



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."

July 13, 2007



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

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Editor: Dan Proud, admin@uuprairie.org; 661-0776

PRAIRIE CALENDAR

Sunday, July 15

*10:00 a.m. "Bring Many Questions (About UUism)" presented by the Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

Monday, July 16

*6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers meet at the home of Amy Schulz

Thursday, July 19

*7:00 p.m. Prairie Film Group meets at Prairie

Sunday, July 22

*10:00 a.m. "UU Humor" presented by Erin Bosch and Robin Proud

Thursday, July 19

*7:00 p.m. Prairie Film Club meets at Prairie

Tuesday, July 24

*4:30 a.m. Prairie volunteers prepare breakfast at the men's homeless shelter, Grace Episcopal
*2:30 p.m. Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood West

Friday, July 27

*5:30 p.m. Prairie Playreaders Annual Fish Dinner, Feiler's Bar & Restaurant, 4506 Verona Road. RSVP to Pat Watkins by July 23.

Sunday, July 29

*10:00 a.m. "A Malvina Reynolds Celebration," led by Mary Mullen

Sunday, August 5

*10:00 a.m. Presentation by the Central Midwest District Young Adult Steering Committee (YASC) Worship Team

Monday, August 6

*7:00 p.m. Friendly Supper Club meets and eats at El Pastor Mexican Restaurant

Sunday, August 12

*10:00 a.m. "Great Summer Reads" led by Rose Smith
*11:30 a.m. Book Club potluck and discussion

Sunday, August 19

10:00 a.m. "Where Is Our P. T. Barnum, Now That We Could Use Him?" presented by Rev. Ralph

Friday-Sunday, September 14-16

*Prairie Retreat at Bethel Horizons

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, AUGUST 5

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, July 15

As UU's we are known for our questioning and inquiring minds. In this service I will be asking those who attend to write out a question before the service about our UU faith and I will try to give a response to your probings and curiosities! What I can't answer will be considered for future Program Committee offerings.

Sunday, July 22

Unitarian Universalism is a religion with a sense of humor. We will offer proof of that statement through songs, stories, and more. You will be invited to share any UU jokes you may have in your repertoire.

Sunday, July 29

Malvina Reynolds was an amazing woman. A UU, she was a late bloomer as a singer/songwriter, becoming known in her 50's. She wrote songs of topical interest, always with a message. In our Prairie Songbook we have "God Bless the Grass," "Let It Be," "What Have They Done to the Rain," and "Magic Penny," and probably her most famous song, "Little Boxes." Who can forget those "little boxes made of ticky-tacky," that "all look just the same" whether it was sung by Malvina or Pete Seeger.

The service on July 29 will introduce you to Malvina, her causes, and her songs. Plan on coming to learn about songs you don't know and to sing some that are familiar. And, by the way, if you have a favorite song of hers you want to hear or perform, please contact Mary Mullen who is putting this service together. (298-0843 or [mmullen\(at\)chorus.net](mailto:mmullen@chorus.net)).

Want to bone up on Malvina and her songs beforehand? Go to www.wku.edu/%7Esmithch/MALVINA/homep.htm

Sunday, August 5

The Central Midwest District Young Adult Steering Committee (YASC) Worship Team will be presenting at our 10:00 am service.

The Worship Team members: Tegan Jones, Chris Hagy, Meredith Schultz, Ian Danner-McPhadden, Danny Maitland, and Justine Urbikas, represent

young adults working to build community and to foster growth of the Unitarian Universalist Young Adult movement in the Central Midwest District. They seek to cultivate and integrate the presence and experience of young adults into UU congregations. They affirm and promote the principles of Unitarian Universalism and are an intentionally welcoming, anti-oppressive and growing community.

One of the members, Justine Urbikas from the Evanston Unitarian Church, was recently elected to represent the Central Midwest District on the UUA Board of Trustees.

Sunday, August 12

Rose Smith will lead Prairie in discussing great summer reads. If you have read a good book that you would like to recommend, come and share it with folks. It can be fiction, nonfiction, children's, something you really enjoyed.

OUR SOCIETY

FROM THE PRESIDENT

We have a new official committee at Prairie: the Communications Committee. This committee was formed of the ad hoc "communications committee" which has designed and updated our terrific webpage, and the "publicity committee" subset of the Hospitality and Membership Committee. The Communications Committee is charged with overseeing the communications of the Prairie community. This includes consistent outward communications from Prairie to the world at large and communication services to members, committees, board, minister and staff.

The main activities of this committee include:

- Managing the Prairie web hosting, including web site, calendar, and discussion forums.
- Maintaining internet member discussion forums and email lists.
- Maintaining equipment for Prairie meeting sound, projection and recording.
- Designing a Prairie UU logo and encourage its use in print and digital materials.
- Working with the Hospitality and Membership

Committee to create and distribute publicity materials to attract visitors and new members.

- Working with RE Committee to create publicity materials for each year's RE program.
- Creating publicity materials as appropriate for special programs.
- Communicating with James Reeb and FUS

Many thanks to Dirk Herr-Hoyman who has agreed to serve as Chair, and Bob Park, Karen Deaton, Dan Proud, and Andy Schwartz as members.

At this point the Communications Committee is still ad hoc, but we will be reevaluating whether to make it a permanent standing committee with representation on the Board later this year. Please feel free to approach any of them with ideas, or let them know if you're interested in helping them on the Committee.

In peace,

Rachel Long, President

SPANISH SPEAKERS MEET JULY 16

Spanish Speakers will meet for potluck and conversation on **Monday, July 16**, at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Amy Schulz, 2304 South Syene Rd. Come early to enjoy the hot tub! For directions, call Amy at 273-2639. For rides or other questions, call Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382.

MOVIE GROUP VIEWS *BREAKING AWAY* ON JULY 19

The Movie Group will meet at Prairie, 7:00, **Thursday, July 19** to view *Breaking Away*. This 1979 film, directed by Peter Yates and written by Oscar-winner Steve Tesich, accurately conveys the pain, confusion, frustration, and exhilaration of being an adolescent. Dennis Christopher and Dennis Quaid star in this Bloomington, Indiana story of friendship, bicycle racing, and growing up.

The August 23 movie will be *A New Leaf*.

HELP FOR THE HOMELESS

Want to make an immediate positive impact on someone's life? Come to the shelter at Grace Episcopal Church at 4:30 a.m. **Tuesday, July 24**. You will be kept busy for about 3 hours cooking and serving, but can leave earlier if you need to be at work. We already have two, possibly three volunteers to cook and serve the July breakfast. A shopper and one or two more people for breakfast would be appreciated.

The August breakfast date is **Tuesday, August 28**. It's not too early to sign up! Adults and teens are welcome to volunteer. If you haven't worked at the shelter before, there will be experienced volunteers working with you who can show you the ropes. Please contact me to sign up.

Paula Pachciarz

273-4806 or pachwack (at) sbcglobal.net

PRAIRIE ELDERS MEET JULY 24

TIME: 2:00-3:50 p.m., Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks Building, Oakwood Village West.

TOPIC: Restoring U.S. Representative Democracy. Eighty-one-year-old Benjamin Franklin, on September 17, 1787, delivered an impassioned speech successfully urging delegates to sign the U.S. Constitution's final draft, despite its imperfections. Franklin keenly understood that consent of an informed and involved public was essential to keeping and improving the newly established republic.

Prairie Elders participants have a long history of fighting to instill democratic principles in areas such as jury participation, access to housing, voter registration, treatment of immigrants, public education, employment practices and expression of beliefs. Like Franklin, age has changed but not stopped us. Bring to July's round-robin discussion any aspect of the topic you find most important in these times.

For interested Internet users, Franklin's speech is here: www.usconstitution.net/franklin.html. A wealth of background on our Constitution is here: www.constitutioncenter.org

We 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.

Participants are welcome to come and go as necessary for appointments, rides, etc.

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

ABOUT US: Prairie Elders aims to provide good times and mutual support for Prairie UU Members and Friends over 65.

For directions, rides, parking and further information please contact Donna Murdoch 238-3802 or Rosemary Dorney 238-4382.

THE PRAIRIE PLAYREADERS is one of the several social groups available to Prairie members and friends, and each Spring we go out for our Annual Friday Fish Dinner, in which everyone in Prairie is invited to participate.

This year's dinner will be **Friday, July 27** at 5:30 p.m. at Feiler's Bar and Restaurant, 4506 Verona Road (in the area between Home Depot and Goodwill, and next to Kentucky Fried Chicken. To get there, take the frontage road that circles Home Depot and Brunsell).

Broiled or Battered Icelandic Cod is \$10.95 and Bluegills are \$12.50, and both are served with choice of potato, choice of salad, rolls and garlic toast. Walleye Pike is also available from the regular menu at a slightly higher price. Phone Pat Watkins at 233-5795 no later than Monday, July 23rd for a reservation.

The fish dinner is followed by the reading of a one-act play at the home of Pat Watkins, 230 N. Meadow Lane, where desert will be served. You have the option of attending only the Fish Dinner, or only the play reading at Pat's, which will begin at 7:30, or both. Come and check us out.

Participation in the Playreaders requires no commitment and neither expertise nor experience in theater. We meet each month between September and June at the home of a rotating host/hostess, who chooses the play, assigns the parts, and provides refreshments. We read and discuss the play (and also have a lively social evening). We try to host at least one theater party and also our Fish Dinner each season. We'd love to see you there!

PRAIRIE FAMILY RETREAT

Why go? To have fun, get to know your Prairie friends, share your talents, try something new, and enjoy a weekend away.

Who is invited? Everyone! Members, friends, extended family, your kids' friends. But everyone must register and pay in advance.

When is it? The weekend begins the evening of Friday, September 14 at about 6:00 p.m. Dinner will not be served, but everyone is encouraged to bring finger food snacks. Beverages will be provided. There are events all day Saturday, culminating in our fabulous Talent Show, and the weekend concludes with the Key Log Ceremony on Sunday morning. If you can't attend the whole weekend, you are welcome to come for any part.

Where is it? Bethel Horizons is a beautiful setting with woods and trails, north of Dodgeville, about 1 hour from Madison. Directions will be published before the weekend.

What is it? This is a weekend of fun, education, and community building. There will be singing, dancing, nature hikes, crafts, discussions, videos, and time to chat or to relax on your own on the porch or among the trees. Suggestions are still welcome for workshops; send ideas to Aileen Nettleton.

What are the facilities like? The main building (Prairie Center) has rooms (with their own baths) which hold 4-8 people. Depending on the turnout, there may be as few as 2 in a room, but sharing is also possible. This building is a bit more expensive than the others but is the best choice for anyone with mobility limitations. It's also convenient for families with small children, although family camping is another, less expensive, alternative.

The Barn Center is a little more basic with shared baths. It's down the hill from the Prairie Center and will be the best setting for someone who wants quiet, as it is usually occupied by adult couples or singles. If you would like a private room for one person, it's most likely to be found here.

The Farmhouse can hold various configurations and could be fun for 2 or 3 families who would like to stay together. All the rates are indicated on the

registration forms. If you have questions or special requests, please contact Robin Proud.

How do you register? Send the completed form to Robin Proud, 114 Glen Hwy, Madison, WI 53705, or bring it to the office at Prairie by **September 2**. Make checks payable to Prairie UU Society.

REV. RALPH'S RUMINATIONS

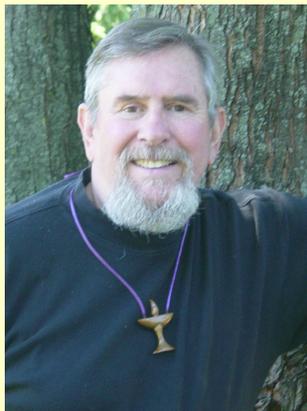
It has been said that healthy organizations, and that includes congregations, focus on mission. Our Prairie UU Society 's mission statement was adopted on November 21, 1999. The statement has four paragraphs and has 141 words. I wonder how many of our members could recite a sentence, let alone a paragraph, from this statement. In reviewing our activities during this past year I have felt that our mission statement has not been a prominent guide in the way the congregation organizes and pursues its projects and short term goals.



According to congregational consultants a good mission statement is no longer than a sentence, with no more than one comma. It can be understood by even the younger members of the congregation. Accordingly, mission helps mobilize the energy of the society and if the congregation is distracted from focusing on mission, it will tend to focus on past achievements, budgetary woes, personality problems or something else.

As we enjoy the warm days of Summer and take time to re-energize our minds, bodies and spirits it might be helpful to rekindle our focus on what challenges Prairie UU Society will be considering this coming year.

Peter Steinke, a respected consultant on creating healthy congregations, says that by focusing on challenges most congregations, like people in general, will feel better when they exercise. Congregations sometimes need to create small challenges, and meet them with successes and



good outcomes. What have been some recent successes and good outcomes (last five years) for Prairie?

As we move forward this coming year I would hope that we as a congregation can focus on our strengths. This means building up options. What, for example, is Prairie doing about strategic planning for growth? Are we creating a climate of feeling trapped without options?

I hope that our upcoming congregational retreat, September 14,15,16, will be one opportunity for us to begin focusing on options for the future of Prairie.

Glad to be journeying with you,

Ralph

SUPPER CLUB MEETS AUGUST 6

The Friendly Supper Club, a group of Prairie members and others, will meet at 6:30 p.m., *Monday, August 6* at El Pastor Mexican Restaurant, 2010 South Park Street. Support a minority business and join the group for great food in a multi-cultural setting.

BOOK CLUB SELECTIONS FOR THE SUMMER

All are welcome to the Book Club discussions listed below. We meet at Prairie after Sunday services, except in September. Participants bring food to share. The meeting usually begins about 11:30 a.m. and continues until 1:00 or 1:30 p.m. For more information or to be put on the e-mail list, contact Mary Mullen, mmullen (at) chorus.net, 608-298-0843.

Sunday, August 12

The Dead, a novella by James Joyce. Available for free as a 26-page e-text (printable version) at www.enotes.com/dead/. This story presents the thoughts and actions of Gabriel Conroy on the night he and his wife attend a party given by his two aunts. His wife reveals a relationship she had when she was a young girl with a young man who loved her passionately. The story has many characters and a number of references to the dead, and many characters are based on Joyce's friends and family members. (Suggested by Nancy Garst)

Saturday, September 15

(at Prairie's annual Bethel Horizons' retreat; exact time to be announced later.)

Midnight at the Dragon Cafe by Judy Fong Bates, from \$2.19.

www.amazon.com/o/ASIN/1582431892/105-3315333-7491661?SubscriptionId=09GE3K6JDGSKCKXKEJG2. This is a Chinese immigrant story set in Canada where 6-year-old Su-Jen Chou meets her father for the first time when she and her mother come to join him where he runs a restaurant. It's a first novel by the author. Booklist says, "The haunting characters in that lonely greasy spoon evoke a tradition stretching back to Carson McCullers." 317 pages (Suggested by Al Nettleton, from an Oregon "everybody reads" program)

Note: In each case, the Amazon URL give access to used books at reasonable prices and includes brief reviews of the books. Prices are those current at <http://amazon.com> as of June 10, 2007. The Web sites have brief reviews as well as links to buying the books.

MEMBERSHIP

Update:

Dick & Julie Bonser

1302 W Ajo Way #225, Tucson, Arizona

Phone number 520-647-9330 or

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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>

LETTERS

STUDENT EXCHANGE OPPORTUNITY

Prairie Folks,

I received a query from Andrew Kell of the Student Exchange program Ocean International about whether anyone in our society would be interested in hosting a high school student from abroad for the 2007-8 academic year. It looks like a great opportunity. I will be announcing it again at Prairie this Sunday, but I'm sending it out here as well since church attendance is typically down among families in the summer. You do not have to have children in your family to host a student. The Web site for their organization is www.oceanintl.org/ and I also have a list of student profiles. If any of you are interested, please let me know.

Rachel Long

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

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The Summer Spree, a weekend of fellowship and fun for our youth, took place July 6-8. The Spree was held at the Friendship Center Camp near Dodgeville, and was attended by seven Prairie young people and three friends. We had an unusually large age range, because Spree-ers welcomed back Judy and Rachel, now college students, and also welcomed new Middle-Schooler Maya and her friend Miranda.

The weekend included many hours of active games and a trip to the beach at Governor Dodge State Park to cool off. Many thanks to Carl Wacker, Erin Bosch, and Susan Herr-Hoyman for their work organizing rides, games, and meals. Kathy Converse and I also enjoyed spending part of the weekend with the young people in a lovely setting.

We really do have a great group of young people at Prairie, and it's well worth taking some time to get to know them. Please think about sharing



