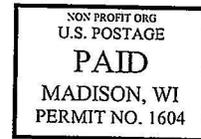


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(608) 271-8218 prairieu@execpc.com
Located off the south Frontage Rd. of the West Beltline Hwy near the Seminole Hwy exit.



PRAIRIE FIRE

... As the prairie stretches out until it becomes one with the sky, let us reach out to touch and be one with the natural world and with one another.

From our Bond of Union.

The Prairie Fire is the newsletter of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society and is published semi-monthly.

An e-mail version is available at <http://www.execpc.com/~prairieu>

December 20, 2001

President: Erin Bosch (608) 238-6285

Editor: Marilyn Ruecking (608) 838-8540; mruecking@hotmail.com

PRAIRIE CALENDAR

Sunday, December 23

9:00am

Choir Rehearsal

10:00am

Intergenerational Symbol Tree Celebration, led by Erin Bosch, with snacks and sweets after the service. You're invited to bring a symbol for the tree and a snack.

Sunday, December 30

No Choir Rehearsal

10:00am

The First Annual Game Day, facilitated by Barbara Chatterton

Bring the new games you received for Christmas or the old favorites. We'll set up tables for interested groups to play together. Or you can still come and just read the paper. Later, we will go out to lunch.

Sunday, January 6, 2002

9:00am - Choir Rehearsal

10:00 "Spirituality. What the heck is it, anyway?" service led by Judy Skog

Join us for an opportunity to experience (not talk about) spirituality. It will involve some, or all, of the following -- movement, color, art, music--and there will be no dogma. This is not about what we learned in church on Sunday, but is about things that touch our souls.

Sunday, January 13, 2002

9:00am - Choir Rehearsal

10:00 am Martin Luther King Day Celebration Service will be conducted by Sandy Ingham with details to come.

12:00 pm - Book Club (see article)

**Next Prairie Fire deadline is
Sunday, January 6, 2002**

DETAILS OF UPCOMING EVENTS

Sunday, December 23: Symbol Tree Service

This is Prairie's traditional holiday service. In addition to the Symbol Tree ceremony, there will be a candlelight "Santa Lucia" children's procession. (Young people should assemble downstairs that morning.) We would like to keep the lights dim for the entire service, so those who have difficulty hearing and who benefit from reading lips, should plan to sit in the front row. We will be using candles to read the hymns also, but if you need more light and would like to bring a small flashlight, that would be fine. For the Symbol Tree ceremony, you are invited to bring an item to hang on the evergreen tree that is a symbol of something that has happened in your life the past year. You can either tell us about that event, or you can choose to read a short poem or other chosen words.

December 2 and December 9 Program Synopses

Our program on Dec. 2 was devoted to our personal **Encounters with Christianity**. We began with Bible readings, from the Sermon on the Mount (Rosemary Dorney), about the Lamb of God (Al Nettleton), and miracles (Barbara Park), and the service includes a number of traditional hymns, infantile, icky, moving, and rousing (accompanied by Michael Briggs and Doleta Chapru). After the discussion and conversation with members, I was struck by the importance of what one might call religious "careers" in the life histories of Prairie members. We have our family careers, our occupational careers, and maybe our political careers, but I think religious careers are distinctively important in the lives of many Prairie members. The idea of careers implies change, stages, progression and regression; most members of other denominations, even some UUs, don't experience the changes, or don't recognize them.

We would like to have other programs that would enable other members to talk about their religious careers. Or non-careers: we do have lifelong nonbelievers in our group. If you would like to help organize a program, contact the program committee or see Warren Hagstrom.

"What would Jesus do?" In her sermon on December 9, Sandy Ingham expressed that, as Unitarians, we have a lower tolerance of "Jesus talk" than most other church-goers do, in fact many of us go to a Unitarian service to escape that. She shared that she has a different perspective on the matter. While we do not want Jesus imposed upon us by the self-righteous Christian who insists that we take Jesus into our lives, she suggests that now is a good time to pause and be aware of the true meaning of Christmas and make an effort to come to terms with Jesus. Jesus is neat! How he lived his life sets a good example for all of us. She gave us 3 examples of how Jesus would live if he were here:

- 1) Living inclusiveness, he would expect us to practice the politics of compassion and not just think compassionate thoughts. Practice open table fellowship.

- 2) He would urge us to "get out of ourselves", let go of our egos, rid ourselves of assumptions and to make a radical change from self-centered to other-centered. We are all broken in some way. We can try to be inclusive and not judgmental.

- 3) Smile! Jesus was an ecstatic being, constantly enjoying others, compassionate, even playful. He would urge us to notice all beings and to delight in each other without worrying about ourselves. Just have fun with others!

So, Sandy concluded with December upon us again, maybe we can see this as a chance to throw judgmental thoughts away, smile and be ecstatic. We can enjoy each other and experience a moment of peace in this hectic season of Christmas.

OUR SOCIETY

Wheel Of Life

The fathers of two Prairie members died this week. **Julia Bonser's** father passed away on December 11 in Oregon. Julie was with the family. Dick writes, "We will all miss him very much. May his spirit find welcome and comfort on the path ahead."

Bob Reuschlein lost his father died on Thursday, December 13 in Madison with family at his side. "God gave us strength to bear it, and courage to face the blow, but, what it means to lose him, no one will ever know."

LARGE PRINT HYMNBOOKS

Warren Hagstrom and Doleta Chapru have donated a three-volume large print "Singing the Living Tradition" hymnbook to Prairie. Anyone who wishes to donate another hymnbook, large or small print, please contact Doleta at 238-5576 or dchapru@aol.com. To purchase a hymnbook for private use, contact the UUA Bookstore at 1-800-215-9076 or uua.org/bookstore. The large print edition is \$45, item number 7157.

Christmas Letters

If you usually write a Christmas newsletter to send to family and friends, we would be pleased if you would like to send or bring a copy to Prairie to put in the folder on the back table. Sharing these letters can be a great way for us to get to know each other better.

Donated Holiday Tree

Thanks to Rick and Marilyn Ruecking for donating such a beautiful symbol tree to the meeting house. Rick topped a 30 foot tree in celebration of Chenoa's recent engagement to Vijay Ingam.

RE Journeys

We've been exploring the "Truths" of Christianity, Wiccanism, the I Ching, and Water recently:

Pre-School: We talked about how important water is to us. We learned how it covers 2/3 of the earth and of its part in the interdependent web of life that Unitarian Universalism speaks so eloquently about.

K-2: We thought about Death and how the death of loved ones affects us. We did this through celebrating our version of the Christian holiday of All Soul's Day. To think about the holiday of Thanksgiving, we made collages of things we could be thankful for. We listened to a story about how the Inuit people give thanks.

3-5: We traveled back in time to when Moses and Joshua graced the planet and relived the making of the Ten Commandments by creating stone tablets with the Commandments written on them. In part, we re-enacted the Battle of Jericho and even sang "Joshua Fought the Battle of Jericho."

We sure were energetic doing these activities!

6-8: Our focus was learning lots about Wiccanism. We created a Wiccan altar and performed a circle ceremony. Gentle souls those Wiccans...

9-12: We experienced the complexities of early Chinese religion and learned the beliefs behind the I Ching. This was a powerful spirituality!

Book Club

The book club typically meets after church on the second Sunday of the month. Most readers "bring a snack to share" along with their thoughts about great books.

Our schedule as planned through March:

Sun., Jan. 13 - TALIBAN by Ahmed Rashid
Sun., Feb. 10 - HOMESTEAD by Rosanna Lippi
Sun., Mar. 10 - ONE HUNDRED YEARS OF SOLITUDE by Gabriel Garcia Marquez

Books can be purchased at Borders for 20% off if you mention you are part of the Prairie Book Club. For more information, call Mary Mullen, 298-0843.

Economic Globalization: Study/Action Issue 2001-2002.

The Unitarian Universalist Association Commission on Social Witness has requested comments from each congregation on the following Study/Action Issue (SAI): Economic Globalization.

How can Unitarian Universalists respond to the unprecedented opportunities and potentially dangerous environmental, political, and quality-of-life challenges accompanying economic globalization?

The new global economy brings with it disconnection between those who enjoy the benefits of globalization and those who pay the costs, which include increased pollution, exploitation of workers, destruction of natural resources, widening income disparities, and decline in small business and family farms. Some people focus on the economic opportunities they believe will lead to improved living conditions worldwide, others worry that the current trade agreements and organizations do not adequately respond to some of the negative effects, and remove the center of economic power ever further from the individuals and families that must live with its consequences. Many feel that global trade and finance organizations-the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the pending Free Trade Area of the Americas, General Agreement of Trade and Tariffs (GATT), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and the World Trade Organization (WTO) - are not familiar with, or accountable to, the general public or sufficiently open to questioning in public forums. It is possible that many traditional state and local governmental responsibilities, such as environmental protection, workplace regulation, management of natural resources, land use planning, and food safety could be preempted by remote, inaccessible, and unaccountable bureaucracies in the name of "free trade".

Please comment on your impressions, whether this can be a springboard to action and how this SAI helps define UUism to **Nancy Schraufnagel**, Denominational Affairs Chair, 501 N Whitney Way Apt 7 Madison, WI 53705 or schraufnancye@hotmail.com by January 6th, 2002. Any questions on this Study/Action Issue or process, please write or phone 273-3196

Art at Prairie!

Rose and Galen Smith will be the first to exhibit some paintings in the meeting room. The artist is Grace Perreiah, of Louisville, Kentucky. Look for them after Christmas! And who will be next?? Call Rosemarie Lester at 255-7039 or e-mail rklester@facstaff.wisc.edu to participate.

Karen Gross in Dominican Republic

Karen Gross has sent several members an update of her work with the Peace Corps in the Dominican Republic with some photographs. To say it's not what she anticipated is an understatement, but to say that she is not loving it is wrong too. But read about it yourself; one of her letters is in the folder of Christmas letters in the meeting room.

Hospitality

The Society has a few regular activities for which we need help at each Sunday service. These include staffing the visitor's greeting table, and doing the coffee set-up, program taping, and kitchen clean-up. Please come prepared to pitch-in and get these jobs done. We thank those who have volunteered.

First Call For Help

The Caring Committee has been established to help Prairie members in need. The types of support offered are writing notes, rides, telephoning, preparing food, home visits, child care, support for people dealing with life crises (e.g., grieving), tape delivery, and as a community resource list. The primary contact person has a list of volunteers with specific support roles. The current primary contact is Linda Sheehy, 273-3895.



THE COMMUNITY

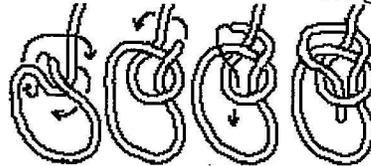
Holiday Blood Drive

The American Red Cross conducts its 16th annual Holiday Blood Drive on Monday, December 24th from 7am to 2 pm at the Alliant Energy Center.

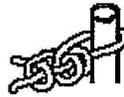
For an appointment call 227-1357. Parking and childcare are free with visits by Santa Claus and area musicians and entertainers.

Knots for Everyday

Sal Gordy of Knots International has sent along a couple of diagrams of essential knots to have in your "toolkit". We hope everyone can learn them in the new year. Merry Christmas from Sal!
Bowline and Rick Ruecking.



Taut Line Hitch



Homecomings UU Bed & Breakfast

Homecomings is soliciting participation in its 22nd directory of UU B&B's. Adventures in fellowship continue if you've got a cool place with an extra bedroom and would like to host visiting UUs. Check the bulletin board in the meeting house or write Homecomings, Box 884, Venice FL 34284 (941)492-4167. We like staying with UUs when we travel and it saves us money too!

Rebuilding the Food Pantry

Please remember to bring a donation to our Food Pantry. We can reach out to the community and help a family in need.

RSVP of Dane County

RSVP is seeking volunteers age 55 and older to help in various capacities at the following sites: Second Harvest Foodbank; Wheelchair Recycling; Hospice Care. Interested? Call Jan 608-441-7891

Shaarei Shamayim Calendar

2nd, 3rd & 4th Sat 9am-2pm Religious Services will be on December 22 and January 12, 19, and 26 in the new year.

Prairie Liaison: Bill Littman 829-1909