

From July 26, 2000 Prairie Fire

## **Sunday, July 30**

There will be NO PROGRAM at the Prairie meeting house. Instead, travel to Sauk City and at 10:00 am, participate in a joint program with Sauk City Congregation, First Society, James Reeb and Prairie. The topic for discussion is "The Less-Traveled Road: Our Common Call".

Each congregation will present a short talk regarding the following themes:

- (1) what is unique about each congregation (how we view ourselves) and
- (2) what we have in common with each other.

We're invited to join the Sauk City congregation for a potluck out in their park (adjoining the church) after the joint service. They'll supply the set-up and beverages. We're asked to bring a dish to pass and hymnals: Sauk City has only about 30.

To get to Park Hall in Sauk City, follow Route 12 NW from Middleton. After crossing the Wisconsin River bridge, turn right at stop light, turn left on Polk, travel three blocks to 307 Polk St. If necessary, you may leave a message at (608) 643-3131.

The following thoughtful letter by Jack Ferver helped inspire the theme for Sunday's service:

To: Editor, Capital Times

From: Jack Ferver, 770 Water Street, Prairie du Sac, 53578. (608) 643-3988

Re: Response to Michael Schuler's June 16, "What is Religion, Let me explain".

I always enjoy reading the articles in the Cap Times by First Unitarian Society's Michael Schuler. As a long-time member at First I gained a great respect for him both as a minister and as a human being, and I read your June 16 article by Michael on "What's religion? Let me explain" with great interest.

He is right about many things, but he and his Unitarian-Universalists are dead wrong about one important point, they hold that, as Michael says, "Religion without God is not impossible". It is impossible. Without God there is no religion and no need for a church. Without God there is no Spirit of God and no basis for religious spirituality.

It is one thing to reject the Christian Trinitarian creed that would locate an external male God up in Heaven and turn the great teacher Jesus into God, but growing millions of us believe that there is a living, creative spirit in all of nature, which includes us, within us, flowing through us, connecting us with every other human being that now lives or ever has lived. To us this is "God", the basis for our spirituality and our renewed interest in finding a "new age" religion.

All of this is not some new-fangled notion, but actually is the ancient source of most spiritual traditions. Here are a few examples. Christianity: "The Kingdom of Heaven is within you". Islam: "Those who know themselves know their God". Buddhism: "Look within, you are the Buddha". Yoga: "God dwells within you as you". Confucianism: "Heaven, earth and human are one body".

The truth in all of this struck home to me after I joined our local Unitarian Fellowship in Sauk City, a Fellowship that is part of the Free Congregation of Sauk County. Ours is the last remaining congregation in the United States of what once was a flourishing “free thought” religious movement, a non-creed movement that relied on large doses of reason and “humanism” and little if any doses of God and Spirituality. It seems that it was not possible for other free thought congregations to survive without “God”. To make it possible for us to continue to survive we have now added a “Human Spirit” meditation-discussion group to our programming to respond to the need of some of us to strengthen our spiritual base.

Not only have free thought congregations failed but many main-line Christian churches are in trouble today, and so are many Unitarian congregations.

What is religion? Let me explain. It is walking and talking quietly, lovingly, with the Spirit of the God within. The theme song of our Human Spirit group expresses this well. It is the great song from Carousel, “You’ll Never Walk Alone”.