



Monteverde Friends School/Escuela de los Amigos

July, 2023

www.mfschool.org

Our summer break is almost over -- just 10 days until we welcome our students back for the 2023-24 school year on August 9th.

"Break" is a bit of a misnomer for our administrative staff members. Without students and teachers present, our two facilities staff have been busy deep cleaning classrooms. Monteverde's wet climate attracts termites and mold, so classrooms got needed cleaning and repairs.

This summer has included some major projects that illustrate how the Monteverde Friends Meeting and our Monteverde Friends School come together for mutual benefit. Two major projects this summer -- repairs on the Friends Library and repairs on one of our teacher houses -- offer good examples of how our functions serve each other.

In this newsletter, we'll explain the organizational structure within which MFS operates, and the school's role within the Monteverde Friends Meeting. For the benefit of the many non-Quakers who are invaluable in supporting our school, we'll try to translate some of our "Quakerese" terms into English.

With great sadness, we note the passing of alumnus Carlos Guindon, son of Luck and Wolf Guindon after a long struggle with ALS. In his last days, Carlos shared a message for the community: "Plant every day. Regenerate the soils and ecosystems. Love all living beings." His message is now posted in a key gathering spot for the community.



Is "Quaker" the same as "Friend"?

"Friend", as in "The Religious Society of Friends" is the formal and original term, though the two terms are used interchangeably today. As background:

"[George Fox](#), founder of the Society of Friends in England, recorded that in 1650 'Justice Bennet of Derby first called us Quakers because we bid them tremble at the word of God.' It is likely that the name, originally derisive, was also used because many early Friends, like other religious enthusiasts, themselves trembled in their religious meetings and showed other physical [manifestations](#) of religious emotion. Despite early derisive use ... no embarrassment is caused by using the term to or of Friends today." Source: Britannica

What is the Monteverde Friends Meeting?

The term Monteverde Friends Meeting is used in two ways. Overall, it refers to our organization that has multiple parts, primarily our Meeting (as in a church or worshipping community), the Friends Library, and our Friends School. At the same time, the term "Meeting" is often used to distinguish between our church function and our school activities.

Our Meeting, in the church sense, is of the type where our worship consists of centering down to be receptive to spiritual messages, or insights. We do not have a minister. Some of our weekly worship hours may be entirely silent. In others, one or more Friends present may feel moved (quaked, in a sense) to offer a short message for all present,

which we then reflect on in continued silence. In contrast with many churches with established creeds, Friends rely on "continuing revelation." Documents outlining our beliefs, values and practices are continually updated to reflect new realizations.

Volunteer committees see to many of the administrative functions that a priest or minister would cover. Those committees report to our monthly business meetings. In addition, the Monteverde Friends Meeting maintains two major "missions": the Friends Library (see next article) and the Monteverde Friends School. These are not the only activities -- e.g., our Peace and Justice Committee is doing work with refugees -- but they are the two main ones.

As you might imagine, running a school on a day-to-day basis is very different from coming together as a church. Thus, it is important to distinguish the role of the Meeting (all volunteers) vs. the role of the school and its employees. We have in place separate "disciplines" -- policy and procedures -- defining the two roles.

In general, the Meeting sets the mission of the school and determines high-level policies while the Head of School and her staff make operational decisions. A Meeting-appointed School Committee hires, oversees and supervises the school administration. For example, the Meeting designated years ago that the school would focus on serving local children; while we add some international teachers, about 90% of our students have grown up in Monteverde. The school, with representation from the Meeting, makes admission and financial aid decisions consistent with that focus.

Within that structure, there are many interactions. The Friends Library is run by another committee of the Meeting and is not the school's responsibility -- but the school is likely the leading "customer" for the library, whether for books or as a quiet place for meetings or study. Similarly, the Meeting owns and is responsible for three houses and three apartments that are intended to help assure that our school teachers can find and afford housing.

The articles that follow address those areas. There is more information at the Monteverde Friends Meeting's [website](#). Aside from descriptions of our Meeting, you can find issues of [Seeds](#), a quarterly collection writings by local people with some association to the Meeting. You can also read an update to our "[Family Album](#)", documenting our community history from 2001 to 2021.

A midweek worship held outdoors with all of our students and a few community members.



Help support us!



You can make a tax-deductible contribution in Canada, the U.S. or Costa Rica to either our Friends School or the Friends Meeting through the same sources. Just note on the memo line for checks, or for online giving in the "designation" option where you want your support to go.



Thank You!

Our Friends Library



The leak was in the back section of the second story of the library. The roof in that part was taken down to the wood, repaired, and then layered with tar paper and insulation before the new metal roofing was installed. The skylight was completely replaced

For many years, the library operated by the Monteverde Friends Meeting was the only library in the Monteverde area. In recent years, a small, one-room library has opened in nearby Santa Elena.

Started in 1975, the mission of the Friends Library is to:

"... provide reading and information services free of charge to persons living in the Monteverde area. The Meeting appoints a library committee who is responsible for the selection of materials, the classification and cataloging of resources and the management of the library. This volunteer work is supported by community members. The library committee reports to the Monteverde Monthly Meeting.

The Meeting maintains the building and may appropriate money to support the library. While the Monteverde Friends Community Library is for the use of the whole community, it also serves as an important resource of materials and information for the Monteverde Friends School.

The library depends on donations of books, magazines, and other materials for its collection. The selection of materials is chosen to provide a wide range of reading materials and information in English and Spanish for the use of the community. We depend on the honor system for patrons to use the library with care, respecting the system of checking out materials and returning them."

Over nearly 50 years, the library has accumulated more than 23,000 books, 4,000 of those in Spanish and the rest in English. That has required a lot of space. The library started with one floor. In the late 1990's a two-story section was added to the building. Even with that space, the volunteer committee is always sorting through the books to reduce the number of duplicates. Once or twice a year, they offer a used-book sale to share hundreds of books and raise funds for the library.

Over the past year, as often happens due to the weather here, a leak developed in the back section of the second floor of the addition. Books were moved and buckets placed, but the leak had to be addressed. Thanks to generous donors, an ambitious project was undertaken. The back roof was taken down to the wood structure and then layers of insulation and the steel roof were installed. Along with that work, skylights were replaced. The next step was to paint the entire roof in a matching color, and then the entire building was painted. Volunteers from our Meeting's House and Grounds Committee then scoured the inside of the library, clearing mold.

Our library looks like new!



The older, single-level part of the library on the left and the newer, two-level section on the right.

Housing for Our Teachers and Staff

From left to right, the pictures show the damage termites have done to a beam, a place where termites have eaten completely through a door, and our workers placing a new steel ceiling beam, with a new window beam in the foreground.



Finding housing that is affordable within teaching salaries has become an ongoing issue for our school staff over the last ten to twenty years. In the Costa Rican economy, both prices and salaries are a fraction of what they would be in the US and other countries.

However, the vast majority of the Monteverde economy involves tourists who are used to the prices in their home country. With the advent of AirBnB and VRBO, housing rentals reflect that tourist economy. Locals, including our teachers and staff, find themselves priced out of the market. This often hampers our recruitment efforts. Too often, unless a candidate has a second wage earner in the family, candidates decline our offers.

The Monteverde Friends Meeting partially addresses this issue with three houses and a three-unit apartment building that are primarily available for teachers at less inflated rents. Through the generosity of donors, the Meeting has acquired the buildings, some existing and some constructed by the Meeting, over the last 50 years.

As with the library repairs, maintaining these properties in our wet Monteverde climate is a challenge thanks to mold and termites. With all the trees in our area, most older houses are built with wood, as is the case with the Meeting's three houses. The shared school/Meeting maintenance staff member is the point person for day-to-day repairs, but sometimes more is needed.

Most recently, the three-bedroom house we call "Puffers" has required major repairs. Termites have done extensive damage, as shown in pictures with this story. As a result, major reconstruction is needed. One major step is that the wooden beam that is the main support for the roof has been replaced with a steel beam. Vertical beams in windows have similarly been replaced with steel. Guided by the Meeting's House and Grounds Committee, volunteers and our shared maintenance staff, professionals have been hired and repairs are underway.

We look forward to a much-renewed Puffers available for rental by the teachers, staff and volunteers who make our school what it is today!



An outdoor view of the side of Puffers and a picture of the structure with sides torn down to the cement part and steel window beams added.

