PowerPoint Presentation**

**Holidays and Holydays for Spirit Play**

**Neo-Pagan Sabbats in Spirit Play format**

**Promises Stories for Older Children Grades 5 to 8**

**Working on an online training course for Spirit Play teachers**

**If you attend the regular training, you get a CD with over 600 story scripts and materials on it to help with your program.**

## **Bibliography updated**

### **Montessori**

*The Absorbent Mind*, Maria Montessori, John Chattin-McNichols.  
*Montessori: Her Life and Work*, E. M. Standing, 1998.  
*The Essential Montessori: An Introduction to the Woman, the Writings, the Method, and the Movement*, Elizabeth G. Hainstock, 1997.  
*Nurturing the Spirit*, Aline D. Wolf, 1996.  
*Children of the Universe: Cosmic Education in the Montessori Elementary Classroom*, Michael and D'Neil Duffy (Parent Child Press, 2002)  
*Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius*, Angeline Stoll Lillard, 2005.

### **Godly Play**

*Godly Play*, Jerome W. Berryman, HarperSanFrancisco, 1991.  
*Young Children and Worship*, Sonja M. Stewart and Jerome W. Berryman, Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1989.  
*Following Jesus: More about Young Children and Worship*, Sonja M. Stewart, Louisville, Kentucky: Geneva Press, 2000.  
*Teaching Godly Play: The Sunday Morning Handbook*, Jerome W. Berryman; Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1995.  
*The Parable Cycle, The Liturgy Cycle, Children and Sacred Stories*, Jerome W. Berryman; from Godly Play Resources Inc., P.O. Box 563, 703 Main St. Ashland KS 67831; 1-800-445-4390, or [www.godlyplay.com](http://www.godlyplay.com). These are all the lessons as Jerome presents them in his workshops. Readymade materials are also available for the lessons from Godly Play Resources. Also, Jerome's website is [www.godlyplay.net](http://www.godlyplay.net).

### **New books from Berryman: The Complete Guide to Godly Play**

*Volume 1: How to Lead Godly Play Lessons*

*Volume 2: 14 Presentations for Fall*

*Volume 3: 20 Presentations for Winter*

*Volume 4: 19 Presentations for Spring*

*Volume 5: Practical Helps from Godly Play Trainers*

*Volume 6: 15 Enrichment Presentations for Fall*

also available: 3 training VHS and DVD's with Jerome Berryman presenting stories

New volumes due out in Fall, 2006.

Living the Good News Press 1-800-824-1813

*Living in a Fragile World: A Spiritual Exploration of Conservation and Citizenship Using the Methods of Godly Play*, Peter Privett, 2003.

### **Other good books:**

Berends, Polly Berrien, *Gently Lead: How to Teach Your Children About God While Finding Out for Yourself* (Crossroads Publishing, 1998)

Stonehouse, Catherine, *Joining Children on the Spiritual Journey* (BridgePoint Books, 1998)

Zerah, Aaron, *How the Children Became Stars* (Sorin Books, 2000)

Michael Caduto, *Earth Tales From Around the World*

Marc Gellman, *Does God Have a Big Toe?*

Janeen K. Grohsmeyer, *A Lamp in Every Corner: Our Unitarian Universalist Storybook.*

**The Children's Hour: An Alternative Learning Experience**

by Joyce Zaugg DRE

Lessons covering the UU principles using materials on trays as in Montessori, categories include UU Identity, World Religions, UU Symbols. Very good for extending your materials other than stories for older children.

You can order this curriculum by sending your shipping address and \$20.00 to: Unitarian Church of Los Alamos, 1738 North Sage, Los Alamos, NM 87544  
ATTN: Joyce Zaugg, DRE

**Montessori Art Books** available from Montessori Services

Go Get Your Smock: Creative and Independent Art Experiences from the Montessori Early Childhood Classroom by Diane Sutliff

Let Out the Sunshine: A Montessori Approach to Creative Activities  
by Regina Reynolds Barnett