



# 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 Bond of Union)

**October 8, 2004**

*Prairie Fire is the semi-monthly newsletter of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. The two most recent issues may be seen at [www.prairie.madison.uua.org](http://www.prairie.madison.uua.org)*

President: Mike Briggs; (608) 835-0914

Editor: Dan Proud, prairieu@execpc.com; (608) 661-0776

## PRAIRIE CALENDAR

### Sunday, October 10

9:00 a.m. Choir practice

☞ 10:00 a.m. "Woody Guthrie—How Does He Speak to UUs?" presented by Mike Briggs and Dan Proud

### Saturday, October 16

☞ CMWD Leadership Days – North Rockford, IL

☞ 6:00 p.m. Prairie potluck with the Rev. Nels Oas

☞ 7:30 p.m. Prairie Playreaders meet at the home of Mona Birong, 599 Glen Drive.

### Sunday, October 17

9:00 a.m. Choir practice

☞ 10:00 a.m. "Public Issues, Politics, and the Pulpit," presented by the Rev. Nels Oas

☞ 11:45 a.m. Parent-teacher coffee (K-1-2)

### Sunday, October 24

9:00 a.m. Choir practice

☞ 10:00 a.m. "Have There Ever Been Examples of Tolerant, Creative, or Progressive Islamic Civilizations?" Bob Lawrence presents the second of his series on Islam.

11:45 a.m. Prairie Book Club discusses *Flash House* by Amie Liu. Bring food to share.

☞ 11:45 a.m. Parent-teacher coffee (grades 3 through high school)

☞ = Details follow in this issue.

**NEXT PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINE: OCTOBER 17**

### Monday, October 25

☞ 6:30 p.m. Prairie Humanist Discussion Group meets at Prairie to plan future topics.

### Sunday, October 31

9:00 a.m. Choir practice

☞ 10:00 a.m. All Souls Day service led by Orange Schroeder.

### Saturday-Sunday, November 6-7

Fall Frolic Religious Education event at Prairie

### Sunday, November 14

11:45 a.m. Annual Parish Meeting

## DETAILS OF COMING EVENTS

### Sunday, October 10

Discover how the life and music of legendary folksinger Woody Guthrie speaks to UUs. Mike Briggs and Dan Proud present Guthrie's words and music in a celebratory program.

### Saturday, October 16

There will be a potluck starting at 6 p.m. at Prairie. All are welcome. Bring food, family and friends for a get together with the Rev. Nels Oas and other Prairie folk. Rev Oas is a retired Universalist Unitarian minister from Minneapolis who spoke to us last year on Emerson. We are very happy to have him visit us this year on his way south for the winter where he is a consulting minister for a Panama Beach UU church. He will be spending the weekend with the Somers who have become friends with him during their winter stay in Florida.

**Sunday, October 17**

Our service, "Politics, Public Issues, and Preaching," will be led by the Rev. Nels Oas. Nels tells us, "We have always had with us the concern of established religions encroaching the issues of governance with their dogmas. But now as especially evidenced by both political recent conventions, we are overwhelmed with the political leaders flooding us with invocations, prayers, benedictions, and pleadings for a religious perspective. Religion is being involved, usurped, and manipulated for political gain. Quite a reversal! What does it mean for our republic? How is religion being affected by the influences of the state voices of power. Have we become a theocratic nationalistic-centered society that violates the very core of the time-honored liberal religious vision and historic humanistic values? Moreover, has the fundamentalism in today's politics and religious majorities violated the democratic, universalistic non-violent spirit of the progressive world religions?"

**Sunday, October 24**

Bob Lawrence, in the second of his series on Islam, poses the question: "Have there ever been examples of tolerant, creative, or progressive Islamic civilizations?" The talk will discuss Medieval Spain and Baghdad, and point to these communities as probable seeds for the Renaissance in Europe.

**Sunday, October 31**

Prairie's annual Day of the Dead Celebration will be led by Orange Schroeder. You are invited to bring a photograph or other remembrance of a family member or friend who has passed away, and to say a few words. Those who don't wish to speak may light a candle in memory of a loved one.

**PRAIRIE OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR HOURS**

*Mondays 8-10 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.-12 noon*

**SHAAREI SHAMAYIM CALENDAR**

*Saturdays 8:45 a.m.-1:15 p.m.*

*Prairie Liaison: Celeste Robins 249-5933*



Friday, October 15 is the beginning of Holy Month of Ramadan, a month of fasting in the Islam religion. Muslims who are physically able do not eat or drink from the first sign of dawn until sunset.



**OUR SOCIETY**

**HUMANIST DISCUSSION GROUP FORMS**

On Sunday, September 26, ten Prairie members joined humanist UU minister Sarah Oelberg and her husband for lunch and brainstormed about starting a humanist discussion group. We decided that we would create such a group, that we would try meeting once a month, and that others outside of Prairie would be invited to join. We set our next meeting for 6:30 p.m. on Monday, October 25, at the Prairie Meeting House. At that meeting we will decide where future meetings will be held and talk about who we might invite as speakers and what discussion topics we may be interested in.

Those attending our September 26 gathering thought "What does it mean to be a humanist?" would be a good topic to focus an early meeting on. We will be looking for ideas from a successful humanist discussion group at a UU congregation in Illinois that Sarah referred us to.

I am forming mail and e-mail lists of Prairie members and others who think they may be interested in participating in this group, starting with the 10 who attended September 26. If you would like to be added to that list, please let me know.

*Bob Park*

**UNICEF PERSON NEEDED**

For many years, Pat Cautley sold UNICEF cards and gifts to Prairie members two Sundays in November. Because Pat is no longer able to continue, we are looking for someone who would be willing to help out with this effort.

We need someone who can pick up some supplies from the local coordinator, arrange them in the lobby, and sell them to members before and after the Prairie service.

If you would volunteer for this project, please see Linda Sheehy. And don't forget that UNICEF products can be purchased at the Global Express on West Washington.

*Linda Sheehy*

## MINISTERIAL SEARCH COMMITTEE

The Ministerial Search Committee is getting ready to proceed with a search for a “1/4 time consulting minister” as soon as the congregation votes on the 2004-2005 proposed budget at the Annual Parish Meeting on November 14. If sufficient pledges are raised, we will begin the search for a candidate to present to the congregation.

We are in the process of compiling your surveys. The survey results will be part of the packet of information about Prairie to share with prospective ministerial candidates. Thank you to those who have completed and returned your surveys. If you have not, **BE SURE TO RETURN YOUR SURVEY TO PATTY STOCKDALE IMMEDIATELY.**

The committee is also gathering current information about our society’s adult services, the Religious Education program, and other Prairie activities, plus basic background information that will give a sense of who we are and what we are about. This is recommended to help prospective candidates decide if they are interested in a position with our congregation.

We are also developing specific common interview questions that will be used when we are ready to interview potential candidates. If you wish to recommend a candidate, be sure to get the name and contact information to the Ministerial Search Committee in writing. In accordance with UUA hiring recommendations, the Search Committee will keep all information confidential until we have a candidate are ready to “present” to the congregation. All members will then have the opportunity to meet the candidate and vote on the candidate.

Please contact in writing one of the committee members if you wish to pass along any information or if you have questions: Ken Skog, Chair, Doleta Chapru, Barbara Chatterton, Aileen Nettleton, or Patty Stockdale.

## PRAIRIE PLAYREADERS

Prairie Playreaders next meeting is at Mona Birong's, 599 Glen Drive, on October 16th at 7:30 pm. Please call 233-5995 to confirm attendance.

## LETTERS

### PLEDGE TIME AT PRAIRIE

To Prairie members and Friends:



Prairie is taking on a new venture! We have proposed funds in the 2005 budget for a 1/4 time Consulting Ministerial position to guide us into a year of renewal and growth. In order to move forward and hire a person for this position, we will need an increase in financial support minister this year. Our annual pledge will increase by \$21,000 to cover the \$16,000 for the minister salary plus some anticipated increases for utilities, janitorial services and taxes. This is a 45% increase from 2004 and pledges need to increase at this level too. Most of you strongly desired and voted for this approach to growth and we now need your financial commitment to make it a reality.

We want to thank everyone who made their pledge during the pledge luncheon on October 3.

We will be sending everyone else a copy of the financial information presented at the luncheon. We would like to receive all pledges by Sunday, October 24. This will give us time to prepare the final budget for acceptance by the PUU Board and presentation at the November 14 Parish meeting.

If you send us your pledge by letter or e-mail you will save the committee time calling you.

Please send pledges to Kathy Converse at [conversekrtn@msn.com](mailto:conversekrtn@msn.com) or by mail to:  
630 Pickford Street  
Madison, WI

Thank you,  
*Kathy Converse, Finance Committee Chair*  
*S. Randall Converse*  
*608-238-1856 or 608-239-9385 (cell)*

## PRAIRIE WEB SITES

*Prairie UU Society: <http://prairie.madison.uua.org/>*

*Prairie News Group:*  
*<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairienews/>*

*Prairie Views Group:*  
*<http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/>*

*Social Action:*  
*<http://socialaction.homestead.htm>*

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### R.E. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Hello everyone! We are looking for Prairie members in need of assistance with yard raking for a fall service project. We would like to come to your home on the morning of Sunday, October 24 to do the raking. Please let us know if you could use some help with the leaves in your yard!

I would also like to invite all parents of students in our RE program to upcoming parent/teacher coffees. This is an opportunity for parents to meet the RE teachers, find out what they are planning for the year, ask questions, meet other parents and students in the class, and of course have coffee and snacks! The parent/teacher coffees:

- K-1-2 students: Sunday, October 17, after service.
- Grades 3-4-5 and middle school and high school: Sunday, October 24 after the service.

Please join us!

In my next few columns of the newsletter, I would like to share with readers some of the fascinating questions that have been raised already this year in the RE program. Because of space limitations, I will post my answer on the RE bulletin board at the top of the stairs. I hope that you will take a copy to read, and let me know if you have anything to add or if you would have answered differently. I hope that it will even inspire some of you to come downstairs and share your wisdom and knowledge with the amazing students in our RE program!

The following is a question I was asked by a youth after our Neighboring Faiths class:

Are Communism and Buddhism the same, since both believe that all people are equal?

I will post the answer on Sunday, October 10. Let me know what you think!

In Peace,

*Melissa Gjestvang-Lucky, DRE*

## DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

### WOMEN'S SPIRITUAL JOURNEY: CMWD-UUWF FALL RETREAT NOV. 12-14

*[My apologies for not getting this in the last Prairie Fire issue! —Ed.]*

Registration is closing for a women's retreat Friday through Sunday, November 12–14, at the Lake Geneva Campus of Aurora University, WI. The retreat, “Women's Spiritual Journey: Maiden, Mother, Crone,” is presented by Women of the Unitarian Church of Evanston, Illinois.

The conference includes a choice of workshops, a keynote address, “Desire in a Woman's Life,” and various ceremonies, meals, and musical events.

Fees are \$122 to \$240 for lodging plus \$50 for meals, or \$60 for Saturday only (no lodging). Registration after October 8 is an additional \$20.

For more information, contact the Rev. Sue E. Sinnamon for late registration at [ssinnamon@ucevanston.org](mailto:ssinnamon@ucevanston.org) or (847) 864-1330.

### THE FREE AND RESPONSIBLE SEARCH: UU'S AND THE MEDIA

The Religious Education Department of First Unitarian Society of Madison (FUS) is presenting a 4-session fall course on the media. The course schedule is four Tuesday night sessions, 7:00 to 9:00 p.m., beginning October 12, at the Meeting House, 900 University Bay Drive.

In this course you will:

- Learn the current condition of public media in the U.S.
- See and hear Bill Moyers and Amy Goodman on this topic
- Examine and discuss your own values about democratic society and the role of media in such a society
- Receive a toolkit for further action

Course leaders are members of the FUS Media Democracy Task Force: John Powell, Craig McComb, and Joel Gilbertson-White.

Registration is \$15 for FUS members and \$25 for others. For more information, phone 233-9774.

## HOW TO HELP GULF COAST UU HURRICANE VICTIMS

The destruction from the hurricanes in the south did not pass over UU fellowships. Many buildings were seriously damaged, and the UU Friendship Fellowship in Pineda, Florida was almost completely destroyed. One member of the UU Fellowship of Charlotte County was killed. The UU communities in the region have responded with help, and the UU Trauma Response Team has been active in the wake of the storms.

You can help by sending donations to

- “Florida District-UUA” (put “Disaster Relief Fund” in the memo line): Florida District-UUA, 1901 E. Robinson St. #18, Orlando, FL 32803
- “Mid-South/UUA” (put “hurricane relief fund” in the memo line): Mid-South/UUA Hurricane Relief Fund, c/o Ann Green, Treasurer, 827 Sutton Hill Rd., Nashville, TN 37204

For more information, see

[www.uua.org/news/2004/040917.html](http://www.uua.org/news/2004/040917.html)

## DONATIONS FOR HAITI HURRICAN VICTIMS

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is accepting donations to aid hurricane victims in Haiti.

Floods and winds from the latest hurricane, Jeanne, have so far taken the lives of more than 1,000 people in Haiti. Another 1,000 are missing and are presumed dead. The flooding has wreaked havoc, leaving more than 250,000 people homeless.

The island of Hispaniola, consisting of Haiti and the Dominican Republic, has already suffered devastation from floods in May of this year that killed 2,000 people and displaced several thousand.

We are deeply distressed at the death and destruction cause by Hurricane Jeanne. Although UUSC is not currently working in Haiti, we are accepting donations to be used for humanitarian aid.

### What you can do

To contribute to the relief effort in Haiti, please send a check, payable to the “Haiti Relief Fund”, to:

Haiti Relief Fund  
Unitarian Universalist Service Committee  
P.O. Box 845259  
Boston, MA 02284-5259

Or to donate online, visit

[www.uusc.org/programs/support\\_Haiti.html](http://www.uusc.org/programs/support_Haiti.html)

UUSC will channel donations through the Lambi Fund of Haiti, an organization already operating in Haiti on programs of social and economic empowerment. In response to the hurricane damage, the organization is working with grassroots communities directly in the affected area around the city of Gonaives for emergency relief.

This choice reflects UUSC's confidence that donations will benefit hard-to-reach communities and be administered by those who have demonstrated a commitment to and are working with the country's poorest. The choice also reflects UUSC's past programs of working with the poor in Haiti.

The Lambi Fund helps provide for immediate needs such as medicine, food, potable water, tents and blankets, and for building materials to help families start the rebuilding process for the thousands of homes that have been destroyed or damaged by the hurricane. They are also equally committed to supporting the democratic movement in Haiti.

## HUMAN RIGHTS FILM SERIES

The documentary *Unprecedented* will be presented on Friday, October 15 at First Unitarian Society, 900 University Bay Drive, starting at 7:00 pm in the West Living Room. Refreshments will be served and a discussion will follow the film. For more information, call Suzie deBeers at 833-0506.

This film, by filmmakers Richard Ray Perez and Joan Sekler, examines modern America's most controversial contest: the election of George W. Bush. What emerges is a disturbing picture of an election marred by suspicious irregularities, electoral injustices, and sinister voter purges in a state governed by the winning candidate's brother.

## DISTRICT LEADERSHIP TRAINING

You can sign up for one of the Fall Leadership Days being sponsored by the Central Midwest District:

- North - October 16 - Rockford, IL
- South - October 30 - Bloomington, IL

**Goals:** To equip congregational leaders with knowledge and skills to further your work for vital, growing congregations. To further a vision of

robust, transformational congregations addressing the needs of both church and currently unchurched in the 21st century. To decrease the isolation and increase the connection of UU congregational leaders.

**Schedule:** Morning session with Angela Merkert and Dori Davenport on Leadership and Vision for our UU Congregation. Afternoon workshops: (1) Practicing Pluralism— Engaging Conflict during Change; (2) Growing our Congregations; (3) Volunteer Management; and (4) a workshop for congregational presidents.

**Cost:** \$35 per person/\$90 for team of 3 persons

**Registration:** Request a registration form from the District Office by e-mail: [chosmer@cmwd-uua.org](mailto:chosmer@cmwd-uua.org), or register online:

- Rockford: [www.regonline.com/15799](http://www.regonline.com/15799)
- Bloomington: [www.regonline.com/15800](http://www.regonline.com/15800)

*Angela Merkert  
Dori Davenport*

### **SHAPE NOTE SINGING SOCIETY FORMING**

First Unitarian Society is forming a Shape Note Singing Society, a group that will sing the singularly heartfelt style of southern gospel singing that has grown in popularity throughout the northern Midwest. The first meeting will be at the home of John Schweitzer, 4713 Regent Street, on Sunday, October 24 at 6:00 p.m.

### **SOCIAL ACTION**

#### **MUUYACM TO HOST PRISON REFORM CONFERENCE**

On the weekend of October 22-24, MUUYACM (Madison UU Young Adult Campus Ministry) hosts a national young adult conference on prison reform and prisoners' rights, with special guest the Rev. Dr. William Schulz, Executive Director for Amnesty USA and the former President of the Unitarian Universalist Association. Block this weekend off in your calendar and think about how you can participate in what looks to be a really transformative experience.

### **MEN'S DROP-IN SHELTER MARKS 20TH ANNIVERSARY WITH OPEN HOUSE**

That a homeless shelter is still needed after 20 years is *not* cause for celebration. However, Prairie UU, together with 50 other congregations, continues to provide volunteers to sustain the shelter at Grace Episcopal Church, and this *is* reason to honor the acknowledge such dedicated service.

Since 1984, the shelter has served over 19,000 people for about 440,000 nights of shelter and 750,000 meals. Physicians, medical students, attorneys, and law students also assist shelter guests.

Prairie members are cordially invited to an open house at the Drop-in Shelter on Wednesday, October 20, 4:00 to 6:30 p.m., at Grace Episcopal Church, 116 West Washington Avenue. The shelter is operated by Porchlight, Inc., a new organization formed by the merger of Transitional Housing, Inc. with Community Housing and Support.

### **ANNUAL SCHOOL OF THE AMERICAS TRIP PLANNED FOR NOVEMBER**

The MUUYACM annual trip to protest at the School of the Americas in Fort Benning, Georgia is the weekend of November 19. This is an opportunity to join thousands who participate in non-violent demonstrations against the U.S. funding and torture training of military groups that have gone on to commit horrific human rights abuses, especially in Central and South America. It's a long road trip, but a really powerful and inspiring weekend with justice-seekers from around the world. Find out more about the SOA protest at <http://www.soaw.org>.

### **HELP PREVENT CHILD ABUSE**

The Parental Stress Center, 2120 Fordem Avenue, has volunteer openings to staff its 18 hour x 7 day per week Parent Stressline. Volunteers are trained to provide telephone assistance from their own home. This is a wonderful way to assist parents and families who need some support and encouragement.

Fall training begins Friday, October 15. Contact Severa for more information: [severaa@parentalstresscenter.org](mailto:severaa@parentalstresscenter.org) or 241-4888 x13.

## OTHER NEWS

### COMMUNITY BULLETIN BOARD

- Friday, October 8, 12:00 noon. Musicale at First Unitarian Society: Nils Bultmann (music for viola)
- Friday, October 15, 12:00 noon. Musicale at First Unitarian Society: Soprano Rebecca Olthafer and Friends
- Wednesday, October 20, 4:00 to 6:30 p.m. Open House at the Men's Drop-In Shelter, Grace Episcopal Church, 116 West Washington Avenue
- Through the middle of December, Prison Art Project, an art exhibit at the Overture Center organized by Turning Point and the Wisconsin Department of Corrections.

### PRAIRIE PROPERTY PLANT NEWS

[A continuing newsletter tour of Prairie flora by Galen Smith, the seventh in his series.]

Almost all of the flowers in the grounds around our church are now faded but the fruits are prominent and often very attractive. The **rock garden** near the lower-level entrance is still very attractive because of the varied colors and forms of the plants, although there are only a few flowers of **thyme** and **baby's breath**.

In the **prairie planting** there are only a few heads of **frost aster** (*Aster pilosus*) with white rays and yellow centers in full flower, and a few faded large heads with pale purple rays of **purple coneflowers** (*Echinacea purpurea*). **Switch grass** (*Panicum virgatum*), with its very tall and very open inflorescences, dominates the planting. There is also a lot of **little bluestem grass** (*Schizachyrium scoparium* = *Andropogon scoparius*), with beautiful reddish stems and feathery white fruit, and some **big bluestem** or **turkeyfoot grass** (*Andropogon gerardi*), also with white feathery fruit but with inflorescences like a turkey's foot. **Yellow coneflower** (*Ratibida pinnata*) now has only brown, high centers, as does **sweet coneflower** (*Rudbeckia subtomentosa*) with 3-lobed leaves (only one large clump), and **compass-plant** (*Silphium laciniatum*), with huge, tough, rough, deeply lobed leaves. **A few plants of rattlesnake-master** (*Eryngium*

*yuccifolium*), with its tough, yucca-like leaves and bristly, ball-shaped, whitish fruiting heads is especially distinctive.

Four woody plants now have very attractive bright red fruits: the small **Sargent crabapple** tree that in early summer was donated by Pat Watkins in memory of her mother; **Japanese barberry**; **euonymus**; and the spectacular **staghorn sumac**, whose numerous tiny fruits are arranged in very large, erect, long-ovoid inflorescences and whose big pinnately compound leaves are turning bright red. The one female plant of **yew** (*Taxus* sp.) has bright red fleshy seeds instead of fruits; yew is a Gymnosperm (=naked seed, i.e., seed not enclosed in a ripened ovary) rather than an Angiosperm, i.e., flowering plant (angiosperm = enclosed seed, i.e., seed enclosed inside a ripened ovary = fruit). Yew seeds are poisonous to eat, which one can easily remember because "There is nothing so sure as death from *Taxus*."

Anyone interested in helping to maintain or improve the plantings around our church should contact **Galen Smith** or anyone on the **Housing and Property Committee**. Late fall is the best season to improve the prairie by burning and/or digging out some of the switch grass and planting other more desirable plants.

*Galen Smith*



Frost aster (*Aster pilosus*)