

P. O. Box 4037
Madison, Wisconsin

221-1065

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Sunday services at 10:30 a.m. at the YWCA, 101 E. Mifflin St.

- April 9 - On Good Friday the Prairie Society and the First Unitarian Society will hold a joint service. George Calden, Max Gaebler, and Dave Meyer are working together to create this service with some new and exciting material. Everyone is encouraged to attend at the First Society building at 8:00 p.m. on April 9.
- April 11- Family Easter Service: "The Voice of the Turtle" a celebration for Spring. Everyone is asked to bring a dyed egg (without any design, please), some hot cross buns or other Easter breads, and a spirit of rebirth. This is a family service with lots of variety and activity, so wear casual clothes.
- April 18- "How to Live in Harmony with the Earth"
- Harold and Carla Kruse of the Sauk City Fellowship, have a large farm near Loganville on which they have found it is possible to be successful farmers and also to respect rather than exploit the earth.
- April 25 - A multi-media service
- High School Youth Group with Aileen and Al Nettleton
- May 2 - May Day Service

WORSHIP: drama and response to our human condition

What are we doing at the Prairie Society on Sunday morning? What do we call our activities? Many of us in Unitarian circles react to terms like service or worship or liturgy. Understandably so, for often those words carry with them lots of luggage from our pasts in other religious gatherings. They also are freighted with historical and cultural associations inappropriate to a Unitarian religious meeting, given all the things most of us don't believe. But as we leave behind home country we no longer can live with, must we abandon everything? And if we do, have we rushed headlong into a vacuum?

I hope the answer to both of these questions is "NO," for I see no way to make a new and more viable (for us, at least) religious life without some elements of value from the old and much solid new creation. With that in mind, I would like to deal with worship (the word comes from the root "worth-ship") as we do it -- or don't do it -- at the Prairie. Perhaps the most meaningful concept of worship I know is articulated by Malcolm Sutherland, president of Meadville, our seminary in Chicago, as a drama of the human condition and the response of a household of faith to that drama -- a community's or tradition's evaluation or reaction to some fundamental element of the human situation. If we are to present meaningful programs in our group, I think we must create them out of this sense of symbolic drama linked to our response. Certainly, for us such drama will come out of the concrete experiences of our life here and now; we will need to enact statements of how it is. And our reactions will focus on the present realities and possibilities of our world, laying claims upon us for action in our society in our daily lives.

The traditional forms of worship rarely, if ever, contain this tension between the drama of reality and our active reaction to it. I think this is one of the primary reasons why those of us in the Prairie reject such forms. Our problem often, however,

is that we equate such forms with worship itself, so that we create programs which, though they may have much of value and meaning, do not stimulate our thoughts, feelings, and actions at the level of such fundamental reality. Too often our meetings seem flat, our drama of the human condition dull. We give ourselves precious little to respond to, though our tradition of freedom, reason, and social concern provides a rich household of faith with which to respond. In other words, by dumping worship with the traditional forms it has been cast in, we may well lose in the long run the very power and excitement we sought in abandoning the old, dead forms.

Surely one means of transcending such difficulty is simply to think in the dramatic framework of Dr. Sutherland's definition of worship. Another is to acknowledge that, difficult as it is to dramatize gut level issues in the human condition if we use the traditional forms, to abandon the forms makes our task no less difficult, only different and hopefully more potent. All of us must not only think of the drama and response as we create our Prairie worship, we must think of ourselves as all ministers of the group. A fellowship organization such as ours demands this of us even though we have a minister. Our focus cannot be only on ourselves, only ideosyncratic, only doing our own thing. We dramatize the human condition and structure means of responding to that drama for the Prairie. As the minister, I am here to help everyone in the Prairie as they create worship for our community, as they minister through their offering to all of us. We have increasingly evolved a style of worship which is informal, conversational, intimate, and perfectly appropriate to us; I hope that we can work together to enlarge our style to include this human drama which will carry us beyond the borders of the Prairie country in ways we hardly expect and on paths we hardly know exist.

Dave Meyer

ANNOUNCEMENTS: The playreading group will meet this month at the Birongs' home at 599 Glen Dr. on Saturday, April 24 at 8:00 p.m.

High School Youth Group will meet at the Nettletons' 1556 Simpson, #8, SATURDAY, April 10, at 1:00 p.m. Bring your slides

Copies of Dave Meyer's sermon on art and the accompanying poem are available at Sunday morning meeting. If you can't find them, ask someone.

There will be no bottle and can pickup this Sunday, being Easter Sunday. Save your cans and bottles for next time (to be announced).

JUNK MAIL

If you are bothered by junk mail, there are actions you can take to get off the mailing list. Write on the item "Refused - Return to Sender". The post office will then send it back with postage due. That will cost the sender several times what it cost to send the item in the first place, so he presumably will take you off his list. Such notations as "ECOLOGICALLY OBSCENE" have been suggested as a way of venting annoyance.

A word of caution - bulk mail organizations compile lists of people who respond to them in almost any way - even negatively. You may find yourself on still another mailing list.

Social Action Committee