



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."

May 11, 2007



Prairie Fire is the semi-monthly newsletter of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. View past issues at www.uuprairie.org.

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PRAIRIE CALENDAR

Sunday, May 13

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. "Memories, Meanings, and Mother's Day" presented by the Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

*11:30 a.m. Book Club lunch and discussion of *The Plot Against America*

Wednesday, May 16

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

7:30 p.m. Program Committee meets

Thursday, May 17

7:30 p.m. Housing and Properties Committee meeting at Prairie

Saturday, May 19

9:00 a.m. Prairie work day at Prairie

Sunday, May 20

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. "Creationism in Public Schools: A Very (Very) Brief History" presented by Robert Weitzel

*12:00 noon. Humanist Union potluck and program led by Randy Converse

Monday, May 21

6:00 p.m. EnAct potluck and discussion

Tuesday, May 22

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

Wednesday, May 23

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers potluck at the home of Prudence Barber

Thursday, May 24

*7:00 p.m. Prairie Film Group meeting

Sunday, May 27

*10:00 a.m. "Memorial Day: Observances and Observations" presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski, followed by picnic at Prairie

Sunday, June 3

12:00 noon. Humanist Union potluck & program on religious propaganda, led by Andy Somers.

Wednesday-Sunday, June 20-24

UUA General Assembly, Portland, Oregon

Saturday, June 23

*Prairie fundraising trip to Milwaukee.

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, MAY 20

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, May 13

We explore the question of whether the tragic toll that the shootings at Virginia Tech, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the atrocities being brought upon innocents in the Darfur Genocide, the trauma from violence in our own society is creating a numbness in our collective psyche, or as one observer has said, we are becoming "saturated selves".

In exploring this we will also be visiting the making and meanings of Julia Ward Howe's "Mother's Day Proclamation."

Sunday, May 20

The program, "Creationism in Public Schools", is presented by Robert Weitzel. Bob taught Earth Science in middle and high school for 12 years. His essays regularly appear in *The Capital Times*. He has also been published in various papers, magazines, and Web sites.

Bob's proudest moment as a writer came when he received a scathing e-mail (a copy of a letter to the editor of *The Capital Times*) from the public relations director of James Dobson's Focus on the Family, taking him to task for an essay he wrote regarding abstinence-only sex education. Bob offered an evolutionary argument as to why this approach is bound to fail...which it has. He knew he was finally getting under the skin of the right...well, the wrong...people.

Sunday, May 27

We explore the need for and the use of a "Language of Reverence" in observing this Memorial Day, the fourth year of our nation at war.

OUR SOCIETY

PARISH MEETING VOTES FROM APRIL 22

The spring parish meeting was held April 22, 2007. In addition to reviewing previous minutes, the treasurer's report, and the minister's report, the following actions were taken.

Elections

The following slate of officers was accepted for 2007-2008:

President: Rachel Long
Vice-President: Anne Lundin
Secretary: Jerry Simmons
Treasurer: Kate Liu
Finance: Norma Briggs
Hospitality & Membership: Paula Pachciarz
Housing & Property: Al Nettleton
Long Range Planning: Marilyn Ruecking
Program: Susan Herr-Hoyman
Religious Education: Karen Deaton
Social Action: Kathy Converse
Denominational Affairs: Nancy Schraufnagel

We also selected Dirk Herr-Hoyman, Rosemary Dorney, and Mary Mullen to serve on the Committee on Committees (also known as the Nominating Committee). The Committee also will include one member chosen by the outgoing committee from its members, and another to be appointed by the incoming Board from its membership.

Meeting House Project

We discussed and voted on three resolutions that had been placed on the agenda by recommendation of the Board at its March 21, 2007 meeting. These were considered separately.

"Be it resolved that Prairie suspend the processes directed at construction of a new meeting house at this time." Following discussion, the resolution was accepted, with a vote of 39 yes, 11 no, and 2 abstaining.

"Be it resolved that Prairie should place the building site on the market, with an objective of recovering the costs of purchase and financing." Following lengthy discussion, the resolution failed, with 24 yes and 27 no.

"Be it resolved that Prairie continue to occupy its current meeting house until such time as an affordable option for moving to a new meeting house that better meets the needs of the Society is identified." This was accepted easily on a show of hands.

We then considered a resolution to appoint a committee *"...to ascertain whether needed funds will be available from members and friends, whether the present meeting house could be sold*

to a willing buyer for an adequate price, and whether Prairie could support the operating cost of a new meeting house on the Fitchburg site," with the resolution also including further details regarding the rationale, makeup, and proposed activity of the committee. Following discussion, we voted to table this resolution and direct the Board to develop recommendations regarding it.

Bylaw Changes

Two changes to the bylaws were approved. The first change resolved a conflict in the current bylaws regarding selection of lay ministers, by adding to the responsibilities of the Program committee "selecting lay ministers in accordance with Article VIII.B." The second change added a Youth Member to the Executive Board: "The Youth Member is a person between the ages of 16 and 24. She or he is a fully participating officer of the society, and is responsible for such duties as may be determined from time to time by the Executive Board."

Various Committee reports were also distributed during the course of the meeting, but there was not time for discussion of these.

Jerry Simmons, Secretary

UPCOMING BOOK CLUB SELECTION

The Prairie Book Club meets monthly after the Sunday service at Prairie. Bring food to share. Anyone who has read the book or simply wants to listen to the discussion is welcome to attend.

Sunday, May 13. *The Plot Against America* by Philip Roth. Fiction, "an alternate history where Franklin Delano Roosevelt is defeated in the presidential election of 1940 by Charles Lindbergh...and Jewish-American families like the Roths are persecuted on various levels. The narrator and central character in the novel is the young Philip, and the care with which his confusion and terror are rendered makes the novel as much about the mysteries of growing up as about American politics. (Wikipedia) 400 pp, \$1.15 & up.

Sunday, June 10 *Eats, Shoots & Leaves: The Zero Tolerance Approach to Punctuation* by Lynne Truss and Bonnie Timmons. Try this critical review, which will make you want to read the book to see if you agree:

http://www.newyorker.com/critics/books/articles/040628crbo_books1?040628crbo_books1
<http://www.newyorker.com/critics/books/articles/040628crbo_books1?040628crbo_books1> . 228 pages, \$0.92 and up.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS SOUGHT FOR H&P

Come and join the Prairie Housing & Property Committee! If you have skills in maintenance, aesthetics of design or decorating, gardening, cleaning, organizing, and discarding excess stuff, we need you on the committee. Meetings are scheduled at 7:30 p.m. on **Thursday, May 17** and **Thursday, June 14**, with the goal of developing a plan for building improvements for the next year.

PRAIRIE WORK DAY ON SATURDAY, MAY 19

There will be a Prairie Workday on **Saturday, May 19**. We will do yard work, if the weather is good, and clean out the corners of the building. Bring tools, cleaning supplies and food to share for lunch. I'll provide beverages.

Al Nettleton, Housing & Property Chair

FILM GROUP VIEWING ON MAY 24

For the Prairie Film Group, the curtain will go up at 7:00 p.m. on **Thursday, May 24** to view *Brothers*, a 2004 film from Denmark written by Anders Thomas Jensen and Susanne Bier. Bier also directs this microscopic examination of the intricacies of family bonding, the significance of the blood ties between brothers, and the effects of one of the brutal realities of war on every individual member of a family.

Bring a snack to share.

PRAIRIE WEB SITES

Society Home Page: <http://uuprairie.org/>

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

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

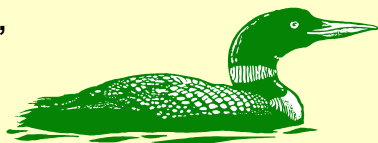
Social Action: <http://socialaction.madisonwi.us>

Humanist Union: <http://humanist.madisonwi.us>

REV. RALPH'S RUMINATIONS

On **Sunday, April 22,**

at our annual parish meeting we voted on resolutions that



represented differences of perspectives on those resolutions. Without unanimous agreement there continues to be concerns and questions regarding, "What next?", "What options are worthy of full congregational support?"

The voting results were difficult and for some quite painful. From my perspective I observed that a civil tone and a non *ad hominem* behavior was practiced. That was positive and I believe to be in keeping with our Unitarian tradition of aspiring to practice covenanted relationships.

By using the term "covenanted relationships" I am referring to our practice as a free and liberal congregation that we can accomplish more as a community than as isolated/individual selves. Our religion requires that we use our collective thinking, our collective will, our collective passion, and our collective resources, more than any one of us can do alone. Though we never get beyond the possibility of error or fallacious reasoning, our best efforts can be and will be tested within an ongoing and faithful community that is part of a loving and rational tradition. This does not mean that we have insulated ourselves from the promise or perils of change or, as Buddhists would say, "Impermanence."

The visit of the Dalai Lama to Madison, May 2, 3, and 4, may have reminded us of the wisdom of this tradition when we experience the sadness of loss by an accident or the ways of democratic processes.

Achaan Chah Subato, the great Theravandan meditation master, once said about broken glasses (think here of disappointment or loss):

"One day some people came to the master and asked, 'How can you be happy in a world of such impermanence, where you cannot protect your loved ones from harm, illness and death?' The master held up a glass and said, 'Someone gave me this glass, and I really like this glass. It holds my water admirably and it glistens in the sunlight. I touch it and it rings! One day the wind may blow it off the shelf, or my elbow may knock it from the

table. I know this glass is already broken, so I enjoy it incredibly.'"

Congregational living and decision-making is complicated and can be perplexing. As Prairie moves forward with a new Board, we are given a new Spring in our community. May we all consider this as a new beginning. In doing so, may we also appreciate the passingness of things, of events, of persons who have served in those important yet fragile roles of leadership in our communal life. There is newness and transitoriness within our interdependent web of living. There is purpose and wonder awaiting for us in this existence. And as hard as it can be to face, the simple Buddhist perspective says; "this very moment is the only place we will find life and love and meaning."

May we think of this and realize it may be an opportune time to say "I'm sorry" or "Thank you" or choose to take a walk, or take the time to have that conversation you've been putting off.

This is a new season for Prairie. A new beginning. Hope is with us!

Happy to be journeying with you,

Ralph

PARTAKE IN THE JOY AND BEAUTY OF SPRING: A DAY IN MILWAUKEE

The Prairie Unitarian Society invites you to a bus tour of Whitnall Park, Milwaukee Art Museum, and lunch at the 4-star restaurant Bacchus on **Saturday, June 23.**

It's hard to believe that it's been three years since our last trip to the beautiful display of roses and peonies at THE BOERNER BOTANICAL GARDENS WHITNALL PARK at HALES CORNERS, where you will see more than a thousand roses of all varieties. Gardeners should bring their pencils and notebooks and everyone may want his or her camera. The rose gardens are arranged for easy walking; there are benches on which to sit and rest, and you will want to visit the lovely gift shop, which is full of garden motif gifts either for yourself or for your gardening friends.

Just before noon, we will reboard our comfortable, air-conditioned Badger bus to enjoy A SUPERB LUNCH AT THE FOUR-STAR BARTOLOTTA RESTAURANT BACCHUS, where you will have a choice of a vegetarian pasta meal with tomato sauce, mozzarella, basil, tomatoes, and vegetables over genelli; Atlantic Salmon with Dijon Mustard and Herb crumbs over Spinach with a rich red-wine sauce; or Grilled Pesto Chicken Salad with golden raisins, pine nuts and romaine lettuce with grilled country bread. Accompanying your entree will be soup or salad, a beverage, and desert.

After lunch our bus will take us the two short blocks to the: MILWAUKEE ART MUSEUM for the exhibit PISSARRO: CREATING THE IMPRESSIONIST LANDSCAPE. This exhibit—the only Midwest venue—traces, in more than fifty paintings, Camille Pissarro's artistic evolution from a traditional landscape painter of formal Salon composition in the 1860's to a pioneering and daring impressionist at the time of his entries for the first impressionist exhibition in 1874.

Cost of trip is \$ 62, and check made out to Prairie U.U. Society is due no later than **27 May**. Price includes transportation, lunch and both entrance fees. Mail your check to: Pat Watkins, 230 N. Meadow Lane, Madison, WI 53705-3331. Include the meal choice slip with your check, and write your choice of pick-up location on the memo line. Also, make sure your phone number is on the check.

Pick-up locations are UW Credit Union on University Avenue by Midvale Blvd. at 8 a.m. and South Towne Mall at 8:20 a.m. (could consider a stop downtown at Meriter). Return by 5:45 p.m.

For questions, call Pat at 233-5795. A written confirmation with all travel details will be mailed to you by June 8.

HUMANIST UNION MEETS ON JUNE 3

Humanist Union meets next on **Sunday, June 3**.

Andy Somers will follow up on his series of programs on propaganda at Prairie by leading a discussion on *Religious Propaganda: How to recognize and deal with it*. Potluck lunch at noon, presentation and discussion about 12:20 to 1:30 p.m. Future Humanist Union programs are posted at <http://humanist.madisonwi.us/events.htm>.

PRAIRIE ELDERS MEETING

Prairie Elders meets **Tuesday, May 22**, 2:00-3:50 p.m., at the Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks Building, Oakwood Village West.

Good times and mutual support are Prairie Elders' goals. The good times rolled aplenty at our April meeting. Seventeen of us chuckled and guffawed as participants related humorous personal stories of childhood exploits and adult embarrassments.

For many of us, "good times" also include meaty discussions on important issues. Our round-robin commentaries alternate each month between a topical issue and personal stories on selected subjects. This month's topic is a serious one.

MAY Topic: "Current Threats to the Separation of Church and State." Rob Boston's article in the March 2007 issue of *Church and State* provides a good overview. Those interested in reading it may contact Doleta Chapru (before **May 15**) for the publication or find it on the Web at www.au.org. Search on "avalanche bad bills".

SCHEDULE:

1:30 Nakoma Room opens
2:00 Introductions
2:20 Topic presentation and discussion
4:00 Vacate room

REFRESHMENTS: Please bring snacks to pass, if convenient. Beverages are furnished. Bring your own beverage cup if you can.

DIRECTIONS: Oakwood Village West is in the 6100 block of Mineral Point Road several blocks west of Whitney Way. Follow the main entrance road veering left and up the hill. Heritage Oaks is the new building on the right. Its visitor parking entrance is directly across from Oakwood's one-story Resale Shop. The parking lot's automatic door is to the right of two yellow posts and marked by a yellow arrow on the driveway. Drive in and find a spot near the clearly marked elevator shaft. The Nakoma Room is on the first floor. From the elevator go to the right and past the mail boxes. Turn left by the reception desk. There are also a few handicapped stalls farther up the hill in front of Heritage Oak's main entrance. Enter there and turn right immediately past the receptionist's desk.

ABOUT US: For further information please contact Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWS

JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS NEWS

House of Representatives Passes Crucial Hate Crimes Legislation: Debate Moves to the Senate

In a major victory for advocates of BGLT equality, the House of Representatives voted Thursday to pass the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act (H.R. 1592). The Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act, called the Matthew Shepard Act in the Senate, adds sexual orientation, gender, gender identity and disability to existing federal law regarding hate crimes.

The bill would give authority to the federal government to investigate and prosecute violent crimes against victims targeted for their sexual orientation, gender, gender identity or disability. (Currently, the federal government has this authority in crimes committed because of the victim's race, color, religion or national origin.)

The bill would allow federal authorities to assist local law enforcement when they request assistance or fail to adequately investigate or prosecute these crimes. Under the bill, local law enforcement could also receive grants to help with expenses related to investigating and prosecuting bias-motivated violent crimes.

Thanks to all of you who helped pass this bill by contacting Congress, educating your friends, and speaking out about hate crimes; stay tuned for more ways to participate as the Senate considers the bill in the next few weeks.

Bill Sinkford & UU Ministers were in Washington DC for Clergy Lobby Day

On Tuesday, April 17, seventeen UU ministers and UUA president Rev. William Sinkford met in Washington, D.C. to join over 200 religious leaders in lobbying for BGLT equality. As one of the featured speakers at the press conference, Rev. William G. Sinkford reiterated Unitarian Universalist support for BGLT equality and challenged the harsh and confusing arguments used by opponents of the legislation:

We are people of faith, and we also have a commitment to truth. Much of the rhetoric in opposition to these bills is blatantly and inexcusably false. So let me be clear: These laws would not create quotas or force churches to hire people who do not share their religious values. These laws will not criminalize free speech or impede religious expression in any way. These laws do not undermine a single constitutional right. In fact, the contrary is true. If passed, the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, and the Local Law Enforcement Hate Crimes Prevention Act would strengthen our nation's commitment to freedom and justice for all of 'we the people.

You can read all of his remarks at: www.hrc.org and watch the whole press conference on YouTube (Rev. Sinkford appears at 12:06 approximately).

Rev. Sinkford was quoted in coverage of the event including: 365Gay.com, gaywired.com, and Lavender. The Rev. Roberta Finkelstein, minister at South Church in Portsmouth, was one of the UU ministers who participated in the April 17 events; you can read about her story here: www.fosters.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=2007104160171.

OTHER NEWS

LECTURE ON AUSTRIAN IN WISCONSIN

Our own Rosemarie Lester will present a slide lecture, "An Austrian in Wisconsin," on **Wednesday, May 16**, at 6:30 p.m. at the Wil-Mar Neighborhood Center, 953 Jenifer St.

From 1856 to 1860, Frank Hoelzlhuber, an enterprising young Austrian who taught art and music at Milwaukee's German-American Academy, kept a record of his travels throughout Wisconsin. Illustrated with delightful watercolors, his written commentary reveals a mixture of journalistic curiosity and an earnest desire to bring to the folks back home an idea of what this great "new world" was really like.

Come and enjoy the slide lecture, which includes Hoelzlhuber's watercolors and original commentaries translated from the German by Rosemarie.