



# 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."

**May 23, 2008**



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

### Saturday, May 24

8:00 a.m. to Noon. UU Blood Drive at James Reeb UU Congregation, 2146 E. Johnson St.

### Sunday, May 25

\*10:00 a.m. "Birth Options in the Madison Area" presented by Aszani Kunkler

\*11:45 a.m. Book Club potluck and discussion of *Shape-Shifter* by Tony Hillerman

### Tuesday, May 27

\*1:30 p.m. Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood West

### Saturday, May 31

\*8:30 a.m. to noon. Strategic Planning Session: "Facility and Staffing Needs"

### Sunday, June 1

\*10:00 a.m. "Transition Sunday"  
Noon. Humanist Union potluck and program.

### Monday, June 2

\*6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers meet at the home of Dave and Marcia Johnson, 305 S. Segoe Rd.

## NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, JUNE 1

### Saturday, June 7

9:00 a.m. WOW meeting

### Sunday, June 8

\*10:00 a.m. "Flower Communion and Its Founder, Norbert Capek" presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

### Saturday, June 14

2:00 p.m. Memorial service for Betty Jallings, Grand Hall, Meriter Retirement Community

### Wednesday-Sunday, June 25-29

\*UUA General Assembly, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

### Friday-Sunday, September 5-7

\*Fall Retreat at Bethel Horizons, Dodgeville

(\* = Details follow in this issue.)

## INSIDE

- Preview of next congregational Strategic Planning Session: "Facility and Staffing Needs"
- Prairie activities and meetings
- Rev. Ralph's Ruminations
- May 4 Parish Meeting summary

## **DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS**

### **Sunday, May 25**

"Birth Options in the Madison Area" is being presented by Aszani Kunkler. Although most women give birth in hospitals and under the care of physicians in the United States, this approach to birthing is not shared by the rest of the world. Care by midwives, and birth at home or in birth centers is the norm for virtually every other country in the world. Countries using midwifery care consistently have better outcomes, lower costs and higher satisfaction rates than the U.S.

Join Certified Nurse-Midwife and Madison Birth Center Director Aszani Kunkler as she examines the culture and politics of childbirth in America. There will be ample time for discussion after Aszani's presentation. Bring your stories and questions for lively dialogue!

### **Sunday, June 1**

Transition Sunday is one of Prairie's cherished annual traditions. Poetry, music, and humorous readings provide an opportunity to reflect on the changing roles we move through in our lives. We focus especially on celebrating our youth as they graduate from middle school and high school.

### **Sunday, June 8**

On this Sunday Prairie celebrates flower communion, a service that was created by Norbert Capek (1870-1942), who founded the Unitarian Church in Prague, Czechoslovakia. He introduced this special service to that church on June 4, 1923. For some time he had felt the need for some symbolic ritual that would bind people more closely together. The format had to be one that would not alienate any who had forsaken other religious traditions. The traditional Christian communion service with bread and wine was unacceptable to the members of his congregation because of their strong reaction against the Roman Catholic faith. So he turned to the native beauty of their countryside for elements of a communion which would be genuine to them. This simple service was the result. It is now celebrated in countless UU congregations when members bring flowers to share with each other at the end

of the service. This festive participatory service, of readings and song, which celebrates both the earth's beauty and humanity's oneness, is usually done before the beginning of the Summer season. Its simplicity and universality make it meaningful for children as well as adults.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

### **RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD**

May

23—Declaration of the Bab (Baha'i)

29—Ascension of Baha'u'llah (Baha'i)

30—Sacred Heart of Jesus (Catholic Christian)

31—Lag B'Omer (Jewish)

June

4—Pentecost (Christian)

5—Ascension of Jesus (Orthodox Christian)

9—St. Columba of Iona (Christian)

9-10—Shavuot (Jewish)

11—Trinity (Christian)

## **OUR SOCIETY**

### **STRATEGIC PLANNING SESSION SET FOR SATURDAY, MAY 31**

**Saturday, May 31, 2008, 8:30 -12 noon**

We have one more planning workshop to go: Facility and Staffing Needs. We will have simple breakfast items available at 8:30 a.m. and start the session promptly at 9 a.m. Thank you to everyone who has participated in our planning process so far:

- First Direction Setting meeting on Vision and outcomes for the next 5 years
- Review meeting on Vision and outcomes
- Board Review and approval of Vision and outcomes
- Second Direction Setting meeting on Ministry actions to support vision and outcomes
- Review meeting on Ministry actions

Yet to come:

- Board Review of Ministry actions, 5/25/08
- Third Direction Setting meeting on facility and staffing needs 5/31/08
- Review meeting on facility and staffing needs 6/29/08
- Further actions to review, finalize and implement our plan

At the Facility and Staffing Needs meeting we will first review 1) the Vision and outcome priorities, and 2) the Ministry action priorities. Then we will ask for small groups to discuss several questions and report to the whole group:

- What we can do to improve/ modify/ use our current facilities to help achieve vision outcomes and ministry actions over the next 5 years?
- What gaps are there in facility features/ capabilities that are needed to achieve outcomes/ ministry actions?
- What are staffing needs to achieve outcomes/ ministry actions?

We will ask that there be more focus on the first facilities question than on the second.

After reporting on the facilities and staffing questions we will ask the groups to discuss and report on responses to the question - How will we know when (if) we are ready to begin work to find a new facility?

I hope you can come to the Facilities and staffing needs meeting on May 31st.

*Ken Skog*

*Chair, Strategic Planning Task Force*



### **BOOK CLUB MEETS MAY 25**

The Prairie Book Club meets after the Sunday service on specified dates, usually starting at 11:45 a.m. Participants bring food to share and meet in the couch room downstairs. Everyone 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:

**Sunday, May 25, *Shape-Shifter* by Tony Hillerman**

**Sunday, June 29, *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follett**

### **PRAIRIE ELDERS MEET ON MAY 27**

Prairie Elders Meeting, Tuesday, **May 27**, 1:30-3:30 p.m. in the Nakoma Room of Heritage Oaks, Oakwood Village West. Or come at 1:00 for informal conversation. Newcomers welcome.

TOPIC: CREATIVE AGING. Define "creative" in your own way. Among us are creators of paintings, sculpture, photography, fiction, poetry, music, handwork, gardens, doggerel, letters to the editor, speeches, puns, web forum commentary, organizations and characters on stage. We also have people with creative ways to keep their minds active or entertain lively grandchildren. Tell about your creative side, bring a creation or come to listen and share good times with friends. We use a round-robin format for the benefit of those with hearing loss.

SNACKS: If convenient, please bring a few snacks to pass and your own beverage cup.

ABOUT US: Prairie Elders aims to provide good times and mutual support for Prairie UU members and friends over 65. We welcome other UUs who live in the facility where we meet. Come and go as necessary for appointments, etc. Let us know if you need directions or a ride to Oakwood.

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

### **SPANISH SPEAKERS WILL MEET JUNE 2**

Spanish Speakers will not meet in May. The next meeting will be **Monday, June 2**, at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Dave and Marcia Johnson, 305 S Segoe Rd.

## SAVE YOUR RUMMAGE!

This summer the RE Committee will sponsor a rummage sale to raise money for the RE department. Because of limited space we ask that you keep your items at home until it is time for the sale. A date has not been decided so stay tuned for more details.

## 'TIS ALMOST FAIRY TIME

**Sunday, August 10**, meet new and old friends from James Reeb, First Unitarian Society, and Prairie as we carpool to American Players Theatre and picnic. Buy your tickets directly from American Players Theater for that night's 6:00 p.m. performance of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (<http://playinthewoods.org/> or 608-588-2361). Details on where to meet will follow or contact Liz Wessel, 238-9934 or [lizwessel \(at\) yahoo.com](mailto:lizwessel@yahoo.com), or Karen Deaton, [karendeaton \(at\) tds.net](mailto:karendeaton@tds.net)

What could be better? Midsummer revelry and camaraderie and it all starts with a car pool!

*Karen Deaton*

## IHN UPDATE

Recently I became the coordinator for Prairie's role in the Interfaith Hospitality Network (IHN). Paula Pachciarz was the previous coordinator for a long while. Since I need to let you know of this change in coordinators, I thought I would also take the opportunity to raise some awareness of IHN and Prairie's role. You can go to this website for lots of info: <http://ihnmadison.org/main.cfm>.

I will just briefly tell you that IHN is a program that coordinates temporary housing for homeless families by helping various churches house the families in their church buildings for one week on a rotating basis. The Prairie building is not large enough to house the families, so we are a "buddy" church with Midvale Lutheran (ML). The families stay at ML and Prairie has agreed to provide volunteers for many of the jobs that are needed throughout the week.

IHN provides "tours and training" for the volunteers, and that is a good thing to do, but it is not absolutely necessary in order to help out, especially if you go with someone who has already been a volunteer. You can go to this

website for an explanation of the volunteer jobs: <http://midvalelutheran.org/ihnjobs.htm> and you can sign up online at this address: <http://nordengs.com/ihn/group.asp?eg=8&u=true>.

IHN is a wonderful organization and we should be proud of Prairie's association with it. It would also be good if we could increase the number of volunteer jobs Prairie covers in a given session.

There are some exciting things afoot for IHN and I will be sending out more info on prairienews in the near future. If you don't have a computer and are interested in IHN news, let me know and I will call you.

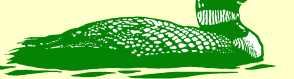
*Erin Bosch*

## FALL ALL-CONGREGATION RETREAT

Every fall Prairie members and their families and friends spend a weekend of playing, making music, walking, talking, learning, and rejuvenating ourselves and each other. Our 2008 retreat will be **September 5-7** at Bethel Horizons bordering Governor Dodge State Park near Dodgeville. Put it on your calendar now—this weekend for many of us is a highlight of the year. We always need volunteers to help plan the retreat. Please let me or another Board member know if you would be willing to help coordinate adult or youth activities or registration. You wouldn't be alone - folks who have gone before you will assist you. Thanks!

*Rachel Long, President*

## REV. RALPH'S RUMINATIONS

At our recent Parish Meeting (Sunday, May 4)  Prairie came together in passing resolutions by unanimous or almost unanimous votes.

Disregarding the content of the resolutions, the results that were achieved should be acknowledged by all that a process of reaching a consensus is clear and positive sign of Prairie's health as a congregation. What has happened to make this change in the congregation's dynamics?

Here are a few of my observations on what Prairie is achieving:

Prairie is moving forward to becoming a learning congregation.

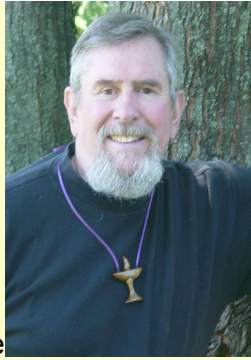
Opportunities for members to know who and where to go with concerns and suggestions have been made more accessible and more widespread.

But this is only a beginning of a more complete and reliable source for achieving congregational goals. Input is only the “raw data”, not the foundational basis for a major – or even minor – change.

I believe Prairie is beginning to be more intentional in using multiple ways of gathering data – all congregational workshops, circle supper meetings, attendance at children’s and adult classes, meetings and Sunday services, numbers of participants in activities, numbers of new members, numbers of visitors and return visits, average pledge, etc. Our long-range planning activities are using this information to identify “achievable” and “within budget” goals for the coming years.

Here I wish to share a secret mistake that is made in many of our congregations. Some will agree with me, if you think about it. Loud voices (squeaky wheels get the oil!) get their way. And the result is that people who don’t complain – and feel the opposite -- just go away... quietly, without telling anyone. Learning congregations don’t allow that to happen, because they value everyone’s input, not just the people with loud voices who insist on being heard. We need to hear everyone’s voice in our congregational gatherings and decision making.

Evaluating what we’re doing and continually working to do it better makes us a learning congregation. But we do need to know what it is that we’re trying to accomplish in order to evaluate our success. Or as someone has said, “You may make really good time without a rudder on your boat, but you probably won’t get where you’re going.”



In the coming months Prairie’s long range planning activities will be identifying and defining congregational goals that are clearly articulated and shared. We need to reach consensus on these goals. My hunch is that these goals will involve some kind of change for Prairie. If no change is involved in what we are aiming for, we probably won’t hit our targeted goals.

How can we improve on becoming a better learning organization?

According to most congregational growth consultants goal setting is one of the major characteristics of congregations that reach out and attract new members: the habit of intentionality. Outreach -- and learning – both require that we reflect on what we are trying to accomplish, that we don’t simply let events happen to us.

Prairie closed a door at our Parish Meeting. But, as proverbial wisdom says, “When one door closes, other doors can open”.

I believe that Prairie is really serious about the need to live our lives here on earth as if they mattered – we are serious because we are setting serious and challenging goals. Let us work together in the process and achieve what we are capable of achieving. We proved this at our May 4 meeting. Let us applaud ourselves and move forward!

Glad to be journeying with you,

*Ralph*

#### **SUMMARY OF PARISH MEETING MAY 4, 2008**

Prairie’s annual spring business meeting was held on **Sunday, May 4, 2008**, with numerous actions taken. The draft of the full minutes of the meeting has been distributed on prairienews, and members may request a copy from the secretary.

**OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE CHAIRS:** We elected the following for 2008-2009:

President: Rachel Long

Vice-President: Anne Lundin

Secretary: Christina Klock

Treasurer: Kate Liu

Denominational Affairs: Pat Watkins

Finance: Mary Somers  
Hospitality and Membership: Paula Pachciarz  
Housing and Property: Al Nettleton  
Long Range Planning: Ken Skog  
Program: Susan Herr-Hoyman  
Religious Education: Karen Deaton  
Social Action: Kathy Converse  
Communications Committee: Dirk Herr-Hoyman  
(a new position on the Board)

Gordon Cunningham, Rick Ruecking, and Kim Truog were elected to serve on the Committee on Committees for the coming year, along with Mary Mullen, who is the carry-over member from the outgoing committee. One more member will be appointed from the incoming Board.

**BYLAWS CHANGES:** The proposed changes had been distributed with a previous edition of *Prairie Fire*. The major changes were: 1) The Communications Committee is now a standing committee with its chair as a Board Member, 2) Committee membership no longer requires Board approval, but rather is determined by the Committee Chairs, 3) Responsibility for lay ministers is now with Program Committee, and 4) The Membership Committee has been renamed Hospitality and Membership Committee, with a simplification of the description of its responsibilities. For the most part, we approved the changes as distributed. We chose not to proceed with a proposed change in the definition of Members of the Society, and wording changes were made in two sections.

**ACTIONS ON OUR PROPERTY:** Three votes were taken. We voted to stop the building plans at the Fitchburg Center property, carried by a show of hands, 37 yes, 2 no, and 2 abstaining. We voted to authorize the Board to sell the Fitchburg property, carried by a show of hands, 38 yes, zero no, and 3 abstaining. Kate Liu, Treasurer, noted our current budget shortfall of about \$15,000 due to previous and upcoming promissory note repayments. We then voted to authorize the Board to refinance the Whenona property in order to cover the shortfall, carried by a show of hands, 43 yes, zero no, and one abstaining. It was noted that this authorization does not require the Board to act, and that such action would not be needed if the Fitchburg property were sold in a timely fashion.

**AUTHORIZE BUDGET FOR 7/1/08-6/30/09:** The budget proposed by the Finance Committee was accepted. This included an increase to a half-time consulting minister, as well as an increase in janitorial hours. Several budget items were deferred. They are not in the budget as it stands now, but will be added back when the Fitchburg property is sold.

**POLICIES:** Several new policies were noted, including a policy on "Disruptive Behavior," as previously approved the Board, and three policies previously approved by the Religious Education Committee: "Child and Youth Behavior," "Expectations for Parents with Children in the Religious Education Program," and "Supervisory Responsibility for Child and Youth Behavior."

**APPROVE FOCUS AREAS FOR CONSULTING MINISTER FOR 2008-2009:**

- I. Work with us to continue to develop a shared ministry.
- II. Aid in leadership development and in evaluating our governance structures.
- III. Help us identify and foster conditions that support membership growth.
- IV. Help us finalize and implement our Strategic Plan.
- V. Contribute to Sunday Programs.
- VI. Pastoral Care.

*Jerry Simmons, Secretary*

## **UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWS**

### **CAKES FOR THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN FACILITATOR TRAINING**

A collaborative effort of the CMwD W&R and Women's Connection, five facilitator training workshops are scheduled for 2008. These Train-the-Trainer (T3) workshops will prepare facilitators in the new "Cakes for the Queen of Heaven" curriculum, including the new Part I: In Ancient Times and Part II On the Threshold. Part II will be released this summer!

June 14 • St. Joseph, Michigan: Berrien UU Fellowship

June 21 • Oak Park, Illinois: Unity Temple UU Congregation

July 26 • Kirkwood, Missouri: Eliot Chapel

November 15 • Peoria, Illinois: Universalist Unitarian Church of Peoria

November 22 • The First Unitarian Society of Milwaukee

For more details or to register, go to [www.cakesforthequeenofheaven.org](http://www.cakesforthequeenofheaven.org). You can even add your comments on your Cakes class experiences to our blog!

*Gretchen*

*Office Manager, Women and Religion Committee*

*Central Midwest District UUA*

*office@womenandreligion.org*

*www.womenandreligion.org*

## **PLANNING FOR ACTIONS OF IMMEDIATE WITNESS (AIWS) AT GA 2008**

We are trying something new this year. To assist Unitarian Universalists (UUs) in organizing AIWs at the 2008 General Assembly (GA), the Commission on Social Witness (CSW) encourages you to plan and collaborate ONLINE.

If you are interested in proposing topics and planning together for AIWs, email your topic title, two-sentence description, and email address to: [socialwitness @ uaa.org?subject=aiw](mailto:socialwitness@uaa.org?subject=aiw) (Please start your Subject line with AIW).

The information will be posted at <http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=euup2QQ2Lz1la2U%2FJs22aTvqLrqxXrUQ> (scroll down for list). People interested in learning more about a particular topic or collaborate on drafting an AIW can communicate directly with the original proposer.

If you prefer to just propose a topic for others to consider, send only the title and description to be posted. If another person wants to coordinate planning that issue, they can notify us at [socialwitness@uaa.org](mailto:socialwitness@uaa.org).

Proposed AIWs cannot be submitted online.

To be considered at GA, proposed AIWs must be submitted at GA as described in Part Two of the Proposer's Guide (<http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=pKWPNRQxMZRCS6FT9XbPgDvgLrqxXrUQ>).

Please note: the criteria for AIWs include that there not be a recent existing Statement of Conscience or AIW on the topic and that the matter be focused and urgent enough to require immediate action.

View past AIWs at <http://salsa.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?v=2&c=%2FMyQtEvh0R6RyuDMPmLeuyrK7P8%2BxHxJ>.

To organize a group online to work together, consider using Google Groups or Yahoo Groups.

This online planning process will be available from April 15 to June 1. The webpage will remain up through GA 2008.

Questions may be sent to [socialwitness@uaa.org](mailto:socialwitness@uaa.org).

*David May, Commission on Social Witness*

## **OTHER NEWS**

### **INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK BULLETIN**

Did you know? IHN is starting a new housing program this July, in collaboration with the YWCA and the Salvation Army. The House-ability program will provide scattered-site subsidized housing and case management services for homeless families with a disabled parent.

"Karen" is a single mom with three children. She has multiple health problems which interfere with many tasks and have entitled her to receive Social Security Disability payments. Karen's kids also have special needs. The House-ability program could help Karen's children stay in the same schools to continue the gains they have already made and would provide continued assistance in dealing with the varied issues and concerns of each day. Without ongoing support, many of these issues might overwhelm the family.

To get this program started, the three agencies need to furnish 23 apartments during the months of July and August. We remember the wonderful

job our community did furnishing apartments after Katrina by collecting and transporting donated furniture. Could your congregation furnish an apartment or two to make a home for families like Karen's this summer? Please contact Rachel Krinsky (294-7998 x 302) for further information.

*Rachel Krinsky, MSW, IHN Executive Director*  
[interfaith@tds.net](mailto:interfaith@tds.net)

## **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>



Explore <http://www.uua.org/events/generalassembly/index.shtml>,  
call (617) 948-4209, or write [gaoffice@uua.org](mailto:gaoffice@uua.org)