



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."

June 8, 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, June 10

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. "Summertime Is Coming," presented by the Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

*11:30 a.m. Book Group discusses *Eats, Shoots and Leaves*

Wednesday, June 13

7:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Thursday, June 14

*7:30 p.m. Housing & Properties Committee

Sunday, June 17

9:00 a.m. No choir rehearsals in the summer

*10:00 a.m. "Another View of Iran" presented by Bonnie and Bob Block

Wednesday, June 20

7:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Wednesday-Sunday, June 20-24

UUA General Assembly, Portland, Oregon

NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, JUNE 17

Thursday, June 21

7:00 p.m. Movie Group views *Vanya on 42nd Street*

Saturday, June 23

Prairie fund-raising trip to Milwaukee.

Sunday, June 24

*10:00 a.m. "Venezuela: Condoms and the Constitution" presented by Mary Somers

Tuesday, June 26

*2:00 Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood West

Friday-Sunday, July 6-8

Summer Spree at Prairie

Friday-Sunday, September 14-16

Prairie Retreat at Bethel Horizons

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, June 10

Hal Borland has written that "Summer is a promissory note signed in June, its long days spent and gone before you know it, and due to be repaid next January." We'll be exploring some the

“enchantments” that may come your way during the long days of Summer.

Sunday, June 17

"Another View of Iran" is the title of the June 17 presentation by Bonnie and Bob Block of Madison about their twelve day visit to Iran as participants in an interfaith friendship delegation organized by the Fellowship of Reconciliation (www.forusa.org <http://www.forusa.org/>). In December of 2005 they visited the cities of Tehran, Qom, Isfahan, and Shiraz and learned about this ancient culture. They met with Shia Muslim clerics, leaders of Christian, Jewish and Zoroastrian communities, a women's environmental group, students at the state run school for media studies, and many ordinary Iranians who shared their concerns.

Bonnie has worked as a social worker, attorney and divorce mediator. Most recently she staffed the Wisconsin Network for Peace and Justice. She is also a past chair of the National Council of the Fellowship of Reconciliation and was the national coordinator of the Lutheran Peace Fellowship. She is a “semi-retired” but continues as a writer, peace activist, and nonviolence trainer.

Bob is a retired physician who practiced internal medicine in St. Paul, Oklahoma City, Green Bay and Madison for 42 years. He is an avid biker and jogger, plays the tuba in a brass quintet and the Madison Municipal Band, and has woodworking aspirations.

Both of the Blocks are graduates of UW Madison and returned there to live in 1980. Bob and Bonnie have been married for 45 years and have two adult sons and one active, redheaded grandson.

Sunday, June 24

“Venezuela: Condoms and the Constitution” will be presented by Mary Somers. Prairie members Andy and Mary Somers went to see for themselves the situation in Venezuela. The tour by Global Exchange was sold as a celebration on International Women's Day and how women's rights are treated and implemented in Venezuela. They went with seven others, including two women from Nicaragua. Here's a taste of what Mary Somers will be telling us.

Women were managing cooperatives producing vegetables and fruits. They had received a small loan from Ban Mujer and paid it back in six months. The cooperative had nine women, but now only seven as two women had to drop out as their husbands did not want them to work outside the home. In another community shortly before the delegation arrived a women was shot by her husband after being elected to the local community council.

Eight-five per cent of the Venezuela people have been very poor and oppressed for centuries. The new government has brought health care, education and nutrition centers to poor neighborhoods. Food is 35 per cent lower at the barrio groceries. People of all ages are going to school. Free health care is available to everyone with the assistance of 20,000 Cuban health care workers including 12, 000 physicians. Voting in elections is encouraged. Election day is on Sundays when few work and transportation is free.

The major problems will be getting improved water and sewer to the highly populated areas in the hills surrounding Caracas. These homes have few roads and crumbling soil. And the culture of male chauvinism, so prevalent in Catholic Latin America, stands in the way of social economic and political development. Venezuela may have the most progressive constitution in the world for women, but the men will not wear condoms.

OUR SOCIETY

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We had a joint meeting of the old and new Prairie Board members May 6, after which I officially assumed office as Prairie's president for the 2007-8 year. It is a big responsibility, and a challenge. I have high hopes for Prairie this year. We have an enthusiastic and talented group of leaders lined up to serve you as Chairs of Committees and as Prairie's Board members. All the new Board members, plus our Youth Religious Education Coordinator and our Administrator, have found the time and energy to join one another for a Board Retreat June 8-9. We'll be evaluating what steps we need to take at this point to grow as a society, and bring our ideas

and plans back to you for further discussion and ultimately action.

Undoubtedly, some of you will be unhappy with me, or with other Prairie leaders, or with some of what we do this year. I hope you will strive to follow the path of kindness, and give us your feedback carefully. Don't speak ill of us to others; rather, follow the more courageous path of telling us directly what has upset you or what you believe we could do better. Remember, we are volunteers, trying our best to serve the Prairie community and find ways of making our world a better place. We all share these same goals – to love each other and to bring that love out into the world.

We are a church community, and here is the place where we try to create a space of warmth and support for each other, a sanctuary. If we experience kindness here, it will be easier to bring that kindness into the world. We also need to challenge each other to be better people. If we can be courageous here, it will be easier to change our lives and our world for the better. Teaching each other to be loving here will help us to be loving everywhere.

Let us challenge each other to be our best with each other, and let us not settle for less. I will strive to be courageous enough to challenge you if you are being unkind or careless with one of our community. I ask you to do the same with me. Let's build Prairie from the inside – we can be kind, careful, and courageous ministers to one another.

In peace,

Rachel Long, President

PRAIRIE FAMILY RETREAT SEPTEMBER 14-16

Mark your calendars NOW for joining us at our annual Prairie Retreat at Bethel Horizon, near Dodgeville, **Friday evening, September 14-Sunday noon, September 16**. This is a wonderful time for our Prairie community to play, sing, share ideas, and get to know one another at a deeper level.

Bethel Horizon is an environmental retreat-study center in the beautiful driftless area of western Wisconsin, near Governor Dodge State Park.

The program for the retreat will grow from your contributions. Do you have a nature activity to lead with children and adults? Do you have an idea for a craft to share for all? Mixers or folk dancing you could lead? A small workshop around a timely topic you would like to lead? Talents to share in the evening Talent Show?

Registration and lodging information will be coming soon. Contact Aileen Nettleton, program coordinator, with your ideas: aanett@execpc.com or 238-6053.

REV. RALPH'S RUMINATIONS

As we enter into the month of June many of us will begin engaging in activities



that can be rewarding and growth giving. As the classic song "Summertime" from Gershwin's Broadway hit, *Porgy and Bess*, phrases it, most of us can look forward to days ahead when the "livin' is easy." It has also been said that, "If a June night could talk, it would probably boast it invented romance." (Bern Williams)

Easy living during the day, and the rich possibilities for romance in the nighttime hours. As the motto for Wisconsin tourism puts it: "Life is Good." But (the philosopher's "but"), underneath the glow of the idyllic pleasures waiting to be experienced we must find the keys to unlock the moments of meaning that can become cherished memories for sharing with others the stories of "How I Spent My Summer Vacation."

Some of us may find in the following practices keys to unlocking deeper meanings in the summertime. There is something about the changed pace of our lives during these months that makes it a little easier to dedicate time to growth on our individual journeys. Perhaps we have (or recall) moments of heightened sensitivity to the sacred, the holy, the spiritual (call it what you may) while at camp or on vacation. For some of us the longer days may invite reflection. Others, hopefully, will be inspired by being around children on vacation from school; they model play and joy and wonder.

HOUSING AND PROPERTY COMMITTEE PLANS MEETING

The Housing & Property Committee will meet at Prairie, 7:30, **Thursday, June 14**. All members of the society are encouraged to join this committee. The priorities we are now working on include building aesthetics (starting with de-cluttering), deciding whether to carpet or repair floor tiles in basement classrooms, deciding on classroom furnishing and storage improvements, and needs for other building improvements.

WORK DAYS WORK!

Two successful work days were held at Prairie in May and June. Thanks to Dorothy Krause, Ralph Tyksinski, Dirk Herr-Hoyman, Phoenix Wardell, and Galen Smith for coming to help out. We successfully cleaned out the shed (mostly); removed old cabinets from against the back wall; cleaned out the fenced area behind the building; trimmed the jungle to the west of the kitchen/restroom wing; cleaned gutters; removed some hanging wire fencing; trimmed trees; removed some rogue trees; and, washed entry and meeting room windows.

We will schedule another work day just before the RE classes start in the fall to spruce up the basement space and make it inviting for the children. Watch for the date in a future Prairie Fire issue.

These work days are an important part of the Prairie community experience. We both get to know one another and find that much can be accomplished in a short time when there are many hands doing work together for a short time.

Al Nettleton, H&P Committee Chair

SPANISH SPEAKERS ON JUNE 20

Spanish Speakers will meet on Wednesday, **June 20**, 6:30 p.m., at the home of Bill Shaffer, 1029 Spaight St, #B6. Bill's number is 255-0003. For questions or rides, call Rosemary Dorney, 238-4382.

MOVIE GROUP MEETS JUNE 21

The Movie Group will meet at Prairie, 7:00 p.m., **Thursday, June 21** to view *Vanya on 42nd Street*. This 1994 film by Louis Malle and Andre Gregory is an intimate interpretive performance of the play *Uncle Vanya* by Anton Chekhov, as translated by David Mamet. The film stars actors Wallace Shawn and Julianne Moore.

Over the course of three years, director Andre Gregory and a group of actors came together on a voluntary basis in order to better understand Chekhov's work through workshop performances. The play was performed rehearsal-style on a bare stage with the actors in street clothes. The action of the drama itself takes place entirely within the vacant shell of an abandoned theatre on 42nd street in New York City.

Free from any commercial demands, their performances were enacted for an invited audience only. Gregory and Malle decided to document the play as they had developed it. The film was the result of the collaborative process.

(Thanks to wikipedia.com for this description.)
The film was recommended by Nancy Garst.

The summer schedule for the Prairie Film Group continues on **July 19** with *Breaking Away* and **August 23** with *A New Leaf*.

PRAIRIE ELDERS MEETING

Prairie Elders meet next on **Tuesday, June 26**, 2:00-3:50 p.m., Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks Building, Oakwood Village West.

JUNE TOPIC: A book that inspired, motivated, influenced or otherwise had special meaning to you in your adult life.

We use a round-robin format for the topic and begin and end our gathering with casual conversation. The Nakoma Room will be open at 1:30 for those who wish to come early to visit.

REFRESHMENTS: Please bring a small handful of snacks to pass, if convenient. Beverages are furnished. To reduce landfill trash, bring your own beverage cup if you can.

DIRECTIONS: Oakwood Village West is in the 6100 block of Mineral Point Road 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 across from Oakwood's one-story Resale Shop. Drive to the right of two yellow posts. An arrow on the driveway points to the automatic entrance door. Park near the elevator shaft and take the elevator to the first floor. From the elevator go to the right and past the mail boxes. Turn left by the reception desk and go straight ahead to the Nakoma Room.

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: 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 contact Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Doleta Chapru 238-4970.

LETTERS

AMUUSE SUMMER CAMPS FOR UU SINGLES

Hi:

I am a member at James Reeb UUC on the east side, and wanted to remind you about the AMUUSE summer camps for singles. I went last year and found it a very good, inexpensive "vacation" experience. (It's not always easy for singles to find a good way to use their summer time off.)

There are sessions at nearby Lake Geneva in July and Michigan in August. Campers tend toward middle-age; many are UU, others, not. More information at www.amuuse.org.

Any questions, feel free to call me, or follow up with contact there.

Thanks,

Pat Schneider
Reporter, *The Capital Times*
608-252-6408

NETWORK FOR UU THEISTS AND DEISTS

Dear Editor,

I'd like to spread the word about the American Unitarian Conference.

<http://www.americanunitarian.org/>

It's not a denomination or a church. It's an organization serving as a network for people who have a Unitarian theology. They welcome Christians, theists and deists.

It was founded in the year 2000 by several Unitarian-Universalists who desired a network for traditional Unitarian believers. The organization is independent of the Unitarian Universalist Association.

I invite you to explore the website.

Peace,

Ben Frank

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWS

RAISE THE DRUMBEAT FOR DARFUR

Raise the Drumbeat for Darfur at GA 2007 in Portland!

As genocide devastates Darfur, we must be relentless in our efforts to end it. You can help. At General Assembly, UUSC will hold a full-day activists' training to increase awareness and organize action to bring peace and justice to Darfur.

Space for this exciting opportunity is limited and filling up quickly!

To register to participate, contact Rachel Jordan at volunteerservices@uusc.org or 617-301-4307.

What: Activists' training to raise the Drumbeat for Darfur!

When: **Wednesday, June 20**, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Where: Ambridge Events Center, Portland, Ore.

Cosponsors: UU-UNO, UUA, Africa Action, Massachusetts Coalition to Save Darfur, and Fidelity Out of Sudan.

This landmark event will feature three inspiring speakers: Darfurian activist Omer Ismail, author

and activist Frances Moore Lappé, UUA President Rev. William Sinkford and UUSC President Charlie Clements.

Small group workshops facilitated by experienced activists will help you build the skills necessary to help organize a Drumbeat for Darfur within your own community.

Each participant is encouraged to organize one to two others from their congregation to attend as well, and to be allies for raising the Drumbeat for Darfur within their own communities.

There is no charge for attending, and registration for General Assembly is not required. Lunch will be provided.

More about this exciting event can be found online. In order to participate, you must register by contacting Rachel Jordan at volunteerservices@uusc.org or 617-301-4307.

Join the Drumbeat for Darfur campaign and take action today at www.uusc.org/drumbeatfordarfur!

JU WRITER PENS THE BRIDES OF MARCH

The Brides of March: Memoir of a same-sex marriage can be found at www.thebridesofmarch.com.

The author is a Unitarian Universalist who married her wife in Portland, Oregon's first church. This memoir touches on one of the hottest cultural and political debates of this century and does so with amazing grace, humor and poignancy. There's even a chapter entitled "Wishy washy Unitarians" that explores the author's struggle to accept 'organized religion' despite her admiration for and love of the community that her church provides.

Here's what others are saying about it:

"Author Beren DeMotier has a winner on her hands with *The Brides of March*, an absolutely hilarious and sobering memoir about lesbian motherhood, the quest for marriage, and the pitfalls of a legal system that doesn't know how to classify and acknowledge same-sex relationships.

This richly woven memoir juxtaposes the author's own coming of age as a punk kid (and seemingly voracious teenage harlot) with her life now, as a wife and suburban mom with a SUV-full of precocious kids of her own.

Brides is a quirky, witty, engaging, and beautifully crafted tale of a life lived. Every politician in Oregon should read it." -- Diane Anderson-Minshall, executive editor *Curve* magazine

"*The Brides of March* should be on everyone's wedding gift registry. This memoir warmly, wittily chronicles the everyday details of "same-sex marriage" for an extraordinary political time. It's a gift."--Kate Clinton, humorist

"After all of the partisan rhetoric what about same-sex marriage means, what a welcome relief *The Brides of March* is -- a beautifully-written, quirky look at the pros and cons of same-sex marriage from the inside out, smart without being preachy, funny without being bitter, emotional without being maudlin.

I have certainly never seen the case for why being able to get married in one's home state is so emotionally important - for everyone -- made better anywhere. Love, even under the best of circumstances, is not easy to convey in prose, but this book about one strong couple working their way through a relationship is positively glowing with it." -- Anne Mini, Ph.D.

"Beren deMotier provides an honest and compelling account of what it was like to be a family of "same-sex marriage" in Multnomah County. We changed procedure in order to follow Oregon's constitution and allow couples like Beren and her wife, Jannine, to marry in March of 2004. We knew families were raising children and living daily lives, but not treated equally in our community. This book skillfully describes the experience before, during and after our decision with heart and clarity. Commitment to their young children and their family is the core of this book's story.

DeMotier opens your eyes to the heart and soul of this generation's civil rights battle." -- Diane M. Linn, former Multnomah County Chair

JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS NEWS

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Join the Drumbeat for Darfur campaign and take action today at www.uusc.org/drumbeatfordarfur!

Susan Leslie

Director for Congregational Advocacy and Witness, UUA, www.uua.org/justice

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>

OTHER NEWS

POETRY READING TO BENEFIT THE ENVIRONMENTAL ENDOWMENT

Plan now to join Michael Belongie and fellow poets Debie Gordon, Shelly L. Hall, Jean & Steve Tomasko, Yvonne Yahnke and Josey Zell for an evening of poetry in celebration of the Summer Solstice.

Tuesday, June 19, 7:00-8:15 p.m.

at Holy Wisdom Monastery, home of Benedictine Women of Madison, 4200 County Highway M, Middleton, Wisconsin

Sponsored by Benedictine Life Foundation, the outdoor poetry reading will take place on the Hilltop overlooking the prairie and Lake Mendota. Enjoy nature-themed poetry, refreshments, a bonfire and great fellowship.

For additional information, cost and registration form, visit

www.benedictinewomen.org/poetry_reading.html,

or contact Merry Jorgensen at (608) 836-1631,

ext. 121, or mjorgensen@benedictinewomen.org.

Merry Jorgensen, Benedictine Women of Madison

RESTORE AND SUSTAIN

Explore how each one of us is part of a larger collaborative effort to make the world a better place at:

Caring for Our Local Place on Earth

A full-day, interactive environmental conference held at Holy Wisdom Monastery, featuring keynote speakers Calvin DeWitt and Richard Henderson.

The conference is sponsored by Benedictine Life Foundation in partnership with Benedictine Women of Madison, Friends of Pheasant Branch, Natural Heritage Land Trust, Sustain Dane, The Aldo Leopold Foundation and The Prairie Enthusiasts—Empire Sauk Chapter.

Saturday, June 23

Holy Wisdom Monastery
4200 County Highway M in Middleton

- Learn about the varying missions, motivations and accomplishments of local restoration and ecological management groups
- Engage in workshops that explore the many facets of the environmental movement in our area
- Reenergize your present efforts and be inspired to new actions

Registration is just \$5 in advance and includes lunch.

Sign up TODAY!

For more information, visit www.benedictinewomen.org, or contact Merry Jorgensen at (608) 836-1631, ext. 121, or mjorgensen@benedictinewomen.org.

Merry Jorgensen, Benedictine Women of Madison

SOULFORCE OPPOSES SURGEON GENERAL NOMINEE HOLSINGER

On June 6, Soulforce has issued a statement expressing deep concern over the nomination of Dr. James Holsinger for U.S. Surgeon General.

"As the leading spokesperson for matters of public health, the Surgeon General should be guided by sound medical science, not anti-gay views rooted in religion-based bigotry," said Soulforce Executive Director Jeff Lutes.

Dr. Holsinger is the current president of the United Methodist Judicial Council. As a member of the council, he opposed the 2004 decision to allow Rev. Karen Dammann, a lesbian, to continue serving as a minister.

He also upheld the 2004 defrocking of Rev. Beth Stroud, another lesbian minister, and sided with a Virginia pastor who denied church membership to an openly gay man. Soulforce stood in solidarity at the trials of Rev. Dammann and Rev. Stroud,

challenging the unjust policy that bars gay men and lesbians from ordination in the United Methodist Church and the false doctrine that homosexuality is "incompatible with Christian teaching."

Holsinger co-founded Hope Springs Community Church, in Lexington, Ky., which operates an "ex-gay" ministry aimed at changing homosexuals to heterosexuals. Recent events have brought national attention to the existence of programs intended to modify same-sex desires, which continue to multiply in spite of the consensus of the major medical and mental health organizations that sexual orientation is not a disorder and is, therefore, not in need of a cure. The American Psychological Association identifies "depression, anxiety, and self-destructive behavior" among the possible risks associated with ex-gay therapies.

Later this month, on June 29 - July 1, Soulforce will sponsor an international convention in Irvine, California, for those who have attended ex-gay ministries or reparative therapy but ultimately concluded that the programs did more harm than good. The Ex-Gay Survivor Conference will feature the testimonies of former "ex-gays," including men and women who founded and directed ex-gay programs but are now speaking publicly about the injury the programs can cause. For more information about the conference, go to www.soulforce.org/article/1226.

Soulforce Executive Director, Jeff Lutes, is a licensed psychotherapist in private practice and has treated dozens of victims of so-called "ex-gay ministries" and "reparative therapy." In a statement released Wednesday, Lutes said *"America doesn't need a Surgeon General who supports 'reparative therapy' and anti-gay dogma masquerading as science. If Holsinger bars gays and lesbians from his own church, how will he treat them as the nation's chief physician? What America needs now is some 'reparative theology' - a force of fair-minded people of faith who will take an unwavering stand against religion gone bad and choose instead to welcome and affirm gay and lesbian people into full citizenship."*

The goal of Soulforce is freedom for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender people from religious and political oppression through the practice of relentless nonviolent resistance.