



# 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." (Bond of Union)

**May 12, 2006**

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

President: Mike Briggs, (608) 835-0914 Consulting Minister: Rev. Jody Whelden, minister@uuprairie.org; (608) 231-9707 Editor: Dan Proud, admin@uuprairie.org; 661-0776

## **PRAIRIE CALENDAR**

### **Sunday, May 14**

No choir rehearsal

\*10:00 a.m. "UUism and the World's Big Religions," presented by Rebecca Malke-Eligenti

\*11:45 a.m. Long Range Planning Committee presentation

### **Wednesday, May 17**

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

### **Thursday, May 18**

\*6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers potluck at the home of Ema Pachon

### **Sunday, May 21**

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

\*10:00 a.m. Transition Sunday, led by Erin Bosch and Rachel Long

\*11:45 a.m. Right Relations Task Force presentation

### **Tuesday, May 23**

\*2:00 p.m. Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood West

### **Wednesday, May 24**

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

7:15 p.m. Second session of the Story-Telling Workshop

**NEXT PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINE: SUNDAY, MAY 21**

### **Sunday, May 28**

No choir rehearsal

\*10:00 a.m. Kids Game Day

\*10:00 a.m. "A Century of Regime Change and What We Can Do About It," presented by the Rev. Jody Whelden, followed by Memorial Day Picnic at the home of Michael and Norma Briggs

\*12:00 noon. Humanist Union meets at PrairieneWS

### **Wednesday-Sunday, June 21-25**

\*UUA General Assembly, St. Louis, Mo.

(\* = Details follow in this issue.)

## **DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS**

### **Sunday, May 14**

"UU-ism and the World's Big Religions" is the sixth and final session of Rachel Long's 6-session lay ministry, "World Religions - Know Your Neighbor." Prairie's own Rebecca Malke-Eligenti will be our speaker.

Unitarian Universalism began as two faiths, which joined in 1961. We and our two parent faiths are both quite new as compared with other faiths we have discussed, and we are still rapidly evolving. The UUA states that one of the sources of our living tradition is "wisdom from the world's religions which inspires us in our ethical and spiritual life." Which wisdom do we embrace, and which do we reject? What do we share with the world's older and much larger religions, and what makes us distinct?

What do we UU's draw from our own faith to enrich, inspire and comfort us, as compared with the practitioners of these other faiths?

Rebecca Malke-Eligenti studied world religions and journalism as an undergraduate at UW-Eau Claire. She was raised Roman Catholic and has been a Unitarian Universalist for 8 years. She is a new member of Prairie UU Society. She recently accepted our position of Youth Religious Education Coordinator (YREC.) She lives in Madison with her spouse John Eligenti.

### **Sunday, May 21**

Transition Sunday celebrates the journeys of Prairie youth as they make the transition to the next phase of their education and lives. This year two of our middle school students will be making the transition to high school and one of our high school students will be graduating. This promises to be a fun and uplifting service, led by fun and uplifting spirits, Erin Bosch and Rachel Long.

### **Sunday, May 28**

"A Century of Regime Change and What We Can Do About It," will be presented by the Rev. Jody Whelden. This weekend we honor the many soldiers who have served in the US Armed Forces. As we think of those human beings who gave their lives, we are drawn to reflect in the mirror of truth about our country's use of force in the world. Some of it has been service we can be proud of, some of it is not so pretty. This morning we will examine the work of journalist Stephen Kinzer, who has just published a book called *OVERTHROW: America's Century of Regime Change from Hawaii to Iraq*. After reviewing the patterns he exposes, we will integrate ideas for the future brought to us by Rabbi Michael Lerner, one of the co-leaders of the grassroots movement calling itself, "The Network of Spiritual Progressives," an alternative to the religious right.

## **OUR SOCIETY**

### **LONG RANGE PLANNING PRESENTATION**

On Sunday, May 14, the Long Range Planning Committee will hold its second congregational listening session after the service. The committee's plan is being developed to chart a multi-year course for Prairie. The committee has developed a draft document and now needs congregational input. Come be part of the plan. Info: Ken Skog, Chair, kskog (at) tds.net or telephone 273-481.

### **SPANISH SPEAKERS MEET MAY 18**

Spanish Speakers will enjoy potluck and conversation at 6:30 p.m. on May 18, at the home of Ema Pachon, 1459 E. Main St., Apt. 205. All are welcome. For questions, call Rosemary Dorney.

### **RIGHT RELATIONS DISCUSSION MAY 21**

After the service on Sunday, May 21, the Right Relations Task Force will present draft #2 for input and dialogue. This task force is creating a document of a set of agreements about attitudes and behaviors we want to use at Prairie in setting an atmosphere of respect, kindness, and honorable communication. Across the country, UU congregations are making these agreements.

Next year, we will work on the final agreement. Come and help us shape our document. Contact the committee for more information: Larry Nahlik, 274-6870; Mary Somers, 276-8397; Nancy Schraufnager, 273-3195; and Patty Stockdale, 298-0843.

### **ALLIED PARTNERS IDENTIFY HELP OPPORTUNITIES**

Volunteer opportunities were advertised at the May 9 meeting of Allied Partners, a group of representatives from area churches and support organizations. Many volunteers are needed to help with the June 10 Community Open House at the new Boys and Girls Club at the Allied Family Center. Call Barb Park if you can help in planning the event or working that day (noon to 2 p.m.).

Office help is badly needed for Rita Adair to finish paperwork from the Katrina evacuees project. Rita spoke at Prairie about this project on March 26.

## THE VIEW FROM MY BRANCH



I thought you might like to know more details about communication between the minister and a congregation. I have been asking all the groups working for Prairie's future to be more transparent in their meetings and their reporting to the congregation, and it seems like a good time for me to do that, also.

First, it is important to remember that a minister and a congregation are partners. Ministers are self-employed and are not employees. A congregation determines that it wants professional leadership and calls a minister to partner with it to move towards its goals. There is an annual review of the minister's work, in the context of the congregational work, through such things as the survey you filled out this Spring. This relationship is designed to have the congregation and minister work as equals. This can be hard to understand, as we are world used to bosses and employees. But, it means that someone whose life is dedicated to well being of your congregation, while they are serving you, and the UU movement will be there to help your congregation grow and prosper.

To facilitate the conversation between the minister and the congregation, I meet with the Committee on Ministry (COM) once a month. The COM is appointed by the Board, after nominations have been made that have the trust and approval of both the minister and the Board. The Prairie COM is Orange Shroeder, Andy Swartz and Aileen Nettleton.

We talk about all I am doing, share feedback of how I might tweak things or be more effective, and work on the priorities for the congregation's goals. At the same time, I share with them my concerns regarding the congregation and we think together about strategies and ideas for my ministry.

Any time you want to talk with me, directly about something you don't like (or like!) about what I am doing please call me directly: 608-347-0237 (cell).

But, if you want to start with someone else, start with one of them. They will ask you to come to me directly, eventually. But, they can listen to help you sort out your concerns and be glad to join you and me in a conversation where I can get your feedback, and you can hear more about what I am thinking.

Concurrently, the minister is in dialogue with the President of the Board, and any members who want to be engaged in ongoing dialogues. The channels are always open and there cannot be too much discussion about things which are happening. Call anytime.

As a final note, here are some things I worked on this week. I thought they might interest you. They included.....reading and writing for service on May 28.....various communications about denominational meetings.....review and feedback for long range planning committee.....study and feedback for calendar committee.....writing this column.....dinner with Wednesday night potluck group.....e-mails from things like ministerial agreement discussions to meeting planning with program committee.....Committee on Ministry meeting..... rewriting the Right Relations Task Force Draft..... one pastoral appointment.....a pastorally related phone call.....communications with new Coordinator of RE for a mentoring session with her later in the month.....planning for workshop on storytelling at the end of the month.

*The Rev. Jody Whelden, Consulting Minister  
Office: 608-271-8218; Home Office: 608-231-9707*

### **PRAIRIE ELDERS MEET MAY 23**

Prairie Elders Meeting: Tuesday, May 23, 2:00 p.m. at Oakwood Village West, Oaks Building, Second Floor Exercise Room.

Discussion Topic: Highlights of Positive Social Change in the 1960s and 1970s. Galen Smith, facilitator. All are welcome to share brief tales of personal activism, changes during the era, or whatever seems relevant.

General discussion afterward as time permits. This topic is a spinoff from our lively, fascinating April discussion on radical change.

Time: 2:00 to 3:50 p.m. Note change in the ending time. The Exercise Room will be open at 1:30 for those who wish to come early for casual conversation. We must vacate it no later than 4:00. Participants are welcome to come and go as necessary for appointments, rides, chair attendants, etc.

Refreshments: Please bring a handful of snacks to pass, if convenient. Beverages are furnished.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

About us: Prairie Elders aims to provide good times and mutual support for Prairie UU Members and Friends over 65. We also welcome other UUs who live in the facility where we meet. For directions, rides, parking and further information please call Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Doleta Chapru 238-4970.

### **BOOK CLUB JUNE SELECTION**

On Sunday, June 4 after the service, the Book club will discuss *Collapse: How Societies Choose to Fail or Succeed*, by Jared Diamond (592 pages). This book connects the fate of societies to their treatment of the environment. Diamond is well known for his bestseller, *Guns, Germs, and Steel*, in which he looks at how environmental and structural factors explain why Western societies came to dominate the world. In his new book he looks at history's losers, like the Easter Islanders, the Anasazi of the American Southwest, the Mayans, and the modern-day Rwandans, as well as the early settlements in Greenland, to analyze why societies failed. Diamond teaches geography at UCLA.

Get an overview of the book at [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse:\\_How\\_Societies\\_Choose\\_to\\_Fail\\_or\\_Succeed](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collapse:_How_Societies_Choose_to_Fail_or_Succeed).

Read a long review from *The New Yorker* at [http://www.newyorker.com/critics/books/?050103crbo\\_books](http://www.newyorker.com/critics/books/?050103crbo_books). Try out an online educational activity that apparently is based on this book at <http://www.learner.org/exhibits/collapse/>.

## **PRAIRIE WEB SITES**

*Society Home Page:* [www.uuprairie.org](http://www.uuprairie.org)  
*News Group:* [groups.yahoo.com/group/prairienews/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairienews/)  
*Views Group:* [groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/)  
*Social Action:* [socialaction.madisonwi.us](http://socialaction.madisonwi.us)  
*Humanist Union:* <http://humanist.madisonwi.us>  
*Long Range Planning:* [www.execpc.com/~prairieu/](http://www.execpc.com/~prairieu/)

Spring Fling was once again a success. We had a nice turn out of children along with parents and volunteers. Ultimate Frisbee was played along with other games outside. We also had competitive games for kids of all ages.

Some of the highlights: Jessie Garst's teammates were able to successfully put ten socks on her foot before the other teams could. Reuben Arnold was able to put the most marshmallows in his mouth and yell "Chubby Bunny" without spitting them out and Caleb Swartz was our standout team player in the Indian game "Kabaddi". Thanks to Robin Carre for donating his children's "Bouncy House" which is always a treat.

Many thanks to the volunteers who donated their time; your help is much appreciated. For anyone who hasn't had a chance to volunteer or didn't get a chance this time we'll be having our annual Summer Spree in July!

Despite the rain our children spent time outside last Sunday for the annual neighborhood clean up. With raincoats on, and garbage bags in hand our RE children took part in cleaning up Mother Earth. Even though the April showers can be cold I've always enjoyed them. They clear away the snow and uncover all the things we've left behind during the Fall. As a child I had a lot of fun going outside in the Spring gathering up all the "lost" toys I failed to put away before the snow came.

Flowers are growing, the grass is green and animals and their little ones are coming out of hibernation. Growth is all around us. This is the season for transitions. Mother Earth is not the only one blossoming; our RE children are too. Our transition service will be on May 21. This year two of our middle school students will be making the transition to high school and one of our high school students will be graduating. I hope we can all be there for them as they embark on their new journeys in life.

And if you haven't done it already please check out our new Web site at [www.uuprairies.org](http://www.uuprairies.org) for information on not just upcoming RE events but church events as well.

*Rebecca Malke-Eligenti*  
*Youth Religious Education Coordinator*

## **UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST NEWS**

### **GENERAL ASSEMBLY REGISTRATION AND BUS INFORMATION**

You can register for General Assembly online at <http://www.uua.org/ga>. The site has plenty of details on housing, scholarships, transportation, volunteer opportunities and more.

Buses from First Unitarian Society are being organized and will leave Wednesday, June 21 and return Monday, June 26. The cost is \$125 per person (round-trip).

Contact Elizabeth Barrett at [ebarrett \(at\) chorus.net](mailto:ebarrett@chorus.net) to sign up for the bus.

*Nancy Schraufnagel*