



# 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."

**August 10, 2007**



*Prairie Fire is the semi-monthly newsletter of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. View past issues at [www.uuprairie.org](http://www.uuprairie.org).*

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## PRAIRIE CALENDAR

### 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 Tyksinski

\*11:45 a.m. Potluck followed at 12:30 by a DVD showing of *A Brief History of Disbelief, part one*

### Sunday, August 26

\*10:00 a.m. Ingathering Water Ceremony

### Tuesday, August 28

4:30 a.m. Serve breakfast at the Men's Homeless Shelter, Grace Episcopal Church

\*2:00 p.m. Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood East to discuss children's books for adults

### Friday-Sunday, September 14-16

\*Prairie Retreat at Bethel Horizons

(\* = Details follow in this issue.)

## DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

### 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.

### Sunday, August 19

Rev. Ralph will be exploring the life and thought of this fascinating individual, P.T. Barnum, who was a confirmed Universalist. We also will be delving into the world of the circus as a metaphor for life.

### Sunday, August 26

As we begin our new program year, this service will be our annual ritual of ingathering commonly used in UU churches—the Water Ceremony. Please bring to the service a small container of water which is a reflection of a meaningful story from your summer weeks. The source of the water might be almost anything—let your imagination have wings. We will blend our offerings of water as symbolic of our joining ourselves in community to begin a new program year.

**NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, AUGUST 19**

## **OUR SOCIETY**

### **FROM THE PRESIDENT**

Summer can bring sweet relaxation, but your Board makes sure it brings action as well! We are working to understand our options for moving Prairie ahead, and we'll be asking for your help in deciding our next steps.

We will be having a parish meeting **Sunday, September 30**, with a number of items on the agenda that will require your vote.

Soon our members and many of our Prairie friends will be receiving a letter from Ralph Tyksinski and me. We will be sharing background information about Prairie's financial situation and commitments in preparation for a decision on how to finance our current debt.

We also have proposed Board members who will need to be approved by the parish (a Finance Committee Chair and a Youth Board Member). We may have some bylaws changes to propose as well, in particular regarding our treasurer position and possible changes to how we handle our money. Lots of work is going on behind the scenes to help Prairie grow and strengthen.

Want to get in on the action? Come to our Parish Meeting. But also consider serving on a committee or two if you aren't on one already. The list of committees and chairs can be found in your order of service.

In peace,

*Rachel Long, President*

### **A FEW MORE RETREAT VOLUNTEERS NEEDED!**

Volunteers are still needed for these projects for the Prairie Family Retreat at Bethel Horizon, **September 14-16**. Please contact Aileen Nettleton if your talents match one of these areas:

- \* Lead an adult workshop on "What is Your Environmental Footprint?"
- \* Coordinate an intergenerational photo project "Friends for Peace"
- \* Lead an Outdoor Sports-related activity with kids and adults

\* Help Robin Proud as "Assistant Registrar" on site

\* Assist a leader with a craft activity with children

\* Read aloud stories to younger children for Storytime

Please contact Aileen Nettleton, retreat program coordinator, with your offer to volunteer and describe which task you are interested in.

Over 20 people have already volunteered to help develop a stimulating weekend for all of us.

Everyone will also have a chance to volunteer for "Table setting" and "Cleanup" once we are there!!

More information and the registration form will be in the coming issue of Prairie Fire. If you have questions about registration, contact Robin Proud.

The deadline to register is September 2.

Many thanks,

*Aileen Nettleton*



*Scenes from Bethel Horizons 2006*



## PRAIRIE ELDERS MEET AUGUST 28

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

TOPIC: A children's book that has special meaning in your adult life. This could be a book from your childhood, a book you read to your children or a book you discovered as an adult. There is no age limit for loving children's books – or for writing them. The last book Theodor Seuss Geisel wrote and illustrated was his 1990 publication *Oh, the Places You'll Go*. Much beloved Dr. Seuss was 85.

We alternate a round-robin "show and tell" topic with discussion of a current issue. At the July meeting, one person came armed with a copy of the Constitution, others shared ideas about salvaging our democracy and we conducted a serious Prairie-style discussion about the precarious state of our nation.

We begin and end our gathering with casual conversation. The Nakoma Room will be open at 1:30. Come and go as necessary for appointments, rides, etc.

REFRESHMENTS: Please bring a small handful of snacks to pass. Beverages are furnished. 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, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

## PRAIRIE'S REBECCA APPEARS IN SICKO

Our Youth Religious Education Coordinator, Rebecca Malke-Eligenti, appears in Michael Moore's movie, *Sicko*, and she is featured in an *Isthmus* newspaper article at <http://www.thedailypage.com/daily/article.php?article=8087> and in a YouTube clip at <http://www.thedailypage.com/daily/article.php?article=8100>?

## REV. RALPH'S RUMINATIONS

Our recent Sunday services at Prairie have experienced an increased number of visitors, and some have been expressing interest in joining our congregation. As we move into the coming weeks we can also expect to be visited by those who are "shopping" for a church home that offers a worthwhile religious education program for their children.



Are we prepared to offer the kind of hospitality that is authentic and welcoming?

A workshop that was offered at this year's General Assembly in Portland, Oregon, may offer some guidance and considerations as we prepare ourselves to perform the best of our welcoming practices. Its title: "Will They Come Back? Radical Spiritual Hospitality".

The presenters were Taquiena Boston, Rev. Sofia Betancourt, Rev. Dr. Devorah Greenstein, and Rev. Keith Kron. Sofia Betancourt began with a reading from "Radical Hospitality: Benedict's Way of Love" by Father Daniel Homan and Loni Gollins Pratt.

*"When we speak of hospitality we are always addressing issues of inclusion and exclusion. Each of us makes choices about who will and who will not be included in our lives... Issues of inclusion and exclusion, while personal, are not just personal. Our entire culture excludes many people. If you are in a wheelchair, for example, you are excluded because there are places you can't go. If you are very young, if you are very old, you are excluded... Hospitality has an inescapable moral dimension to it... It is an issue involving what it means to be human. All of our talk about hospitable openness doesn't mean anything as long as some people continue to be tossed aside..."*

*"But calling hospitality a moral issue does not tell us the whole truth about hospitality either. A moral issue can become bogged down in legalisms, and hospitality is no legalistic ethical issue. It is instead a spiritual practice, a way of becoming more human, a way of understanding yourself. Hospitality is both the answer to modern alienation and injustice and a path to a deeper spirituality."*

The presenters each modeled a story of feeling welcomed or not feeling welcomed before pairing up workshop participants to tell one another their own stories.

Devorah Greenstein, Program Director for Accessibility Concern: She was leaving a 30+ year marriage and coming out as a lesbian when she entered a UU church in her hometown for the first time. It was a Gay Pride service. The hymn "We Are a Gentle, Angry People" left her in tears. She has felt welcomed from that day on.

Taquiena Boston, Director of IDBM: She and her family have passed through the All Souls Church Unitarian, Washington, DC many times and have been intrigued by the Wayside Pulpit, with sermon titles like, "God's Trombone" without stopping to visit until one Sunday in August when they decided to do so. The minister, the choir, and most of the members were on vacation and the service was lay led. It was far from the dynamic worship they were used to. During coffee hour, a lay leader explained the peculiar "summer schedule" of most UU congregations, and invited them to return when the minister would be back in the pulpit. It took only one person's hospitality to make them feel welcomed and to decide to return.

Sofia Betancourt, Program Director for Racial and Ethnic Concern: While she was a seminary student, she was invited by another seminary student of color to participate in a Kwanzaa service at her friend's church. The church was predominantly white and for that particular Sunday, they "showcased" the only people of color by having them participate in the service: a youth of color lighting the chalice, her friend doing a reading, and she herself being responsible for the music. After the service, a parishioner came up to her and commented on the unusual music then invited her to return for Black History month.

Keith Kron, Program Director for Bisexual, Gay, Lesbian and Transgender Concern: As a visitor to one of the churches in the Greater Boston Area (the identity was not revealed to protect the guilty), he would stand around during coffee hour with his green visitor's mug and no one would come to talk to him, leaving him to read all the announcements on the bulletin board. The only person who talked to him was a student ministerial intern. This went on for two whole months before someone besides the student intern talked to him.

Some of the stories and insights participants shared with one another were:

\* A white minister greeted a mixed-race couple by saying, "We need more people like you here."

\* Many congregations assume that they are welcoming and accessible until a person in a wheelchair is invited in to speak and there is no ramp to go up to the podium. The podium being a symbol of power and literally a position of power, what does this say about the congregation?

\* There are two groups of people who consistently feel minimized and unwelcomed in UU congregations: political conservatives and the hearing-impaired. When people speak too quickly or do not use a microphone, the hearing-impaired are left out and they eventually drop out from participating in congregational life.

\* A birth-right young adult UU who wanted to study the Bible is told she doesn't belong in her home church by her humanist elders.

\* It only takes one person to make visitors feel welcomed or unwelcomed.

\* In times of loss, a kind word can help the grieving person feel connected and welcomed.

\* Over-welcoming turns People of Color away.

\* A visitor usually knows within 10 minutes whether he/she is welcomed.

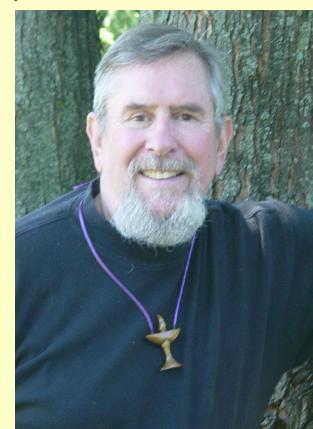
\* Large people often feel discriminated against. A typically insensitive remark is, "Are you sure you want dessert?"

\* Emotional disability is not tolerated as much as physical disability. People with physical disability are expected to do less than they are able while people with invisible disability are expected to do more than they are able.

\* People of Color are jumped on initially but then there aren't any programs in place for them when they return.

\* Four large lesbians are so often confused with one another that a typical response is, "It's the other lesbian you mean."

\* People of Color are expected to be experts in race relations and are expected to lead and teach anti-racism/anti-oppression classes and workshops.



I dare say that we all have had experiences of visiting a place for the first time and wondering what to expect. I hope that we are able to extend to all visitors the kind of gracious and inclusive welcoming expressions that will be positive and leave visitors

with a "wow" experience that will have them coming back to Prairie for more.

Glad to be journeying with you,

Ralph

## 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/](http://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](http://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.

## POTLUCK AND DVD AUGUST 19

Everyone is invited to stay for a potluck lunch at 11:45 a.m. on **Sunday, August 19**, followed at 12:30 p.m. by a showing of the first hour of the 3-part BBC television series *A Brief History of Disbelief*, cosponsored by the Prairie Program Committee and the Humanist Union.

The series was written and narrated by English author, director and commentator Jonathan Miller. An interview of Miller available online at <http://www.thehumanist.org/humanist/HIFredEdwards.html> gives a good overview of his perspective. The series is billed as "the first ever television exploration of the idea that God doesn't exist". The programs have been broadcast on PBS stations in many cities around the country this year, but not in Madison.

Bob Park

## PRAIRIE FILM GROUP PLANS AUGUST 23

The Movie Group will meet at Prairie, 7:00 p.m., **Thursday, August 23**, to view **The Bicycle Thief**. Netflix describes this 1948 film: "Widely considered a landmark Italian film, Vittorio De Sica's tale of Rome's post-World War II depression earned a special Oscar for its devastating power. Antonio Ricci (Lamberto Maggiorani) relies on his bicycle to do his job. But the same day he gets the vehicle back from the pawnshop, someone steals it. Antonio and his young son, Bruno (Enzo Staiola), search the city in vain, as Antonio confronts a looming desperation."

The September 20 movie will be **A New Leaf**.

If anyone wishes to be placed on the Movie Group email list, contact Al Nettleton.

*A note to those on the movie group email list who are getting this as a blind cc copy: A New Leaf* is not now available on Netflix so I unilaterally substituted **The Bicycle Thief**. I hope that meets with your approval. I'll keep trying other sources.

October 18, November 15, and December 13 are the Movie Group dates for the rest of the year.

Al Nettleton

## MEMBERSHIP

### WELCOME “NEW” MEMBER CARL WACKER

After 16 years of “Friendship”, Carl became a member of Prairie in the fall of 2006. He’s not sure what decided it for him in the end (possibly his wife being chair of the Hospitality and Membership Committee had something to do with it), but it’s hard to imagine him becoming *more* active at Prairie.

Over the years, Carl has been a reliable presence in the RE program. He has chaperoned overnights, driven teens to Cons, served on the RE Committee, helped organize Summer Spree, and taught RE classes. He has contributed his talent with the guitar, piano, and clarinet to many a musical event. And you have no doubt seen some of his photographs on bulletin boards and in this newsletter.

But what brought Carl to Madison, and Prairie? Carl’s job as a soil scientist with the USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service brought him to the state office in Madison in 1990, when his daughters, Judy and Toby, were three years and three months old, respectively. (Carl also has an older son, Marlon, who now lives in Sarasota, Florida and is active in working for rights for the homeless.)

Although still involved with soil science issues, he now spends much of his working life coordinating a program to protect farms from development. He and his wife discovered Unitarian Universalism in 1982 in Decatur, Illinois, when a friend responded to their lament that there were no local, liberal, free-thinking religious communities by telling them about the UU Church. Carl and Paula visited the lay-led Decatur church the following Sunday. Carl was delighted to find out that hot coffee and a discussion were included in every service. After becoming acquainted with the Seven Principles, he never looked back.

At the heart of Carl’s spiritual values is an affinity with nature and wildness. He chooses to spend much of his time outdoors. Growing a large, bountiful garden, canoeing, camping, biking the Capital City Trail, raising backyard chickens—all of these keep him connected with the outdoors

and with the natural rhythms of life. His children have grown up rich in outdoors experience.

We are glad, and lucky, to have Carl in the Prairie community.

*Paula Pachciarz, Hospitality and Membership Committee Chair (and spouse of Carl)*



## MEMBER UPDATES

*Note: The Bonders' apartment number is 226, not 225 as reported in the last PF issue.*

### Dick & Julie Bonser

1302 W Ajo Way #226, Tucson, AZ 85713-5721  
Phone number 520-647-9330 or  
cell phone 608-332-2993  
E-mail address: [julbon \(at\) earthlink.net](mailto:julbon@earthlink.net)

### Barbara Boyd

13500 Copper Croft Run Apt. C  
Blacksburg, VA 24060  
608-347-6112

## PRAIRIE WEB SITES

Society Home Page: <http://uuprairie.org/>  
News Group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/>  
Views: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/>  
Social Action: <http://socialaction.madisonwi.us>  
Humanist Union: <http://humanist.madisonwi.us>

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **END OF SUMMER SPLASH**

We are planning a pool party for our RE families to celebrate summer as it draws to a close, and celebrate the beginning of our 2007-08 Religious Education year. On **August 26**, we will begin our Sunday morning RE classes for the year. Later in the day, we will go to the Bauman Aquatic Center in Middleton for our pool party. The pool has a sand play area, a zero-depth entry for little ones, and a variety of water features including fountains and big water slides. If you have not received email news about this party, and might like to participate, please contact me (Karen at 278-8480 or karendeaton (at) tds.net) or our YREC Rebecca (youthcoordinator (at) uuprairie.org).

### **World Religions Classes Begin August 26**

Prairie youth will study the religions of the world during the year to come. Here is what we have planned:

#### **Grades 7–12, Neighboring Faiths**

This group will learn about some of the religions of the world (Islam, Buddhism, Judaism, Christianity, Sikhism, and more) by visiting local congregations and inviting members of local churches to come to Prairie to talk about the activities of their congregations. Barb Park, Rick Ruecking, and Orange Schroeder have each signed on to lead a 3- or 4-week unit on a particular religion. We need more members of our Prairie community to volunteer to take a turn! This is an engaging curriculum that offers teachers a chance to learn, too.

#### **Grades 4–6, Religions of the World**

This group will learn about the central stories and concepts of the three major monotheistic religions: Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, and an important Eastern Religion: Buddhism. Games and activities will be supplemented by visits to local congregations and discussions with visitors from those congregations. Karen Deaton will teach, and is looking for a co-teacher.

#### **Grades 1–3, Special Times**

The students will learn about Judaism and Christianity (which are central to our culture) by enacting the activities of the major Jewish and

Christian holidays. They will experience these celebrations through art, music, stories, discussion, and sometimes even food! Robin Proud and Marcia Johnson will teach.

#### **Preschool and Kindergarten**

Our young children will participate in age-appropriate games and crafts that reinforce UU principles. Carl Wacker and Yvonne Hiebert will teach.

#### **Infants and Toddlers**

Prairie provides free child care each Sunday morning in a safe and comfortable setting.

#### **Thanks to volunteers**

Thanks to Erin Bosch, Paula Pachciarz, Jori Conca, and Robin Proud, who have filled in this summer for our YREC Rebecca as she takes care of the responsibilities of new motherhood. These volunteers have greeted visiting families and entertained children with resourcefulness and friendliness.

*Karen Deaton,  
RE Committee Chair*

## **UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWS**

### **JOURNEY TOWARDS WHOLENESS NEWS**

#### **Immigration Reform, Immigrant Rights, and the New Sanctuary Movement**

Fixing the broken immigration system that has 12 million undocumented people trapped, standing in solidarity with these immigrants, pledging with the New Sanctuary Movement, and speaking out were a large part of this year's GA.

A workshop with Interfaith Worker Justice ([www.iwj.org](http://www.iwj.org)) Exec. Dir. Kim Bobo and Chicago IWJ organizer Kristen Kumpf, along with UUA Board Member and Co-Minister of First Unitarian Houston Rev. Jose Ballester and First UU San Diego Social Justice Council Chair Jackie Statman was attended by over 300 people. You can view it at 3037 Welcoming the Stranger: A Just Immigration Policy Workshop (<http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/2007/presentations/31350.shtml>) - RealVideo |

## [Windows Media](#)

Resources: *For Once You Were a Stranger: Immigration through the Lens of Faith.*

A 2007 Action of Immediate Witness to Support Immigrant Families—Stop the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement Raids) was passed by a large majority.

### **Peace Actions—Upcoming Dates & Deadlines**

Aug. 24: Deadline for Stories/Suggestions for Muslim/UU partnerships

Aug. 25: Peace Rally and March in Kennebunkport, ME featuring UUSC Pres. Charlie Clements!

Sept. 11: Anniversary of the attacks on the World Trade Center and Pentagon

Sept. 15: Deadline for UU Funding Program

Oct. 8: Columbus Day/Indigenous Peoples Day - Interfaith Fast for Peace

Oct. 11: National Coming Out Day

Oct. 14: Association Sunday

Nov. 11: Armistice/Veteran's Day

### **Looking For UU Peacebuilders**

The Unitarian Universalist Association's Washington Office for Advocacy, in relationship with the Peacemaking Congregational Study Action Issue Core Team, is looking for volunteers who are interested in enriching and elevating the UUA's organizing and activism for peace, focusing first on organizing around an October 8th day of interfaith fasting, witness, and advocacy against the war. Contact Alex Winnett at awinnett@uua.org or (202) 296-4672 ext. 20.

her face? We had that experience just last week when a charming and curious one-year-old shelter resident took his first steps at IHN. He looked amazed with himself, and his mom was beaming with pride and delight.

The little boy was practicing his walking and playing in the playroom a few days later, when a visitor came through the Day Center. The visitor watched him play for a minute, smiling. Then he suddenly looked up and said "Wait a minute – is he homeless?!"

It is hard to believe that there are little children in our community without a stable, safe place to learn and play. We are grateful to all of you who help us, in any way, to give these children and their families a better future. Thank you.

### **THE EARTH SPEAKS: OUR SPIRITUAL CHALLENGE**

August 13, 9 a.m. - 4 p.m.

Conference Point Center, Williams Bay, Wis.

Speaker: Dr. Cal DeWitt, Professor of Environmental Studies, UW-Madison, and Founding Director of Au Sable Institute of Environmental Studies

Interfaith panel of respondents includes Dr. Laura Dresser, Associate Director of the Center of Wisconsin Strategy (COWS) at UW-Madison.

Register for \$75. Registration includes lunch.

Mail checks payable to "Conference Point Center" to Conference Point Center, P.O. Box 575, Williams Bay, WI 53191

For more information, visit [www.conference-point.org](http://www.conference-point.org), or call 262-245-5155.

### **WOMEN AND POVERTY CONFERENCE SEPTEMBER 5-6**

Wisconsin Community Action Program Association sponsors "Growing Communities, Cultivating Self-Sufficiency," at Marriott Madison West Hotel, Madison, Wis.

For more information on the conference, see [www.wiscap.org](http://www.wiscap.org).

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK**

#### **BULLETIN**

Have you ever seen a baby take his first steps? Do you still remember where it happened and who was there... the look of surprise and delight on