



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."

December 7, 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

Saturday, December 8

*9:00 a.m. WOW (women's group) meets at the home of Kathy Converse, 630 Pickford St.

Sunday, December 9

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*9:30 a.m. Nifty Gifty in R.E.

*10:00 a.m. "Ways of Seeing, Part II" presented by Rick Ruecking

*11:45 a.m. Book Club discusses *Timebends*

*12:00 p.m. Humanist Union meets for potluck and discussion: "Humanism's Contemporary Challengers: Who Controls Our Public Image?"

7:00 p.m. Meditation Group at Prairie

Monday, December 10

7:00 p.m. Housing and Property meeting

Wednesday, December 12

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Thursday, December 13

*7:00 p.m. Film Group views *The Rules of the Game* at Prairie

NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16

Sunday, December 16

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. Symbol Tree Intergenerational

Service led by Erin Bosch and Ralph Tyksinski

*11:30 a.m. "Who Are UU?" Q&A with Rev. Ralph

7:00 p.m. Meditation Group at Prairie

Wednesday, December 19

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

*6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers meet for potluck at

the home of Ema Pachon, 1459 E. Main, Apt. 205

7:15 p.m. Board Meeting

Sunday, December 23

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. "A Child's Christmas in Wales" led by

the Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

11:45 a.m. Meditation Group

Monday, December 31

Last chance to have your pledge count for this year's taxes!

Sunday, January 20

11:30 a.m. Chili Pledge luncheon at Prairie

Sunday, February 24

11:30 a.m. Potluck and Annual Prairie Auction, Orange Schroeder, auctioneer.

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, December 9

Rick Ruecking presents "Ways of Seeing". This second program of a 2-part series walks us down a weedy garden path to speculate on corruptions to "the vision thing"—propaganda, advertising, and madness—before our personal revelations. You'll share the imaginations you dream to maintain clarity or the nightmares which impede the way of seeing your vision.

A lifelong Universalist, Rick discovered Prairie Society on a Sunday morning when door-knocking the Dunn's Marsh neighborhood on behalf of "Jerry Brown for President". That vision was postponed by the elections of 1980 to 2004 but has been resurrected again by Barack Obama. Rick was Prairie's president during the Growth Workshop of 1984 when the Society deferred 'the ministerial option and a new building' with interim goals for growth which included hiring a paid administrator, organizing the caring committee, and becoming handicap accessible with other building improvements. Since he's incapable of organization, Rick left the construction to others while sharing in the future ways of envisioning ourselves.

Sunday, December 16

This Sunday will be our traditional Symbol Tree intergenerational service where all (including children) are welcome to come forward, share some words with the congregation, and place a related symbol on the tree. Following are some possibilities to get you thinking: Was there an important milestone event that happened to me this year? What did I learn this year that might help others? Do I have a story to share about something that others might find uplifting?

If you are perhaps less comfortable sharing personal experiences, you would also be welcome to share a poem or quotation or other short reading with a more universal quality.

Please bring cookies or other festive finger foods so we can munch as we mingle after the service.

Sunday, December 23

This Sunday closest to Christmas will feature a presentation of "A Child's Christmas in Wales", led by Rev. Ralph, with Andy Somers, Al Nettleton, the Prairie choir, the Cambrian Singers (a local Welsh choir that includes Dan Proud, Metje Butler, Barb Park, and Doleta Chapru), and others. Through the lyrical language of Dylan Thomas and beautiful Welsh and English carols, the readers and singers will paint a warm, wry, and sympathetic picture of the human spirit and the wintry observance that we call Christmas.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

THE HOLIDAYS ARE UPON US

The holidays are upon us. I write this as the snow gently falls outside and the lights on my tree twinkle with delight. I love this time of year.

RE is settling into a cozy atmosphere as well. This month our young people can look forward to hearing holiday music, drinking hot chocolate and snacking on cookies.

This Sunday the high school class will learn about the religious holidays for the month of December: Christmas, Chanukah, Winter Solstice and Eid al-Fitr. They will also learn about the meaning and history of Kwanzaa. Some of the holiday events happening in Madison this month:

Christmas—Our Lady Queen of Peace will have a number of Christmas Eve and Christmas Day services December 24 and 25 at 401 S. Owen Dr.

Chanukah—Shaarei Shamayim will have a Chanukah celebration on December 8 at 6 p.m. at the Madison Senior Center at 330 W. Mifflin St.

Winter Solstice—Circle Sanctuary will have their annual service at First Unitarian Society, Friday, December 21 from 7-9 p.m. This is a benefit for Circle Sanctuary and FUS. There is a suggested donation of \$10/adult and \$5/youth. You can bring canned food for a charity food drive.



Kwanzaa—Olbrich Botanical garden will host an event December 29 from 1-3 p.m.

December 9 is our annual Nifty Gifty event. Kathy Converse and I have been hard at work on finalizing our plans for the day. The event starts at 10 a.m. but students are welcome to come a half hour early to start on their gift making. Donations are greatly appreciated. We are in need of several volunteers to help the children make their holiday crafts. Please let me know if you can lend a helping hand that morning.

December 16 is our annual Symbol Tree service. This will be a time to place a symbol on the tree and tell others what it means to you.

December 23 is our Christmas Intergenerational service. Our young people will meet downstairs for a nice cozy celebration. Stories will be read and there will be cookies and hot chocolate. If you would like to take part in our holiday celebration please let me know, we would love to have you!

Rebecca Malke (YREC)
[youthcoordinator\(at\)uuprairie.org](mailto:youthcoordinator(at)uuprairie.org)



DECEMBER RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

- 5-12—Hanukkah (Jewish)
- 8—Bodhi Day (Buddhist)
- 8—Immaculate Conception (Catholic Christian)
- 12—Feast day, Our Lady of Guadalupe (Catholic)
- 16—Posadas Navidena begins (Christian)
- 18—Hajj begins (Islam)
- 20—Eid al Adha (Islam)
- 21—Yule (Wicca/Neo-Pagan, north. hemisphere)
- 21—Litha (Wicca/Neo-Pagan, south. hemisphere)
- 21—St. Thomas Day (Christian)

OUR SOCIETY

REPORT ON DECEMBER 2 PARISH MEETING

Several items came before the parish at our recent meeting. Some of the highlights follow.

BYLAWS CHANGES: The changes in the bylaws that had been proposed previously were not addressed due to lack of clarity about whether or not the current bylaws require proposed changes to be published two weeks in advance. Therefore, these changes will be deferred to our spring parish meeting, as well as changes to clarify the above issue and clean up several other areas of the bylaws. One of the proposed changes was to make the Communications Committee a standing committee, with the chair to be elected by the society. Until the bylaws are changed, this committee will continue to operate, with Dirk Herr-Hoyman as chair, with Dirk participating at Board meetings without voting privileges.

“COVENANT OF GOOD RELATIONS”: A draft of the proposed Covenant of Good Relations was presented and discussed. Two changes were made, then the following resolution was approved: “Be it resolved that Prairie UU Society approve the “Covenant of Good Relations” document as “Prairie UU Society’s written expression of our Society’s commitment to create an environment where members and friends treat each other well.” Be it further resolved that the Board is charged with working with the Parish to create the environment and behaviors toward one another described in the document.” It was also noted that updates to the Covenant may be proposed for consideration at future parish meetings.

TREASURER’S REPORT: Kate Liu, Treasurer, presented and reviewed a “Summary of Expected Revenue and Expenses for 2007-2008 Budget Cycle.” She reminded us that our current 18-month cycle is January 1, 2007 – June 30, 2008, after which we will resume a 12-month cycle that matches the UUA budget year. Through the end of this cycle, anticipated expenses are about \$63,000, with anticipated revenue about \$47,000, leaving a budget gap of about \$16,000. Reasons for this include difficulty budgeting accurately for an 18-month cycle, and the need to repay promissory notes of about \$74,000. Committee

chairs are evaluating what can be adjusted for the remainder of this cycle.

Kate also presented and discussed a review of "Prairie's Property Assets." She noted that the cost to us of the Fitchburg Center property so far (property taxes plus interest paid and still owed on promissory notes) is still less than the increase in value of the property since we bought it (based on the 3% annual increase in price specified in our contract with Fitchburg Center, should they buy it back from us). This gap will gradually close, however, since the interest on promissory notes changes from 3% to 5% after the first two years.

CONSULTING MINISTER POSITION: Two resolutions regarding the position of consulting minister were approved by the meeting. The first was: "Be it resolved that Prairie expand the position of Consulting Minister from quarter-time to half-time. Be it further resolved that the Finance Committee prepare a budget reflecting this change, with a commitment to raise the needed funds." The second was: "Be it resolved that Prairie authorize the Board to begin negotiations with Ralph for a new contract to run June 3, 2008 – May 31, 2009."

Jerry Simmons, Secretary

WOW MEETS SATURDAY, DECEMBER 8

The women of Prairie (called WOW) will meet **Saturday, December 8** at 9 a.m. for a breakfast potluck at the home of Kathy Converse, 630 Pickford Street. We will read and write haiku. All prairie women are welcome. Any questions, call Kathy at 238-1856, or Mary Somers at 276-8397.

HUMANIST UNION DISCUSSES HUMANISM'S PUBLIC IMAGE

On **Sunday, December 9**, we will hear Doleta Chapru's presentation on Humanism's Contemporary Challengers: Who controls our public image? She will review contemporary groups and individuals who specifically define humanists as enemies to be loathed and feared. Discussion will focus on publicizing humanist values and upholding those values through legal action.

As usual we will start with a potluck lunch at noon, with the presentation starting about 12:20 p.m. and discussion winding up about 1:30 p.m. If you can't join us but would like to hear the program later, check the bottom of our Events page at <http://humanist.madisonwi.us/events.htm> for a link to an MP3 file of the program.

WINTER BOOK CLUB MEETINGS PLANNED

The Prairie Book Club meets after the Sunday service on the specified dates, usually starting about 11:45 a.m. Participants bring food to share. We meet in the "couch room" downstairs. Anyone is welcome, whether you have completed the book or not. For more information, contact Mary Mullen, 298-0843, or [mmullen\(at\)chorus.net](mailto:mmullen@chorus.net).



Upcoming Prairie Book Club selections:

December 9 — *Timebends*, Arthur Miller's autobiography.

January 13 — *Call It Sleep* by Henry Roth is about three years in the life of an immigrant Jewish boy in New York in the early 20th century. Henry Roth wrote this book, then didn't publish another for 60 years.

February 10 — *Murder in Amsterdam* by Ian Buruma is about the murder of the Dutch filmmaker Theo Van Gogh and also delves into how Islam treats women (suggested by Donna Murdoch who, I believe, has read the book. Read some background on Van Gogh and a review of the book at http://www.salon.com/books/review/2006/09/27/buruma/index_np.html.

PRAIRIE MOVIE GROUP MEETS DECEMBER 13

The Movie Group will meet at Prairie at 7:00 p.m., **Thursday, December 13**, to view *The Rules of the Game*. This 1939 film by Jean Renoir has been ranked in several lists of the top ten movies ever. It is a satirical look at upper class French society as World War II is dawning. Bring snacks to share and a hunger for a good film.

WHO ARE UU SESSIONS PLANNED

Who wrote the Seven Principles? Are UUs theists? Where does UUism fit into history? Can one be a Buddhist and a UU too? If you are new to Unitarian Universalism, you may have such questions as these and more.

Following the service on **Sunday, December 16**, Rev. Ralph will be on hand to supply answers and give an overview of the rich heritage of Unitarian Universalism. Gatherings will be in the couch room downstairs at Prairie.

SPANISH SPEAKERS ANNOUNCE HOLIDAY GATHERING

Spanish Speakers will meet for a festive holiday potluck on **Wednesday, December 19**, at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Ema Pachon, 1459 E. Main, Apt. 205. (Don't worry, no gifts, just lots of good food and company). Everyone is welcome. For information, directions or rides, call me at 238-4382.

Rosemary Dorney

CHRISTMAS EVE ON THE RADIO WITH ROSEMARIE

On Christmas Eve, **Monday, December 24**, I will do a program for the WORT access hour, from 7-8 p.m. The Duo Doloroso of Berkeley, CA, has produced a CD entitled, "After the Last Sky: A Mosaic of Palestinian Poetry and Music". It is beautiful, moving, bitter—and coming, after all, from the "Holy Land". Not your customary Christmas cheer, but if you're willing to listen to a different drummer, here's your chance!

Rosemarie K. Lester

PRAIRIE ELDERS SKIPS DECEMBER

Prairie Elders will not meet in December. Next meeting will be **Tuesday, January 22**. Watch the *Prairie Fire* for details.

For information about the group, please contact Donna Murdoch 238-3802. Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

WHAT IS THE CARING COMMITTEE?

Who at Prairie might come to visit you or someone in your family when you are in the hospital? Who at Prairie can you contact if you come home from surgery and would appreciate seeing a friend or having some meals delivered? Who can be a caring person to share in a family death or other crisis? Who can you talk to if you are feeling a little overwhelmed and want a friendly ear?

The Prairie Caring Committee is here so Prairie members are able to feel they can depend on someone for support in times of need. As a religious community, we want to reach out and provide support when you need it. Members of the Caring Committee each attempt to maintain contact with a group of members. We also depend on your calls to let us know when someone needs support.

If you or someone else at Prairie needs caring support, please contact any of the members of the committee or our Consulting Minister, Rev. Ralph Tyksinski (608-873-6041), who has graciously agreed to work with the committee. Members of the committee are: Dean Schroeder (256-8813), KK Anderson (279-3596), Erin Bosch (238-6285), Robin Proud (661-0776), Linda Sheehy (273-3895), and Aileen Nettleton (238-6053). At some point, all members were notified whose group they are in, but there is also a list of the Caring Groups on the Bulletin Board in the meeting room to serve as a reminder. If you cannot reach the committee member who is your main contact person, please call any member and we will try to help get the response you need.

Erin Bosch

ADULT CONTINUING EDUCATION COURSE TO BE OFFERED IN FEBRUARY

Mark your calendars! Prairie is joining with FUS to offer Building Your Own Theology. This Discussion Course will be held at Prairie, beginning on **Tuesday, February 12**, 7:00-9:00 p.m. and continuing on succeeding Tuesdays for 8 sessions. The course concludes on April 1.

The course will have as co-leaders Nick Schweitzer from FUS and Ralph Tyksinski from Prairie. Nick has been teaching this course at FUS for several years and Ralph has used some of the course materials in programs he has conducted in other settings.

Building Your Own Theology is not an academic exercise; it has to do with the very stuff of our lives. This course invites you to develop your personal credo: your fundamental religious beliefs, values and convictions that inform and direct the living of your life.

As UU's, we directly or indirectly say to our younger learners: "You are only at the beginning of your journey; religious and spiritual growth is a life-long process". This course is designed to foster that very search. You will be guided in coming to terms with questions about human nature, ultimate reality, history, ethics, and religious meaning.

To register for this course: Call Ralph at 608-873-6041; or e-mail him at: revralph341@yahoo.com.

REV. RALPH'S RUMINATIONS

Ralph will resume his column in the next issue.



MEMBERSHIP

Please welcome our new member:

Christina Klock
2507 W. Whitney Way
Fitchburg, WI 53719
cak190@hotmail.com



SAUK COUNTY CONGREGATION SEEKS MINISTER/SPEAKER

The Free Congregation of Sauk County—A Unitarian Universalist Fellowship is seeking a part-time Minister/Speaker*. The congregation is looking to fill a part-time position of approximately 12 hours per week. A half-time Minister/Speaker position is feasible within the next three years.

The position will include:

- Presenting 1 or 2 Sunday programs/month
- Helping to plan and develop Sunday programming
- Helping to conduct congregational workshops as needed and at least one Adult RE class per year
- Presiding over the marking of special events, such as marriages, child dedications, and funerals
- Providing advice and support for any group designated by the Board to attend to the special or emergency needs of members

Applicants should send:

- A letter of interest. Please include any salary requirements.
- A resumé or curriculum vitae.
- Three professional references. Please include current contact information.
- Optional: An example of original work (article, lecture, sermon, etc.) that expresses, the applicant's guiding philosophy as it pertains to a Minister/Speaker position.

To the following postal address:

Free Congregation of Sauk County
307 Polk Street, Sauk City, WI 53583
Attention: Search Committee

Or, e-mail free_congregation@verizon.net
Please put "minister position" in the subject line.

For questions or more information, please use this email address; or call Michael Whaley at 588-2048

JOURNEY TOWARDS WHOLENESS NEWS

This is a news bulletin put out by the Congregational Advocacy and Witness office of the Unitarian Universalist Association, 25 Beacon Street, Boston MA 02108

Sinkford in Washington, DC, for World AIDS Day; Calls on Government to Confront HIV/AIDS

On Friday, November 30, the eve of World AIDS Day, the Reverend William G. Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), joined hundreds of activists in the nation's capital to call for greater governmental leadership in confronting HIV/AIDS at home and abroad. The day started at a meeting with high level leadership in the Office of the Global AIDS Coordinator (OGAC), an entity within the State Department whose mission is to lead implementation of the U.S. President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR). Rev. Sinkford was joined in that meeting by Serra Sippel, Director of the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE), and Rob Keithan, Director of the UUA Washington Office for Advocacy. Together they urged the Office to fund comprehensive, integrated, and evidence-based HIV prevention programs, and especially to support congressional efforts aimed at removing the earmark in PEPFAR which requires that one-third of funding goes to abstinence-until-marriage programs. Rev. Sinkford emphasized the religious support for effective programs, based on the moral responsibility to put evidence and human lives ahead of ideology.

To see the complete story, go to: <http://www.uua.org/news/newssubmissions/59381.shtml>

Immigration and New Sanctuary Movement Resources now available on the Web

We're pleased to tell you we have a robust section on [Immigration and New Sanctuary Movement on our Social Justice pages](#) with resources including a video of Bill Sinkford at an immigrant rights' rally and useful links.

New worker justice resource!

[There is Power in Union: A Unitarian Universalist Guide to Supporting Worker Justice](#) (PDF, 18 pages) by Rev. Aaron McEmrys

From the Introduction:

This is intended to be a simple, introductory guide for Unitarian Universalists who want to support Worker's Rights...the freedom of working people to be treated with respect and dignity, to have a voice in their working lives, equitable pay and benefits, safe working conditions, and the freedom to speak and act collectively without interference or fear of reprisal....This guide is one small way to give Unitarian Universalists a new set of tools to use in our struggle for justice.

Allies for Racial Equity (ARE) Annual Conference, February 1-3, 2008, Memphis, TN

Come join other Unitarian Universalists in a weekend of focused engagement to further our understanding and create action plans to dismantle racism in our Association, our communities and ourselves. This conference is for individuals who identify as white and share a goal of learning to work to end racism and in doing so, become allies to people of color.

Highlights of the conference include:

- Our Friday night keynote speaker, Abbey Tennis, is a young adult currently serving on the Ministerial Fellowship Committee. She joins us in sharing her own journey into understandings of personal white privilege in the context of battling racism.
- A retired UU minister who traveled to Selma in response to the call from Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. the Rev. Clark Olsen will share reflections on his continued journey as an anti-racist ally.
- Attendees may select up to 3 workshops, including Anti-Racism 101, Making Whiteness Visible, In Whose Honor, and Starting an Antiracism Task Force.
- Small groups will process experiences, share, and help hold one another accountable in community-building work beyond the conference.

Registration information will follow, but this date, location and program is confirmed.

Leading Congregations into a Multiracial, Multicultural Future: now is the time! Feb. 22-24, 2008 in San Jose, CA

Building on the success of the February 2007 national conference, Congregational Services of the Unitarian Universalist Association invites you to join congregational leaders from around the country as we explore the dynamics of creating multiracial, multicultural congregations. The 2007 conference reinforced how essential it is for Unitarian Universalists to continue with this important work as we seek to build just and inclusive communities through our commitment that is rooted in Unitarian Universalist identity, theology, and values.

- In a world of blue and red states, of the radical right and far left, of fundamentalism and apathy; in a world where "the other" is distrusted and feared
- In a world in need of the hope that beloved community can be made more real by human intention and conscious faithfulness
- In this world where Unitarian Universalists are called to affirm and promote respect, justice, interdependence and to honor many sources of wisdom and truth In this world it is always the time for us to learn, to lead, to grow.

Plan to join us February 22-24, 2008, at the lovely Doubletree Hotel in San Jose, CA. Meet other congregational leaders from throughout the United States as we explore together what we can do to lead. [Register online now!!](#)

7:30 p.m. at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1021 Spaight St. on the isthmus. The mixed voice choir always presents a varied program that is a refreshing change from the typical holiday fare.

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

PRAIRIE SINGERS IN CHORAL CONCERT

Prairie members Dean Schroeder, Dan Proud, Paula Pachciarz, and Metje Butler will be singing with the Choral Arts Society Choir in its annual winter concert on **Saturday, December 15**, at