ON THE GIVE AND TAKE BETWEEN YOU AND OTHERS AND DAVE MEYER

by Mark McElreath

Dave Meyer has been Prairie Society's minister for over a year now. All of us know Dave. We have seen him at Sunday meetings, various committee meetings, social functions. Some have come to know him personally well, others have established a cordial but not intimate relationship with the man. He has affected us all, individually and as a group.

And we have affected him.

A group of religious liberals creates a unique set of demands for the person they bring to their midst and call "minister." Some want that person to be the focal point of group activities; for others, that is the last thing they want. Some want that person to be a good listener who can offer insight into deep personal problems. Others want the person to merely reinforce their own personal opinions. Each individual in the Prairie Society has his own perception of what the minister's role should be.

In the last year, Dave has tried being everything to everyone. And the various individual and group needs converged to create a torrent of thoughts and desires within Dave. Undoubtedly he failed some of the people some of the time; unquestionably, he succeeded at other times.

Where do these leave you and Dave for this next year?

Prairie Society can only afford to pay Dave for halftime service; yet, he has given much more of his time than that to the needs of the group and the needs of individual Prairie Society Friends and members. This imbalanced situation will likely continue, unless...

Each of us recognizes the need and desires of Dave Meyer: respecting his uniqueness and realizing our impact on him. We should be aware that he stands at the crossroads of conflicting group and individual needs; and he has a tendency to try to satisfy everyone.

In talks with Dave, he has expressed several thoughts to me which reflect on the give and take between the Prairie Society and its minister.

"I am only interested in relationships which cut to the core of meaning and revolve around the focus of human existence," he said.

"I am not interested in playing games, in trivial conversations... There is too much at stake--psychologically, morally--to play at imitations of life."

"Writing is paramount in my life: I think of myself first as a writer. If I had more time, I know I could write several pieces for Prairie Society. This is where my main talent is... but I haven't had the time."

"My desire now is to give more of the essential me to the group... more of the writer, and less of the regular committee meeting member... to help Prairie Society operate at a meaningful level."

"I want Prairie Society to move away from being so process oriented--to quit stressing the rules of the game--and get down to the business of discussing life. I want us to be content oriented."

"The content as set up by the Program Committee for the first part of this year has a great potential to provide the focus I want for the group. Maybe some of our evening meetings also will get to this level. I hope so, because I can't imagine spending my time at anything less."

Each of our relationships with Dave will shift subtly this next year; and the group's relationship with its minister will shift. It's the natural chain of events as individuals and groups mature.
The Board of the Prairie Society delegated authority to licensed real-estate broker Fran Remeika to find suitable facilities for the group.

A long-time member of Prairie Society, Fran's efforts to find a new meeting place are near fruition. Tentative agreements have been reached with the owners of the Portal-Foster Center for Children for Prairie Society to use their facilities at 686 West Lawn Avenue.

The Portal-Foster Center is sponsored by the Wisconsin Division of Mental Hygiene with support from Dane County and the United Community Chest.

According to the Center, it is "a special school for children who have been diagnosed as autistic, schizophrenic, psychotic, brain damaged, or emotionally disturbed."

"Another way of regarding these children served by the Center is to say they suffer from central nervous system disorder, therefore are hyperactive, disorganized, cannot communicate well, and function at a retarded level. Some children in addition to being neurologically impaired may be blind, deaf, or otherwise physically handicapped. The children at the Portal-Foster Center are not easy to categorize because no two are alike in very many ways."

A parish meeting is planned in October at the Portal-Foster Center, for the group to inspect the facilities.

The church building, built in 1918 (for less than $10,000) by the Westminster Presbyterian Church, is red brick and stucco. The basement level—with three large classrooms, kitchen and large meeting room—is presently used by the Portal-Foster Center. Upstairs, there is an office and large (30 by 52) meeting room.

Tentative agreements indicate the Prairie Society will rent the use of the whole building for Sunday and other specified days of the week.

The Portal-Foster Center had been renting their facilities; but recently the group purchased the building. The previous owners had wanted to raise the church building and put up a high-rise apartment, but community protests and zoning regulations stopped the destruction of the church building.

The building will require certain repair work, which the Portal-Foster Center will make according to the Madison building code. Paint and other maintenance items will be paid for by Portal-Foster if Prairie Society members want to fix up the building.

A lot next to the building is filled with play equipment. Soon a new fence will be installed surrounding the play area.

Across from the proposed new site for Prairie Society is a large parking lot. A bus-stop is nearby.

Proposed rent to be paid the Portal Foster Center is $325.50 a month below what is now being paid the YWCA.

"This deal sounds so good, I get excited thinking about it," Fran said. "It is so good, it is almost unbelievable. I hope the group decides to move there, because the building has so much potential. The association with the Portal-Foster Center is appropriate for our group too."

This is not the first exciting real estate deal Fran has conducted. Right after World War II, a young black couple asked Fran to sell them a rooming house on Mills Street. After careful negotiations, Fran closed the deal. And the agency she worked for was suspended for three months and fined $1,085. At the time the national professional organization of real estate brokers had a clause that no member should sell to a member of a race or character of occupation which would materially depreciate the neighborhood.

"We didn't pay the fine...we just did without 'em. Later, of course, they declared that clause unconstitutional. But I am probably Madison's first and only woman fined and censored for selling a house to a black."
PROGRAMS SCHEDULED FOR UPCOMING SUNDAYS

Sept. 26 - "Prairie and the Arts" - Music, readings, drama, songs.
Participating by Prairie members. Coordinated by Richard Roznay.
Children will be invited to join the meeting halfway through the program.

Oct. 3 - "Threats to Privacy" by Charlie Davidson

Oct. 10 - "The Middle Class Value System #2" - second in a series examining our value structure. Coordinated by Boris Frank.

Oct. 17 - Upham Woods Retreat - No regular Sunday meeting planned

Oct. 24 - "The Freeze" - and the general economic condition, as related to individuals and society. Speaker(s) to be announced.
Meeting followed by UNICEF dinner.

Oct. 31 - Halloween Family Service

SIGN UP NOW for circle dinners, play reading, or book-of-the-month club groups. Lists are provided on the bulletin board as you come in. You'll be called soon by the group coordinators concerning the organization of these interest groups.

Please return your QUESTIONNAIRES this Sunday, the 26th, or mail them by the 27th to Mark & Nancy McElreath.

Religious Education News
Pat Meyer requests all borrowed books from the Prairie Library be returned as soon as possible. An inventory of RE materials is planned soon.

Sunday school will be divided into three sessions this year, and teachers are being sought for the next two sessions. Please see Pat Meyer if interested.

Also, current teachers are interested in feedback from parents.

WE NEED MORE MAILING LIST NAMES...NAMES...NAMES...NAMES...NAMES...NAMES...NAMES

To use the postage permit Prairie Society recently acquired, we need more than 200 names on our mailing list.

The Prairie Society Newsletter is one way others can learn about our group.

Think of some of your friends who might like to know more about Prairie Society. Write their names and addresses here, and bring the names with you to Sunday meeting.

Name
Address

(Zip Code)
INSIDE YOU WILL FIND:  An opinion article by Mark McElreath
Information about the proposed move
Announcements about upcoming events
The deadline for the next Newsletter

Sunday Services at the YWCA on the square at 10:30 a.m.
David Meyer, minister........................................ 221-1065

PLAN FOR THE UPHAM WOODS RETREAT

OCTOBER 17 and 18

Plans are underway for the Prairie Society weekend at Upham Woods, near the Wisconsin Dells. Activities available are hiking, camping, boating, small-group discussions, and whatever you choose. Lilo Koehl is working out the details of cost and accommodations, and these facts will be published in the next Newsletter. Plan for a good weekend.

The play reading group will meet at Jean Gordon's home at 2209 E. Washington Ave., Saturday, Oct. 7 at 6:00 p.m. Questions? Call 249-3034.

The Prairie Community wants to know about your happy events, new babies, illnesses, bereavement and your needs. Tell someone! Notify Mark McElreath at 238-1692 or Mary Jan Woerpel at 271-9003.

The Social Action committee will meet Monday, Oct. 14 at Ted Clark's home, 113th Wacon Hill at 6:00 p.m.

The DEADLINE for the next Newsletter is FRIDAY, OCTOBER 1.