

# GRACE CHRONICLES

Issue No. 6 | December 2022



## From the Principal's Desk

As another year draws to a close, it's an opportune time to celebrate special moments in the life of Grace Primary. Previous issues of Grace Chronicles have already featured some of the year's highlights, including our termly excursions; our Grade 6&7 Camp; our varied clubs and societies and handicraft days; our special assemblies such as World Book Day and Heritage Day; and our school drama production, and Athletics Day.

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Additional significant moments this term included our successful Parkrun Fundraiser, which not only raised the highest fundraising total to date (raising just over R80,000 for furnishings), but also enabled our school families to celebrate together and enjoy the challenge of pushing themselves to complete the 5km. More recently, we shared a memorable and quite emotional farewell assembly with the Grade 7's as we reflected on their journey through Grace Primary and charged them to go on to High School, growing in character, spiritual witness and diligence in their work. Finally, last Friday, we concluded our assemblies for the term with a joyful Christmas Carols Nativity, in which the choir and juniors led us via drama and song to anticipate the season of Advent. All of these varied aspects of our school calendar are not only special memories, but they are important for what they teach children about themselves and the world and they enable the children to get to know their teachers and peers better.

Narrowing our focus into the daily life of our classrooms, we have also found it deeply satisfying to see our children grow throughout the year. This growth has not just been in their abilities, skills and knowledge, but also in their loves and interests, habits and relationships. We hope that you were able to share some of this growth at your child's classroom celebrations on Monday morning which featured some snapshots from the year's learning. As we think about the daily life of the classrooms, I would like to pay a special tribute to the teaching team at the school who have worked really hard throughout the year to nurture the children in their learning and growth. The Charlotte Mason approach often requires much more creativity, preparation and individual nurture on the part of the teaching team and we are grateful for their efforts at making our classrooms stimulating, nourishing and contented spaces of learning.



Finally, I would like to thank our parent body for all the support we receive from you throughout the year. From the ladies who bake for our Tuckshop and special events, to those who serve on our Fundraising Committee, to the parents who have helped lift children to excursions, to those who have pioneered special charity initiatives, to others who sew costumes for productions and set up for special events and much more! Thank you so much for playing your role in making our school the thriving community that it has been this year.

We are looking forward to the year ahead, but in the meantime I wish each of you a very happy Christmas break. I hope you are able to enjoy time with family as well as time engaging with the natural world and reading lots of books. And most of all, I pray that you would renew your sense of wonder in the One who is called: "Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6).

# Glimpses of Grace 2022 (in pictures)



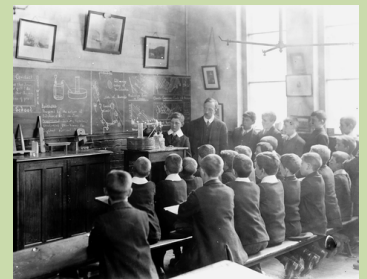
## Philosophy Corner: Is Charlotte Mason Education still Relevant to 21st Century Children?

The end of a school year is often a time to take stock of what we are doing. Is our philosophy of education still relevant to the 21st century children coming to our school with all the other educational buzz words out there, like STEAM, Digital Citizenship, Project-Based Learning, Mindfulness Training, and the like? How do the principles espoused by a Victorian-born educationalist relate to all these modern realities?

In assessing relevance, there's always a balance to be held carefully in tension. On the one hand, we don't assume that what is new and current is always better than traditional wisdom. On the other hand, we can't ignore our present local and cultural context as well as the unique issues that children are facing today. Our respect for Charlotte Mason's educational philosophy is certainly not rooted in an idealistic notion to turn the clock back to a supposedly superior childhood of yesteryear. We embrace the opportunities and distinctives of our present local context, but as we adapt to these, we don't discard godly wisdom in the name of relevance.

At its core, we prize Charlotte Mason's high regard for the child as a human person, created in the image of God - a truth that she perceived had widespread ramifications for education as a whole. We appreciate that children now, just as then, are persons with minds to be fed and nourished; with imaginations able to appreciate beauty in all its forms; with an inner moral sense of right and wrong; with physical bodies needing to run, climb, explore and play; and with a natural curiosity in the world around them.

This was a truth that Charlotte Mason contended for in her own day - a time when children were told to be "seen and not heard"; when girls were told they weren't as capable as boys and when those amongst the labouring poor were treated as inferior intellectually. While much has changed between her day and our own, sadly the subtle undermining of the human person in modern school systems is still a reality to contend with. We see natural curiosity stifled by an oversupply of entertainment; we see conformity to a one-size-fits-all curriculum; we see an over-emphasis on testing and assessments; and we see education treated as a competition in which both the 'winners' and the 'losers' ultimately lose out on any joy in learning.



## Philosophy Corner cont.



Our challenges may be different, but our response must still be to affirm the intrinsic value of children and to make sure that our schooling enriches them with the best possible relationships with God, community, books, art, music and creation. We find great joy in seeing our children growing as persons; enjoying the wonder of personal discoveries; asking for the next chapter of their literature book to be read; relishing some unhurried time to do sketching or watercolour painting during a Nature Study. Just as a plant needs soil, sun and water to grow, so the children of the 21st century still need the well-rounded nourishment of a broad and rich education that treats them as the persons they are.

So at the end of another year, we are thankful that we can take the hands of great mentors from across the generations and build on their godly wisdom as we seek to remain relevant in the present. Is Charlotte Mason's philosophy of education relevant? After nearly 9 years, we at Grace Primary would still say a resounding "Yes"!

Judy McComb

## End-of-Year Exams and Assessments

Over the course of the fourth term, our Grade 3-5 children have been writing assessments on their learning and our Grade 6 & 7's have been writing more formal exams. Over a century ago, Charlotte Mason wrote the following: "Final exams, or end-of-term exams, should not be approached like a beast to be conquered. They should be a natural part of learning that reveals to both the teacher and student alike what ideas have become a part of the child's life, what living thoughts the child has assimilated as his own." At Grace Primary, we encourage our children to approach assessments and exams with this in mind, viewing them as a natural opportunity to demonstrate what they have absorbed over the course of the term. We prioritise open-ended questions that allow the children to display what they know rather than what they don't. Our goal in assessment is for the children to find out what they as persons have assimilated and made their own; what is now a part of their life. As the year draws to a close, we hope that you'll take the opportunity to enjoy with your children all that has captured their minds and imaginations this term.



## What We've Been Reading This Term

Charlotte Mason wrote: "Children must have books, living books; the best are not too good for them; anything less than the best is not good enough". At Grace Primary, we love books, especially 'living books' that are well written and tell a story in an absorbing way. Living books typically engage the mind of the listener or reader, touching the emotions and firing the imagination. Living books can be used in all subjects and do not have to be just narrative. Here are just some of the books that our classes have been reading this term:

### Grade 1:

**Literature:** 'Treasures in the Snow' by Patricia St. John and other 'read-alouds'

**Science Biography:** 'The Boy Who Drew Birds: The Story of John James Audubon' by Jacqueline Davis

**Composer Study:** 'Saint-Saëns: Carnival of the Animals' by Barrie Carson Turner

**Picture Study:** 'Bonnie Ntshalintshali: A New Way with Paint and Clay' by Donve Lee

### Grade 2:

**Literature:** 'The Magician's Nephew' by C.S. Lewis and 'Stuart Little' by E.B. White and other 'read-alouds'

**Science Biography:** 'On a beam of light: A Story of Albert Einstein' by Jennifer Berne

**Composer Study:** The story of Ludwig Beethoven in 'Boyhoods of Great Composers' by Catherine Gough

**Picture Study:** 'Picasso and the Girl with a Ponytail' by Laurence Anholt



### Grade 3:

**Literature:** 'The Lighthouse Boy' by Craig Mair and 'Little Pilgrim's Progress' by Geraldine McCaughrean as well as a children's version of 'A Midsummer Night's Dream'

**Science Biography:** 'George Washington Carver' by Eva Moore

**Composer Study:** The story of Mendelssohn in 'Boyhoods of Great Composers' by Catherine Gough

**Picture Study:** 'George Pemba' by Donve Lee

## What We've Been Reading cont.

### Grade 4:

Literature: 'The 101 Dalmatians' by Dodie Smith

Science Biography: 'Hidden Figures' by Margot Lee Shetterly

Composer Study: 'Johannes Brahms' by Mike Venezia

Picture Study: 'Pierre Auguste Renoir' by Mike Venezia

### Grade 5:

Literature: 'William Wilberforce: The Freedom Fighter (Trail Blazers)' by Derick Bingham

Science Biography: 'The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind' by William Kamkwamba and excerpts from 'Black Pioneers of Science and Invention' by Louis Haber

Composer Study: 'Ralph Vaughn Williams in Boyhoods of Great Composers' by Catherine Gough

Picture Study: 'Dan Rakgoathe' by Donve Lee

Geography: 'Spilled Water' by Sally Grindley

### Grade 6:

Literature: 'There Should Have Been Five' by Monika Honikman and 'Warhorse' by Michael Morpurgo

Science Biography: 'Carry On, Mr Bowditch' by Jean Lee Latham

Composer Study: 'Aaron Copland' by Mike Venezia

Picture Study: 'Action Jackson' by Jan Greenberg and Sandra Jordan and 'Jackson Pollock' by Mike Venezia

### Grade 7:

Literature: 'Goodnight Mister Tom' by Michelle Magorian and 'I am Malala' by Malala Yousafzai

Science Biography: 'An Ocean of Truth - The Story of Isaac Newton' by Joyce McPherson

Composer Study: 'Richard Wagner' by Opal Wheeler and 'Benjamin's Ring' by Roz Goldfarb

## Excursions



Each of our classes have enjoyed a local excursion this term to extend their hands-on learning in some area. You will probably have already seen some photos of these excursions on our social media. From our Grade 1's who learnt more about the History of Pinelands by walking past some of the first buildings, shops, schools and churches in the Central Square area; to the Grade 2's who visited Giraffe World and were treated to a reptile display; to the Grade 3's who visited the Oranjezicht City Farm; to the Grade 4's who learnt more about the trees of Arderne Gardens; to the Grade 5's who went to both the Slave Lodge and the Company Gardens; to the Grade 6's who learnt more about Street Art in Salt River; and finally to the Grade 7's who were led on a historical walking tour in the Waterfront area. From natural beauty to historic sites in our city to the beauty of art - we prioritize these times "out and about" because we believe that they provide our children with broader relationships that will enlarge their cultural literacy, and develop a love of beauty and creativity which will be enjoyed their whole lives.



## Focus Habits

Throughout the year we have trained the children in different termly habits. This term our two habits of focus were **kindness** and **charity**. The word charity describes sacrificial love and generosity towards those in need through the provision of money or material goods. As a school, we thought about the words of St. Augustine in this regards who said: "What does love look like? It has the hands to help others. It has the feet to hasten to the poor and needy. It has eyes to see misery and want. It has the ears to hear the sighs and sorrows of men. That is what love looks like."

As an outworking of this habit, we have partnered with St Thomas Church in Heideveld to put together Christmas food hampers to give to their Daily Bread ministry which looks after needy families. We also put together some toiletry packs for their teens who are going on a youth camp at the end of this year. Thank you to all our school families who have donated generously towards this project (see pics on next page).





A huge thank you to all those who donated goods for St Thomas' Heideveld's Community Christmas Hampers initiative. Thank you for your kind and charitable act.

## Increase your word power!

As part of our focus on particular habits during the term, we challenged the classes with some new vocabulary words that relate to these habits. This focus not only broadens the word power of our children but helps them to think about what these words add to their understanding of the habit in question.

To illustrate why extending our children's vocabulary is important, let me quote from Norton Juster's book for children called: *The Phantom Tollbooth*. In this book Milo, the main character, travels to a land called 'Dictionopolis,' which plays on the word 'diction' meaning the choice of words. In the book, when Milo met the Dirty Bird, they had this conversation:

"Let me try once more,' Milo said in an effort to explain. 'In other words... '

'You mean you have other words?' cried the bird happily. 'Well by all means, use them. You're certainly not doing very well with the ones you have now.'"

We believe in giving our children "other words" to help them communicate more accurately to others. When focussing on the habit of KINDNESS we thought about the following new words:

For the Juniors:

**GRACE  
TACT**

For the Seniors:

**BENEVOLENCE  
ALTRUISM**

When focusing on the habit of CHARITY, we thought about the origins of the word 'charity' and discovered that it originally entered into the English language as a result of its biblical usage. It is derived from the Latin word *caritas*, a word commonly used in the Latin Vulgate New Testament to translate the Greek word *agape*, a distinct form of love which is sacrificial towards others. This made us realize that in talking about 'charity' we are embracing a richly held biblical virtue, which seeks to show sacrificial love to those in need through the giving of money or material goods.

## Staff News

It is always sad to say goodbye to staff who have been such integral members of our teaching team. Mr Louw joined Grace Primary at the start of 2019 to teach our very first Grade 7 class and from the start brought great professionalism, creativity and energy to our team. In addition to pioneering some of our Grade 7 curriculum and leading our first Grade 6&7 camps, he has led two drama productions and given oversight to those children taking part in the Conquesta Olympiads. He will always be remembered for his wide range of hats, ties and accents and for his dynamic classroom presence. Mr Louw has decided to get international experience and will be teaching in Japan next year.

We are also very sad to say goodbye to Mrs Gregoriades who came back to full-time teaching at the beginning of this year after being away on Maternity Leave. However, she would like to devote her energies more fully to being a mother and while we support this decision wholeheartedly, we are sincerely sorry to lose her. Mrs G also joined us at the beginning of 2019 and from the start has been a deeply nurturing and caring member of the staff team. It is not unusual to see individual children gravitate to her on the playground to chat and her classroom has always been a warm and stimulating space.

We wish both these teachers everything of the best in this new season of their lives.



While our good-byes have been sad, we are also privileged to welcome some new staff to our team next year. Mrs Gabriels will be teaching our Grade 7's next year and Mrs Haywood (no stranger to the school!) will be teaching the Grade 4's. Mrs Gabriels has many years teaching experience and at present is at Star of the Sea Convent Primary School. She is excited to teach in a Charlotte Mason school and we look forward to working with her.



Mrs Haywood has spent the past two years at Grace Primary, first in a maternity post and more recently teaching part time Afrikaans and helping with extra Maths and reading lessons. We are pleased that she will now become a full-time member of our staff team. Finally, with the launch of our new Grade R in 2023, we also welcome Mrs Meissner as our new Grade R teacher with Teacher Caroline as her assistant.



## New School Building – At Last!

We are so excited to finally be moving into our new building, which has been a focus of our planning and prayers for a long time now. You have probably enjoyed seeing the progress on this new space as you have driven past the school on a daily basis and we look forward to a special opening ceremony next year. We would like to say a very special thank you to our Building team, in particular our founders, Darrin McComb and Chris de Witt who have put hours of their time into seeing this project to completion.

