



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 21, 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, 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

Wednesday, December 26

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Sunday, December 30

9:00 a.m. NO CHOIR REHEARSAL
10:00 a.m. PROGRAM IS MOVED TO 6:00 PM
*6:00 p.m. "Honoring the Days of Our Years: Going and Coming"

Monday, December 31

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



2008

Wednesday, January 2

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, JANUARY 6

Sunday, January 6

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal
*10:00 a.m. "This I Believe" led by Anne Lundin
*12:00 p.m. Humanist Union potluck followed by a talk, "Protecting Freedom of Speech in an Electronic Age," presented by Al Nettleton

Wednesday, January 9

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Sunday, January 13

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal
*10:00 a.m. "Behind Every Great Man: The Peabody Sisters" presented by Robin Proud
*11:45 a.m. Book Club has potluck and discussion of *Call It Sleep*

Wednesday, January 16

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie
6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers meet at Kate Tucker's, 4504 Camden Rd.

Sunday, January 20

*10:00 a.m. "Yip Harburg: Lyricist/Poet/Activist" presented by Susan Hagstrom
11:30 a.m. Chili Pledge luncheon at Prairie

Tuesday, January 22

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

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

Saturday, January 26

7 p.m., Playreaders meet at the Hagstrom residence, 916 Shorewood Blvd.

Thursday, January 31

*7:00 p.m. Movie Group views *The Remains of the Day*

Tuesday, February 12

*7:00 p.m. Building Your Own Theology class starts at Prairie

Sunday, February 24

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

Saturday, March 15

Fundraising Trip to Chicago Art Institute for Winslow Homer and Edward Hopper exhibits

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

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.

Sunday, December 30

There will be no morning program. At 6 p.m. we will be "Honoring the Days of Our Years: Going and Coming". Join us for a time of sharing memories, looking forward and making music. Bring the family and bring a snack to share after the program.

Sunday, January 6

Barbara Chatterton, Erin Bosch, and Anne Lundin will present "This I Believe," an adaptation of the National Public Radio program by that name. Many of us have heard the 3-minute essays on All Things Considered or Weekend Edition Sunday. Anne, the spark plug behind this service, explains

that the program will be about each presenter's spiritual and ethical beliefs and where they came from. As for all of us, "the complex of beliefs and traditions" that each of them currently ascribes to may have both "contradictions and continuities." It is this "sum of disparate parts" that they will be talking about.

The current NPR program is based on the 1950s radio program "This I Believe" hosted by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow. In creating "This I Believe," Murrow said the program sought "to point to the common meeting grounds of beliefs, which is the essence of brotherhood and the floor of our civilization." Anne added that the idea behind the January 6 service is to promote tolerance for different beliefs.

After their presentation there will be plenty of time for people to share some of their own beliefs. A second "This I Believe" service will be held on February 24 with different Prairie people as presenters.

To read or listen to some of the essays from NPR's "This I Believe," go to http://www.thisibelieve.org/view_featured_essays.php

Sunday, January 13

We all know the important 19th century figures Horace Mann, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Bronson Alcott and William Ellery Channing. But few know of the support and education these great men and others received from Elizabeth, Mary and Sophia Peabody. Denied formal education, the sisters read widely, learned languages and introduced philosophical and social concepts to the men who owed them some part of their success. Robin Proud will introduce us to these fascinating women who were way ahead of their time.

Sunday, January 20

The January 20, 2008 service will be about the poetry and lyrics of Yip Harburg, lyricist for the Wizard of Oz, Finian's Rainbow and one of the best union songs around, "Brother, can you spare a dime".

Yip (short for Yipsel) Harburg was a unique artist on the Broadway stage and in Hollywood, not even letting either the depression or being

blacklisted slow him down. I like his turn of phrase for his chosen work : "Words make you think thoughts. Music makes you feel a feeling. But a song makes you feel a thought." Come and listen to some of his discourse, both in song and in word.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

LOOKING FORWARD TO 2008 IN R.E.

The 2007 RE year is coming to a close. We have two services left before we start a brand new year. As always I am looking forward to a new year with new beginnings. Our RE classes will still be fun and educational full of activities throughout the coming year.



Something new students and adults can experience is our new "Spirit Room". After talking with several of our students I've discovered that some would like a special room that could be used for meditation, prayer, reflection or just a private space to think. I've set up the room by the back stairs as a special place people can go to experience some spiritual privacy. The room will be closed at all times and can be used before, during or after service. I have placed various religious objects in the room along with meditation CD's, cassettes, candles and incense. If you would like to use the sacred room before or after service please let me know. Ideas are most welcome.

December 9 was our annual Nifty Gifty event. We had 23 young people downstairs making gifts for family and friends. I would like to give a very big "THANK YOU" to Kathy Converse for helping me plan the event.

Kathy has been doing Nifty Gifty for over 15 years and the students and I really appreciate all her hard work and creativity. I would also like to thank Randy Converse for setting up the crafts and tables with Kathy and me the night before. Many thanks also goes out to the following people for volunteering their time that morning: Carl Wacker

(taking photos), Patty Stockdale, Karleen Tyksinski, Mary and Andy Somers, Orange Schroeder, Paula Pachciarz and Robin Proud. And thank you to Karen Deaton and Jessie Garst for providing the cookies and juice.

December 30 will be our New Years Eve celebration starting at 6 p.m. This is a family event for children and adults. I hope to bring in the new year with all my RE students and their families.

Wishing you all the best this holiday season,

Rebecca Malke (YREC)

youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org



JANUARY RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

- 1—Mary, Mother of God (Catholic)
- 1—Feast Day of St. Basil (Orthodox Christian)
- 1—Gantan-sai (New Year) (Shinto)
- 5—Twelfth Night (Christian)
- 5—Gukru Gobindh Singh birthday (Sikh)
- 6—Epiphany (Christian)
- 6—Feast of the Theophany (Orthodox Christian)
- 6—Dia de los Reyes (Three Kings Day) (Hispanic Christian)
- 7—Feast of the Nativity (Orthodox Christian)

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>

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

HUMANIST UNION TO DISCUSS PROTECTING FREEDOM OF SPEECH

On **Sunday, January 6**, the Humanist Union will hear a presentation, "Protecting Freedom of Speech in an Electronic Age," by Al Nettleton. Al will describe some of the threats and identify the major organizations working to protect the free exchange of ideas. We start with a potluck lunch at noon, with the presentation starting about 12:20 p.m. and the discussion winding up about 1:30 p.m.

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.



Upcoming Prairie Book Club selections:

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.

March 9 —The Book Club did not meet in December, and the December selection, Arthur Miller's autobiography, *Timebends*, will be discussed.

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.

PRAIRIE PLAYREADERS WILL GATHER

Prairie Playreaders is going to meet on **January 26**, 2008, 7 p.m., at the Hagstrom residence, 916 Shorewood Blvd. RSVP to 238-4970 (Susan) or 238-4382 (Rosemary) or SusanTanyaAml(at)aol.com (Susan).

Prairie Playreaders is a group that gets together to read plays aloud (the host usually has treats and dessert as well). For this meeting, Rosemary Dorney and I are going to co-host the reading of the play "The Belles Stratagem" by Hannah Cowley. This play will be performed by American Players Theater this coming summer, so fellow playreaders can come and get an advanced reading! (If enough people are interested, I would be willing to organize a outing to the play at APT as well.)

Susan Hagstrom

FILM GROUP WILL MEET JANUARY 31

The Movie Group will meet at Prairie, 7:00 p.m., **Thursday, January 31**, to view *The Remains of the Day*. This 1993 Merchant-Ivory production, based on the novel by Kazuo Ishiguro, was nominated for eight different Oscars. Anthony Hopkins, James Fox, Christopher Reeve, and Emma Thompson take us through nooks and crannies in an upstairs/downstairs view of a lordly

country house in the final days of the British Empire.

The film starts at 7:00. Bring snacks to share.

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

As Unitarian Universalists we are privileged to push back boundaries of accepted meanings at Christmas time. We are allowed, nay, expected, to continue our explorations and spiritual journeys in this season of celebrating the birth of a child in Bethlehem. Many of us may be fortunate enough to find or discover on our journeys some new wonder or amazing insight or

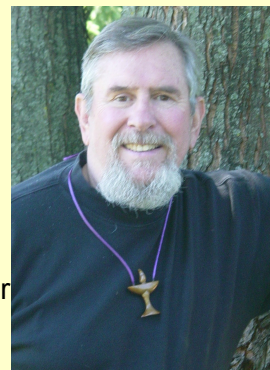


treasured meaning. We discover these gems of wisdom in great works of art and literature. (Our reading at the December 23 Prairie service of Dylan Thomas' "A Child's Christmas in Wales" is a good example.) We search these wisdom offerings out, listen for them, view their images or read about them from the inspired words of others.

As UU's we are comforted in looking beyond our known horizons to seek out other places or events for these meanings. Our journeying may lead one to recognize the sacredness of life wherever and whenever we are grasped by its message. What, after all, especially in the stories of Christian legend, did the wise men and the shepherds see? As a UU I can boldly say that I believe they saw what can be seen in many places on our planet at most any time. The giving and the care of life. There is a newborn child. There is promise. There is new life, the heritage of all the ages past, and the fullness of futures frozen in the pungent smells from the livestock stalls of a remote county stable, the present moment with the promise of life revealed, human simplicity.

At Christmastime we UU's can and do celebrate the birth of Jesus, too; the birth of a special child who journeys to grow up and bring more love and peace to the world. In some Unitarian Universalist congregations, all the newborn children that were celebrated by the congregation during the year have their names read aloud on Christmas Eve. That's because we believe that every child who is born—not just Jesus—is a special child.

Celebrating Christmas helps us to remember that. In fact, we Unitarian Universalists believe that every person is one of the special children born to bring more good will, love, joy and peace to the world. May this be part of our Prairie vision as we go forward into the new year, 2008.



Glad to be journeying with you,
Ralph

MEMBERSHIP

Updates to our membership:

Dave and Marcia Johnson

305 S. Segoe Rd.
Madison, WI 53705
441-0271

LETTERS

CAN YOU SHARE YOUR HOLIDAY LETTER?

Hi All,

The recent post to Prairie Views that contained Cindy Haq's holiday newsletter reminded me to remind you that in the past we have provided a folder at Prairie where you can place your holiday newsletter. If you prepare a newsletter for family and friends you are encouraged to share it with the Prairie community in this manner. We will put that folder out again soon, on the small square table in the foyer, and hope it will fill with newsletters. I've always enjoyed taking some time after a service in early January to read all those letters. We will leave the folder sitting there for several weeks.

It would also be acceptable to send an electronic version of your newsletter to Prairie Views, but not to Prairie News, because the News group is strictly for communications directly related to Prairie.

I look forward to reading your newsletters.

Happy Holidays.

Erin Bosch

PLANS AND CONCERNS FOR THE 2008 GA

We are writing to you because many of you recently received an email with the subject header "IMPORTANT GENERAL ASSEMBLY DECISION" concerning our upcoming 2008 General Assembly in Fort Lauderdale, Florida. We want to assure you that this email did not come from the elected leadership of the UUA, our Board of Trustees, or the General Assembly

Planning Committee, and we do not endorse its call for congregations to consider not sending delegates to the 2008 General Assembly.

As we acknowledged in our recent memo to the UUA Board of Trustees and the GA Planning Committee (see <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/updatesannouncements/60305.shtml>), the situation in Fort Lauderdale is not ideal. Legitimate concerns about the site and the security measures have been raised, concerns that we share, and we are working hard to address those concerns. We continue to be in dialogue with officials at the convention center, and we are following up on the other steps mentioned in the memo to make the Fort Lauderdale General Assembly as warm and welcoming as possible for our congregations.

There are two new steps to note. Because there has been a good deal of rumor and speculation concerning the security measures at the Fort Lauderdale site, our GA Planning Office has developed a new Frequently Asked Questions list that will provide factual information about this issue. See <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/updatesannouncements/61425.shtml>

We are also actively searching for a meeting space in Fort Lauderdale to establish a satellite site where GA delegates who cannot provide the necessary government-issued ID to gain entrance to the convention center can assemble to participate in the business of the Association via a video connection to the plenary hall at the convention center. Our worship services and opening and closing ceremonies could also be transmitted to this satellite site.

This issue is important to all of us, and we are committed to doing all we can to fulfill our responsibilities as elected leaders in our faith community...The unique challenges of this GA site make it clear that UUs have important matters to discuss, including the erosion of civil liberties, support for undocumented workers, and what it means to be inclusive. Let's gather at GA in Fort Lauderdale so we can have these, and other, important conversations.

Beth McGregor, Chair, GA Planning Committee
Gini Courter, Moderator
William G. Sinkford, President

UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWS

STEWARDSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT E-NEWS

This is an excerpt from the electronic newsletter put out by the UUA Stewardship and Development Staff Group.

Dear Friends,

Welcome to your first Stewardship and Development E-Newsletter! At the last Board meeting, the Board of Trustees asked the Stewardship and Development Staff Group to begin communicating regularly with you, the leaders in our movement who transform Unitarian Universalism daily through generous gifts of time, talent, and treasure. We decided to go paperless! Beginning after the New Year, you will find an update on the progress of the Now is the Time Campaign and Association Sunday, among other projects, in your email boxes bi-weekly. We hope it will help you stay connected to the UUA and to the programs you are helping to fund.

Association Sunday

It's a success! As of today, our Association Sundays have raised approximately \$1.1 million (including the \$500,000 matching gift challenge) for national marketing, grants to congregations for local growth and outreach projects, and President Sinkford's new program in support of ministers of color.

The majority of the 630-plus participating congregations have already held their Association Sunday services and sent in their contributions. Over the next few weeks, we expect to collect an additional \$200,000 from the remaining congregations and look forward to reporting the final figures to you in January.

Let us know what you think by filling out our Association Sunday survey.

Association Sunday 2008 will focus on the theme of Growth in Spirit for all Unitarian Universalists, supporting both lay theological education and excellence in ministry. It's not too early to sign up to participate on October 12, 2008 by emailing associationsunday@uua.org!

Now is the Time Campaign

It's continuing to build momentum! At General Assembly 2007, President Sinkford announced the launch of this most ambitious ever Campaign to Grow Unitarian Universalism. As of today, the Campaign has raised 73% of its \$50 million goal, including approximately \$15 million in cash and pledges and \$21.5 million in legacy commitments.

OTHER NEWS

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK BULLETIN

Did you know? More than 1000 children were homeless in our community this year. Because every child deserves a home, IHN and the YWCA of Madison have launched the Homes for the Holidays campaign this month to bring attention to the Second Chance Apartment Project. In this project, community sponsors assist homeless families by renting an apartment for two years and by providing ongoing mentoring and other assistance. However, more sponsors are desperately needed to help families find stability and a home.

"After joining the Second Chance Apartment Project, I realized that there still was hope for me", says one program graduate. "With a little guidance and a few classes, I learned how to manage my bills and restore my credit. Just working with a group of caring people has helped me to get my life back in order. With the help of Second Chance, my life has been restored to something wonderful."

To find out what you or your organization can do to give a Madison family a home for the holidays and throughout the year, call IHN at 294-7998.

Rachel Krinsky, MSW, IHN Executive Director

[Ed. Note: I may be presumptuous, but to end the year, I've devoted the last page of the newsletter to a message to the world by one who may be seen one day as a prophet in our time. See http://nobelprize.org/nobel_prizes/peace/laureates/2007/gore-lecture_en.html for the full text.]

NOBEL LECTURE BY AL GORE

I have a purpose here today. It is a purpose I have tried to serve for many years. I have prayed that God would show me a way to accomplish it.

Sometimes, without warning, the future knocks on our door with a precious and painful vision of what might be. One hundred and nineteen years ago, a wealthy inventor read his own obituary, mistakenly published years before his death. Wrongly believing the inventor had just died, a newspaper printed a harsh judgment of his life's work, unfairly labeling him "The Merchant of Death" because of his invention – dynamite. Shaken by this condemnation, the inventor made a fateful choice to serve the cause of peace.

Seven years later, Alfred Nobel created this prize and the others that bear his name.

Seven years ago tomorrow, I read my own political obituary in a judgment that seemed to me harsh and mistaken – if not premature. But that unwelcome verdict also brought a precious if painful gift: an opportunity to search for fresh new ways to serve my purpose.

Unexpectedly, that quest has brought me here. Even though I fear my words cannot match this moment, I pray what I am feeling in my heart will be communicated clearly enough that those who hear me will say, "We must act."

The distinguished scientists with whom it is the greatest honor of my life to share this award have laid before us a choice between two different futures – a choice that to my ears echoes the words of an ancient prophet: "Life or death, blessings or curses. Therefore, choose life, that both thou and thy seed may live."

We, the human species, are confronting a planetary emergency – a threat to the survival of our civilization that is gathering ominous and destructive potential even as we gather here. But there is hopeful news as well: we have the ability to solve this crisis and avoid the worst – though not all – of its consequences, if we act boldly, decisively and quickly.

However, despite a growing number of honorable exceptions, too many of the world's leaders are still best described in the words [Winston Churchill](#) applied to those who ignored Adolf Hitler's threat: "They go on in strange paradox, decided only to be undecided, resolved to be irresolute, adamant for drift, solid for fluidity, all powerful to be impotent."

So today, we dumped another 70 million tons of global-warming pollution into the thin shell of atmosphere surrounding our planet, as if it were an open sewer. And tomorrow, we will dump a slightly larger amount, with the cumulative concentrations now

trapping more and more heat from the sun.

As a result, the earth has a fever. And the fever is rising. The experts have told us it is not a passing affliction that will heal by itself. We asked for a second opinion. And a third. And a fourth. And the consistent conclusion, restated with increasing alarm, is that something basic is wrong.

We are what is wrong, and we must make it right.

Last September 21, as the Northern Hemisphere tilted away from the sun, scientists reported with unprecedented distress that the North Polar ice cap is "falling off a cliff." One study estimated that it could be completely gone during summer in less than 22 years. Another new study, to be presented by U.S. Navy researchers later this week, warns it could happen in as little as 7 years.

Seven years from now....

Let us acknowledge that if we wish to redeem squandered time and speak again with moral authority, then these are the hard truths:

The way ahead is difficult. The outer boundary of what we currently believe is feasible is still far short of what we actually must do. Moreover, between here and there, across the unknown, falls the shadow.

That is just another way of saying that we have to expand the boundaries of what is possible. In the words of the Spanish poet, Antonio Machado, "Pathwalker, there is no path. You must make the path as you walk."

We are standing at the most fateful fork in that path. So I want to end as I began, with a vision of two futures – each a palpable possibility – and with a prayer that we will see with vivid clarity the necessity of choosing between those two futures, and the urgency of making the right choice now.

The great Norwegian playwright, Henrik Ibsen, wrote, "One of these days, the younger generation will come knocking at my door."

The future is knocking at our door right now. Make no mistake, the next generation *will* ask us one of two questions. Either they will ask: "What were you thinking; why didn't you act?"

Or they will ask instead: "How did you find the moral courage to rise and successfully resolve a crisis that so many said was impossible to solve?"

We have everything we need to get started, save perhaps political will, but political will is a renewable resource. So let us renew it, and say together, "We have a purpose. We are many. For this purpose we will rise, and we will act."

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