

P. O. Box 4037
Madison, Wisconsin

Vol. 3, No. 14
March 24, 1971

Sunday services at 10:30 a.m. at the YWCA, 31 N. Pinkney St.

March 28 - Neil Shadle, Asst. Prof. of Public Ministry at Meadville will speak on some of his social concerns in political actions

April 4 - A Freedom Seder

April 11 - Family Easter Service

WHY A SEDER?

On Sunday, April 4, we at the Prairie will celebrate a Seder, the ritual symbolic meal of Passover. But why should twentieth century Unitarians involve themselves in ancient Jewish festivals? The Seder, is a feast of freedom, a celebration and commemoration of the triumph of oppressed peoples over their oppressors. But more than a looking backward to the time of the Pharaohs, it is a feast of rededication to freedom now, to peace now. In the Seder we see ourselves in the children of Israel, rising up out of our degradation, dehumanization, and misery, to create an identity where there was none, to act for justice where there was none, to win freedom where there was none, to forge a society of humane order where there was none. The Seder in this sense speaks to all people, urging upon us all, the need for a better world, the need for our working commitment to that better world, and the possibility of improving the conditions of life.

The Seder, though a traditional ritual, is also traditionally flexible and adaptable. Jews have long adapted the basic elements to fit the circumstances of their time and society, for neither freedom nor oppression have the same appearance in all cultural contexts. So our Seder is an adaptation. We will be freely using what is called the Freedom Seder first created for Passover in 1969. In this Seder there are many readings, many areas of concern from our lives and times. We will read from A. J. Muste, and Allan Ginsberg, and William Blake. We will hear words of freedom from our Prairie youth and from all ages. Those of us preparing the Seder hope that people who come will be thinking ahead of time about what they think freedom means today in our society. And we urge you, if you wish to do so, to bring a short statement or quote which you will then share with the group in a time allowed in the Seder ritual for words from the family.

Mention of the family brings up another point. The Seder is traditionally a liturgical meal celebrated on the first night of Passover by the family. By celebrating a few days early on Palm Sunday, we symbolically link two holidays that have not only thematic similarities, but close historical causal correlation. Palm Sunday falls on April 4 this year, the anniversary of the assassination of Martin Luther King. It was this assassination and the riots following which first stimulated in the mind of Arthur Waskow (who created this Haggadah -- the written liturgy of the Seder) the ideas which one year later resulted in the Freedom Seder. We commemorate in this liturgy not only the delivery out of bondage in Egypt, but also the delivery out of bondage in America; and especially we commemorate not the death, but the life of Dr. King.

I think that we should especially emphasize that this commemoration and rededication to the struggle for the rights and the dignity of people is celebrated within the safety of the family circle where people commonly feel security and freedom from psychological threats and fears and oppression. We celebrate our Freedom Seder in our own safe home, our own extended family, The Prairie.

L'Chaim! L'Shalom! L'Cherut!
For life, peace, and freedom.

Dave Meyer

FINANCIAL STATEMENT

One way to put our financial plight is this. The cost of a Sunday session is our budget, \$11,000 divided by 40, the number of our yearly sessions. Brutally one could divide this number by the participants and come up with a per capita cost. For each to feel that this was an implied commitment would be as incorrect as to feel that nothing need be done and that the problem will go away.

The point is, Prairie needs your individual help in whatever way. If need be we'll undertake drives, suppers, sales, whatever. If our Society, clearly above average intellectually, is below its own stated financial goal, on the average, what is to be done to assure survival? In short, send money now, keep the Prairie green!

Ted Clark,
Finance Committee Chairman

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

The YWCA has rented the first floor nursery area to a retail store, so we are no longer able to use it on Sunday mornings. We will be using room 210 for the nursery children.

High School Youth: Come over to Caldens right after the morning service, March 28. Bring your thoughts, poems, other selections about freedom to plan for the Freedom Seder. Also bring a sack lunch.

The Long Range Planning committee recently submitted a questionnaire to members and friends of the Society. This concerns preferred locations for the Prairie Society. The opinions expressed have been very helpful and we plan to complete the survey by phone before summarizing the results.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The Play Reading Group will meet on Saturday, March 27 at the Cox's on Old Sauk Rd. just west of Middleton. They will be reading the musical Forty Carats, beginning at 8:00 p.m. For more information or directions on how to find their home, call: 836-6115.

For those interested in talking with Dave Meyer privately, he will be at the Sunday meeting one hour early, at 9:30 a.m. feel free to come then or to call for an appointment at some other time more convenient for you.

Several people have asked for either the sermon or the poem which were part of Dave's service on March 21. Both are being duplicated and will be available at Sunday meetings.

There will be a meeting of the executive board of the Society on Thursday, April 1, at 8:00 p.m. at the home of Hermine Davidson, 2210 Waunona Way.

Meadville Theological School, our denominational seminary at the University of Chicago, is making an appeal for funds. The recent decline in the economy, the serious inflation, and the reduction of support from the Unitarian Universalist Association in Boston (the reduction was from \$70,000 to \$4,000) have created an operating deficit of over \$130,000. Clearly, they are in desperate need. The board has responded by sending a check for \$50 from our contingency fund. If you could send anything, even a dollar or two, the gift would be appreciated. Many students who came to Meadville on scholarships now must seek their own resources, an extremely difficult task when the tuition is \$825 per quarter. If you can contribute, send your check to Meadville, 5701 Woodlawn Ave., Chicago, Ill. 60637

CAN AND BOTTLE PICKUP This Sunday, March 28, will be can and bottle pickup at church. Like the last time it will be at the Fondue Chalet parking lot across the street from the Y. People will be there with containers to put your bottles and cans into between 10 and 10:30 a.m. Separate cans and bottles, and separate bottles into clear, green, and brown colors, and remove the metal caps from the bottles. Questions call Ellie Friedman 257-3385 or Rosemary Dorney 238-4382.