IS PRAIRIE SOCIETY GLIB AND SUPERFICIAL?

A comment by Dave Meyer:

People often claim (both from within and without) that fellowships become glib and superficial. Some feel that the relatively small size of most fellowships so limits the breadth of ideas and information available to the group that sufficient challenges to individual thinking cannot long endure. Others assert that the very closeness of a small group may subvert depth interaction and growth (the picture here frequently focuses on the tired and beleaguered liberals coming together for support, mutuality, and rest, not more struggle and thought). Still others believe that the very lack of a minister in and of itself may significantly undermine a group's potential for depth, the minister being understood as the catalyst to such depth by his careful thinking and by the fact that he must constantly produce his thinking before the congregation.

I certainly don't wish to wholly support any of these criticisms; however, neither do I dismiss them. There really is a terribly difficult problem that all of these criticisms attempt to illuminate. Whether it is a problem peculiar to fellowships, I doubt; but that really doesn't concern me much, for I am involved in ministry in a fellowship model.

I think that the real problem, and this is perhaps the central problem of any religious community and of any ministry, boils down to two factors: first, real religious issues live in the very roots of our lives, for without some understanding of what is important, meaningful, real, etc., one cannot respond to the demands life places upon us (the difficulty here is both intellectual and emotional -- figuring out or discovering meaning is intellectual, but how we feel about that meaning and our place in it is as profound an emotional issue as there is); second, not only are religious issues extremely difficult and fundamental, they don't lend themselves to group examination.

The "how to" of initiating and maintaining serious religious thought in a church community is almost as difficult as the religious issues themselves.

I certainly feel both of these problems very strongly at Prairie. This certainly is no condemnation of Prairie, only an observation of what I suspect is a fairly typical problem.

However, that doesn't let us off the hook: I think that we must try harder and look deeper. We must take care not to simply feed on each other's ignorance, for frequently we can easily condemn or dismiss that about which we know little or have only superficially considered. (This ignorance feeding ignorance and prejudice feeding prejudice is a criticism of fellowships popular among ministers; just where they get off congratulating themselves so blithely for their depth and knowledge, I don't know, for it hardly seems to me that ministers have a corner on wisdom.)

Perhaps what we need most at Prairie is a little more willingness to think together (isn't that in the nature of a community?) and to entertain each other's thoughts without a kind of knee-jerk reaction to terms or feelings about terms. We are, after all, all struggling toward wisdom, not dispensing it. I hope we can get beyond the hang-ups of our own individual prejudice and narrowness, perhaps we can move more as a group toward that wisdom.
Sunday services at 10 a.m., at the Portal Foster Center, 1806 West Lawn Ave.

Congresswoman Marthe Griffths will speak at 12:30 Feb. 10 at First United Methodist Church, 203 Wisconsin Ave. Topic: equal rights amendment for women. Cost: $1.75. Contact: Besty Roberts, at 238-6030, for information and reservations.

Donate paperback books--bring some Sunday. Pick up another to read, only 15¢

Volunteers are needed for painting in the basement. Contact Al Nettleton.

The next program committee meeting is at 8 p.m. Feb. 9 at Boris Frank's, 5609 Kronke Dr.

The new Religious Discussion Group will meet at Dave Meyer's on Tuesday, Feb. 8 at 7. The group will begin by talking about Dietrich Bonhoeffer's book Letters and Papers from Prison (only about the first third at the initial meeting). Everyone welcome. For more information call Dave at 221-0255.

There will be a meeting of all the Prairie teenagers on Sat. Feb. 12, at 2 in the afternoon at the Portal-Foster Center. The function of the meeting is to determine whether there is interest in starting a youth group at Prairie, so please, everybody, come out or call Dave Meyer at 221-0255 if you have a conflict.

Playreading will meet this month at Pat Watkins' house, 2419 Norwood Pl. at 8 p.m. on Sat. Feb. 12. Everyone welcome. For more information call Pat 233-5795.

 Apparently the Sauna Party organized last week by Betty French was a warm success, so they've scheduled another for Feb. 23. Watch for more details!

AFTER DAVE MEYER LEAVE THIS SUMMER, WHAT TYPE OF VOLUNTARY OR PROFESSIONAL SERVICES SHOULD PRAIRIE SOCIETY OFFER TO SATISFY YOUR NEEDS AND THE NEEDS OF THE GROUP?

With this question as a focus, Prairie Society members and friends will seek and continue to grow together. Come February 6 at 10 a.m.

Feb. 13th------LOVE. A program coordinated by Diane Remeika and Vivian Meyer.