



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)

June 9, 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.

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PRAIRIE CALENDAR

Sunday, June 11

*10:00 a.m. "Beatrix Potter: Unitarian Extraordinaire,"
presented by Rose Smith and Anne Lundin

*11:45 a.m. Listening Session for the Congregation

Wednesday, June 14

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

*6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers potluck and
conversation, home of Kate Tucker

Friday, June 16

*5:30 p.m. Annual Playreaders Fish Fry, followed by
playreading at the home of the Hagstroms

Sunday, June 18

*10:00 a.m. "The Legacy of Thomas Paine"
presented by the Rev. Jody Whelden

Wednesday, June 21

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Wednesday-Sunday, June 21-25

*UUA General Assembly, St. Louis, Mo.

Sunday, June 25

*10:00 a.m. "Bringing the World Home" presented
by Karen Gross

*5:00 p.m. Prairie potluck with Midge Miller and
members of the Madison Ethical Discussion Group

*5:30 p.m. Report and discussion on Spiritual
Activism Conference, led by Midge Miller

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

NEXT PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINE: SUNDAY, JUNE 18

Sunday, July 2

10:00 a.m. "Oscar Howe, Artist of the Sioux and the
Painting of the Truth," presented by Rosemarie Lester

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, June 11

In "Beatrix Potter: Unitarian Extraordinaire", Rose Smith and Anne Lundin will explore her life story and her wonderful stories for children, which adults also enjoy. She said that she was descended "from generations of Lancashire yeomen and weavers, obstinate, hard-headed, matter-of-fact folk. . . as far back as I can go. They were Puritans, non-jurors, nonconformists, dissenters. Your Mayflower ancestors sailed to America; mine at the same time were sticking it out at home, probably rather enjoying persecution."

Sunday, June 18

This morning, as we approach the 4th of July holiday, we will be visited by the famous Mr. Tom Paine. On January 10, 1776 Paine formulated his ideas on American independence in his pamphlet Common Sense. In his words, "all the arguments for separation of England are based on nothing more than simple facts, plain arguments and common sense." Due to the many copies sold (500,000) Paine's influence on the Declaration of Independence of July 4, 1776 is well known.

Today Tom Paine will read from his own writings. Then, the Rev. Jody Whelden will reflect on his legacy in the 21st Century.

Sunday, June 25

Peace Corps Year 2006 marks the 45th anniversary of an organization that has placed almost 200,000 volunteers who have served in 138 countries overseas. Karen Gross (Dominican Republic 2000-2002) will share her experiences using pictures, art, music, story, and literature.

Karen Gross was an active member of Prairie for a number of years. Before she left for her Peace Corps training, she presented a service on her hopes for her Peace Corps experience. She also served one summer as the director of Camp Unistar, the UU family camp on Star Island in Cass Lake, MN, near Bemidji. Karen will be arriving June 15th and house-sitting for Mary Mullen and Patty Stockdale until they return at the end of June, so there should be plenty of opportunities to catch up with her.

OUR SOCIETY

LISTENING SESSION AFTER THE JUNE 11 SERVICE

A special listening session (see Rev. Jody's column for more details) will follow the June 11 Sunday service.

Topics for discussion:

1. Ministry at Prairie
2. Building plans
3. Membership growth

Discussion might include priorities, hopes, concerns, expectations, and plans for next year.

Ground Rules:

1. Three rounds, one per topic
2. Take turns talking in order (individuals may pass)
3. Be brief--keep each comment under 2 minutes
4. Listen while others speak

SPANISH SPEAKERS MEET JUNE 14

Spanish Speakers will enjoy potluck and conversation at 6:30 p.m. on Wednesday, June 14, at the home of Kate Tucker, 4504 Camden Rd, Madison. All are welcome. For questions or directions, call Rosemary Dorney, 238-4382.

ANNUAL PLAYREADERS FISH FRY JUNE 16

Prairie Playreaders will be holding their Annual Fish Fry on June 16. The group will meet at Captain Bill's at 5:30 p.m. The address is 2701 Century Harbor Rd., Middleton—right across from Harbor Athletic Club. If you are interested in coming, please contact Pat Watkins at 233-5795 before June 13 (so she can make the reservations).

The one-act play after the meal will be held at the Hagstrom's, 916 Shorewood Blvd., Madison. Drinks and dessert will be available. Anyone in the mood for some homemade rhubarb frozen yogurt?

HUMANIST UNION EVENING JUNE 25

Following the all-Prairie 5 p.m. potluck on Sunday, June 25, there will be a 5:30 p.m. public meeting, cosponsored by the Humanist Union and the Madison Ethical Discussion Group, to hear Midge Miller report on the May 17-20 Spiritual Activism Conference held at All Souls Church, Unitarian, in Washington, D.C. This conference, organized by Rabbi Michael Lerner and others with the Network of Spiritual Progressives, was attended by over 1200 participants from 34 states.

According to Rabbi Lerner (keynote speaker at the UUA Central Midwest District Assembly in Madison, April 22), "Attendees came because they are sick and tired of having the Religious Right use religion or God language to justify militarism and war, cuts in spending for the poor while cutting taxes on the rich, assaults on basic civil liberties and human rights, assaults on homosexuals, and massive governmental corruption."

CONDOLENCES

Judy Skog's father died recently after a long illness. The loss of a parent, no matter how expected, is sad and challenging. All Prairie members and friends extend our sympathies to Judy on the loss of her father. Cards can be sent to Judy and Ken at 626 Orchard Drive, Madison, WI 53711.



THE VIEW FROM MY BRANCH



As previously announced, I will not be returning to serve Prairie next year. If this decision was based on my feelings of caring and respect for you, I could never leave. But, before I speak more of Prairie, I want to tell you a little about what I will be doing.

In mid-May I was asked and accepted a position to serve on the Steering Committee of the Friends of the Committee for the International Peace Council. The Council is based in Madison and was formed in 1995. It includes 23 religious leaders from around the world. The Peace Council includes such people as the Dalai Lama, and Rev. Desmond M. Tutu, former Anglican Archbishop of Cape Town, South Africa. The mission of the Peace Council is to demonstrate that peace is possible, and that effective inter-religious collaboration to make peace, also, is possible.

The work of peacemaking has always been at the center of my ministry. In addition, this appointment will give me experience in a field known as Community Ministry. In Community Ministry, a minister works in institutions in the community that work for justice and concerns for the larger society. At the same time, s/he maintains a membership and involvement with a congregation. Typically, community ministers are chaplains in hospitals and therapists at counseling centers. More and more, they include ministers working at non-profit agencies in such areas as domestic violence, mental health, eco-justice and peace work.

As I said, this opportunity presented itself in May, after the congregational vote inviting me to return and when the Board and I were midway in discussions about next year. I had already signed a contract in April to serve a second year of ministry next year at the Free Congregation of Sauk County. It became clear to me that serving Prairie, the Free Congregation of Sauk County and the Peace Council would make me overcommitted.

As I said, complicating this decision has been you as individuals. Many of you have come to mind as I have struggled with this decision. There have been many wonderful moments with individuals—from counseling sessions, to adult education classes, to designing programs for Prairie, to dialoguing on Sunday mornings. I have had a tussle or two with

some of you. I think we have worked most of those through—let me know if not. I would hope to work through any unresolved moments before I leave. I have made mistakes and undershot or overshot my actions or comments and you have forgiven me—and you have done a little of that, also, and I have forgiven you. Congratulations to us all for being human and forgiving of each other. Most of you, in some way, have let me know of your appreciation, or given me feedback that has helped me. I thank you for all of those moments. As I said when I started—if this decision was based on my feelings of caring and respect for you, I could never leave.

Project-wise, it is hard to leave behind the second phase of the Right Relations Task Force. I hope you will carry that forward. It is hard to leave behind the newly invigorated Membership Committee and the work of the Caring Committee. I will miss not being a part of the results of the Communications Committee's hard work on the Web site. (Just last Sunday a mom and her two kids came to church because of the Web site!) The Children's RE Committee is accomplishing so many good things. Working with Rebecca, the new RE Coordinator, was bound to be a pleasure. The Committee on Ministry members has provided strong leadership for Prairie and support to me. Yes, these images and forward progress have made my decision all the harder.

On Prairie's future—I think, and have always thought, that you have a great "possible" future. The potential of Prairie to grow and serve more people in the 150-250 ranges is tremendous. You live in the Madison, WI metropolitan area...a haven for liberal, progressive thought. Also, it is clear you have the capacity to grow and change. For instance...this year you launched a new successful Web site, you integrated a minister into the life of Prairie, you worked towards a strategic plan, you developed a design for a building, you rebuilt the membership committee, you rearticulated your RE staffing and hired a new person, you created a draft of a Right Relations Covenant, and continued your excellent programming for Sundays and RE.

The Board has asked me to work with them in designing next year's plan for moving forward with these concerns. I am pleased to be asked. I will be staying until July 9th and I am looking forward to this work with your leadership.

Thank you for the honor of serving you this year. Without a congregation, there is no ministry. I have gained a lot as your minister. As human beings, we work together for each other's well being and the well being of the world. I think we did a pretty good job this year—a job that we can be proud of. Thank you for letting me be a part of it.

The Rev. Jody Whelden
Consulting Minister
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Home Office: 608-347-0237

BOOK CLUB MEETS ON JULY 9

The Egyptian Nobel Prize winner Naguib Mahfouz, was first published in Arabic in 1983. The short novel, *The Journey of Ibn Fattouma*, described variously as a parable, fable, or morality play, is about the search for a humane religion that lives up to its ideals for all classes of people who belong to it. The narrator, Ibn Fattouma, travels to several countries representing different real countries, societies, and religions. As you read, try to identify the places Mahfouz might have had in mind. (148 pages)

Recommended by Mary Mullen, this book was one assigned and discussed in the UW class she took last semester called "Religion in Critical Perspective." Learn about the author at the first URL and look at some discussion questions at the second:
http://nexttext.com/index.cfm?fuseaction=books.resource&target=worldlit&file=worldlit_ism_05.cfm&type=student

<http://www.randomhouse.com/anchor/catalog/display.pperl?isbn=9780385423342&view=rg>

MISSING SONGBOOKS!

Members are encouraged to check at home for *Rise Up Singing* books borrowed from the meeting room and upstairs office Sunday, May 14. All are needed for congregational singing. You can purchase copies at local book stores.

Also, individual copies of *Singing the Living Tradition* hymn book and the new songbook supplement are available through the UUA Bookstore at uaa.org or by calling 1-800-215-9076.

PRAIRIE WEB SITES

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

LETTERS

NEW OFFICE PHONE NUMBER

Dear Folks,

I have decided that I do not need my home office business number. So, I have disconnected it, as of this week. Please use cell phone, 608-347-0237 for all business calls. Thanks.

Jody

The Rev. Jody Whelden
Consulting Minister

UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST NEWS

JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS NEWS

Pre-GA Social Justice Gathering for Social Action & Racial Justice Committees

For the first time, a pre-GA social justice gathering for social action and racial justice (anti-racism, diversity) committee members will share our understandings, resources, and best practices on developing effective and accountable (anti-oppressive/anti-racist) social justice: Wednesday, June 21, 2-5 p.m., St. Louis Convention Center, known as the America's Center, in Room F.

This gathering will provide an opportunity for UUs working for social justice and racial justice to learn ways we can work together to create accountable social justice programming. The gathering will include a one-hour session with Lead Consultant for JUUST Change, Paula Cole Jones of All Souls Unitarian Church, Washington, DC.

Advocacy and Witness staff will share information about new resources and initiatives. Small groups sessions will allow time for sharing best congregational practices.

See http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/06ga_SJ_gathering.pdf for details.

If you have not yet RSVP'd, please write to Audra Friend at afriend@uua.org and let us know your name, congregation, city or town, state, and your role in the congregation.

Please spread the word to other social justice and anti-oppression/anti-racism committee members, activists, and leaders in your congregation.

From the Heart: Building a New Democracy Movement!

You also won't want to miss Linda Stout, Executive Director of Spirit in Action, on Saturday, June 24, at 2:15. Spirit in Action, through their Circles of Change Program, is developing social justice approaches and practices that embrace spirit, heal divisions among communities, develop collective visioning, and action for deep and lasting change.

The workshop is called FROM THE HEART: BUILDING A NEW DEMOCRACY MOVEMENT!

Linda will also report on work for a just recovery in the Gulf Coast and the impact of system racism and classism on the efforts to rebuild New Orleans and the Gulf.

See http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/06ga_LindaStout_NOLA.pdf

UU Responders at the program:

Paula Cole Jones, UUA Lead Consultant for JUUST Change Anti-Oppression Consultancy (<http://www.uua.org/programs/justice/antiracism/consultancy.html>)

Rev. Jeanne Lloyd, President of UU Society for Community Ministries (<http://www.uuscsm.org/>)

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