



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."

June 20, 2008



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, June 22

*10:00 a.m. "Sex, Religion, Politics, and the Law"
presented by Andy Somers
11:45 a.m. Board Meeting

Monday, June 23

7:00 p.m. Social Action Committee meeting

Tuesday, June 24

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

Wednesday-Sunday, June 25-29

*UUA General Assembly, Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Thursday, June 26

*7:00 p.m. Prairie Film Group movie

Sunday, June 29

*10:00 a.m. "The My Lai Massacre" presented by
Joe and Joann Elder
*11:45 a.m. Congregational Review Part III & potluck

Sunday, July 6

*10:00 a.m. "Summer Reads" led by Rose Smith
*11:45 a.m. Book Club discuss *Pillars of the Earth*

NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, JULY 13

Tuesday, July 8

6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers meet at the home of
Amy Schulz
7:00 p.m. Hospitality and Membership Committee

Wednesday, July 9

7:00 p.m. Program Committee meeting

Saturday, July 12

9:00 a.m. WOW breakfast meeting

Sunday, July 13

*10:00 a.m. "Religious Convictions: Reflections on
Faith Healing, Children, and the Law" presented
by Shawn Peters
12:00 noon. Humanist Union with Shawn Peters

Friday-Sunday, July 25-27

Summer Spree

Friday-Sunday, September 5-7

Fall Retreat at Bethel Horizons, Dodgeville

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

INSIDE

- Next Congregational Review meeting
- Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, June 22

Back by popular demand—and because Andy has an interest in the several subjects of his title! Andy Somers sparked a lot of discussion last year with his services about propaganda. In this service, he presents a serious overview of the power of SEX as it affects organized religions and the political process. He'll talk about the legislature's response to the powerful and mysterious influence of SEX and our attempts to explain it and control its power over the people, at the same time preventing it from interfering with the authority and reverence we have been instructed to give it.

Andy has been a member of Prairie for 5 or 6 years. He served as municipal judge in Fitchburg for many years, and is an accomplished thespian.

Sunday, June 29

In the early 1990's, Vietnam veteran Mike Boehm (pronounced "Baym") and the Madison Quakers teamed up to raise \$1000 for micro-loans for women in Vietnam. Since then the micro-loan project has expanded to include a peace park and a set of school buildings in the village of My Lai, site of a U.S. military massacre of over 500 civilians on March 16, 1968 during the Vietnam War.

On March 16, 2008, the 40th anniversary of the My Lai massacre, Jo and Joe Elder, members of the Madison Quakers, attended the official ceremony at the site of the My Lai massacre. They also helped plant trees at the nearby Quaker peace park, visited homes of village women who had received micro-loans, and participated in the ground-breaking ceremony for the third school building paid for by funds raised by Mike Boehm and the Madison Quakers.

Sunday, July 6

Every summer we have a program in which we all have an opportunity to tell each other about a special book we've read and recommend that others might also enjoy. We write their names, titles and publishing information on index cards which are collected, and the list is then printed in the Prairie Fire.

Sunday, July 13

In recent months, prosecutors in both Oregon and Wisconsin have been confronted with a complex problem: Should parents who choose to treat their children's illnesses with prayer rather than medicine be charged with abuse, neglect, or even manslaughter when their children die? This talk will examine the complex web of legal and ethical issues that have been raised by such cases. Special attention will be paid to how evolving notions of justice, equity and compassion have shaped (and complicated) societal responses to faith healing cases throughout American history. A question and answer period will follow.

A native of Baltimore, Maryland, Shawn Peters received his undergraduate degree from Rutgers University and his Ph.D. in United States History from the University of Wisconsin-Madison. He has written three books on religion and law: *Judging Jehovah's Witnesses: Religious Persecution and the Dawn of the Rights Revolution* (2000); *The Yoder Case: Religious Freedom, Education, and Parental Rights* (2003); and, most recently, *When Prayer Fails: Faith Healing, Children, and the Law* (Oxford University Press, 2007). He has taught writing and history at the universities of New Hampshire, Iowa, and Wisconsin.

Sunday, July 20

Science and health care technology are advancing at a rapid pace. Sometimes rapid advances cause patients, families, and physicians to find themselves in a quandary about the ethics of situations in hospital settings. Rev. Dr. Marcia Marino will draw from her experience in serving on the Bioethics Committees at three hospitals in presenting several real life cases, and will invite your thoughtful reflection on the complexity of bioethics in the modern era.

Rev. Dr. Marcia Marino recently completed a consulting ministry at the United Unitarian & Universalist Society in Mukwonago, Wisconsin. On August 1, she will begin her ministry as the Interim Minister at Unitarian Church North in Mequon. Marcia has 20 years of experience as a hospital chaplain and chaplain administrator. She is a Board Certified Chaplain with the Association of Professional Chaplains. Before entering local congregation UU ministry, Marcia was the

Regional Director of Pastoral Care for Aurora Health Care in Milwaukee, serving as the administrator for 22 chaplains in 8 hospitals in southeastern Wisconsin. In that role, she served on three Bioethics Committees and one Institutional Review Board.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

ENVIRONMENTAL EXPEDITION

A mighty troop of sixteen landlubber Prairie UU pirates entered the forest of the Arboretum on June 15th armed with sword-like trowels and plastic bags. The search was on for the aliens spreading through the area. The aliens mimicked phlox and bore the name Dame's Rocket. The band of pirates ranged in age from elementary school through the senior years. They were an unstoppable force pulling 15 bags worth of aliens to be transported to another life. Many thanks to these fearless souls for sallying forth and enhancing a part of an ecosystem of the Arboretum.



RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS AROUND THE WORLD

June

- 21—Litha (Wicca, Northern Hemisphere)
- 21—Yule (Wicca, Southern Hemisphere)
- 22—All Saints (Orthodox Christian)
- 23—Sacred Heart of Jesus (Catholic Christian)
- 29—Feast Day of Saints Peter and Paul (Christian)

OUR SOCIETY

CONGREGATIONAL REVIEW PLANNED FOR JUNE 29

Hopefully most of you have received a summary of our last Strategic Planning Session on Facilities and Staffing May 31 (if not, I can get you one.) We still need to discuss a couple of big topics with you before the Board sits down in July to draft the 5-year plan.

At the next review session on June 29, we will be looking at our priority outcomes and priority action items, and discuss which facility and staffing changes are most important. We will also discuss what we will need to have achieved in order to be ready to move to a new space. Please join us for potluck and the meeting!

Rachel Long, President

PRAIRIE ELDERS

Prairie Elders meets **Tuesday, June 24, 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: Newcomers on or near the magical age of Medicare eligibility are welcome to join us. Call the contacts below for directions or a ride. We are pleased that people who joined Prairie in recent years have become regular contributors to our round-robin discussions.

LONG TERM MEMBERS: Hovering near that 65th birthday? Come visit us. We don't card at the door. Past 65 but have other priorities? You're still welcome to join us on occasion whenever it's convenient.

JUNE TOPIC: Something unusual you have done that few others know about. Review your life's activities and wow us. Did you do something special for the benefit of others? Earn your living in a unique way? Have an unusual hobby? Go on an amazing adventure? Take a gutsy political stance? Raise a five-hundred-pound pumpkin? At our May meeting we discovered a champion chess player among us. Who woulda thought? That whetted our appetite for more revelations.

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 Rose Smith 233-3363.

MOVIE GROUP VIEWS *THE REAL DIRT ON FARMER JOHN*

The Movie Group will meet at Prairie at 7:00 p.m., **Thursday, June 26**, to view *The Real Dirt on Farmer John*, a 2005 release from independent film maker Taggart Siegel. Filmed over thirty years to document a unique person's struggles to find himself and to save his family farm, it is a fascinating epic story, with mini-reviews at http://www.rottentomatoes.com/m/real_dirt_on_farmer_john/. The film starts with a statement from John Peterson:

My ancestors have farmed this land generation after generation, and I just about ended the whole thing. What do you do when nothing is left? And in a rural community where you aren't welcome because you're kind of different.

Bring snacks to share.



BOOK CLUB SUMMER MEETINGS ANNOUNCED

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, July 6, *Pillars of the Earth* by Ken Follett is a long, fascinating book set in the Middle Ages in England. Murder, arson and lust surround the building of a 12th-century cathedral. We have an extra week to read this book because the discussion date was moved to accommodate a congregational meeting at the end of June. The 973 pages are fast reading, but get started now. Borders has plenty of copies. This is a reprint of the 1989 novel that is an Oprah's Book Club selection as well as a *New York Times* best seller. Many features related to the book are located at http://www.oprah.com/obc_classic/featbook/pote/obc_featbook_pote_main.jhtml.

Sunday, July 27, *Beyond Culture* (320 pages) comes highly recommended by Gladis Benavides who mentioned this book in her presentation on cultural diversity at Prairie on February 10. 320 pages. Read about Edward T. Hall and his proxemic theory at www.csiss.org/classics/content/13.

Sunday, August 24, *La Linea* by Ann Jaramillo tells the story of a teenage brother and sister who undertake an illegal border crossing to join their parents in California. The author is a middle school teacher in a Texas border community who wrote the story for her students. This book was suggested as an all-Reeb read by the James Reeb Congregation.

Saturday, September 6 (at the Prairie Retreat, Bethel Horizons), *Born on a Blue Day: Inside the Extraordinary Mind of an Autistic Savant* is a memoir by Daniel Tammet, a high functioning man with Asperger's Syndrome, born in England in the 1970s. Daniel sees numbers as shapes, colors and textures and can perform extraordinary math problems in his head. He also learned to speak Icelandic fluently from scratch in a week. Read a fascinating call-in discussion with him at <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/discussion/2007/04/11/DI2007041100813.html>

He says he enjoyed a novel about an autistic boy, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Nighttime*, that our book club read. But he doesn't agree that Asperger's is incompatible with having religious faith. 256 pages. Suggested by Barb Park.

SPANISH SPEAKERS

Spanish speakers will meet for conversation and potluck dinner on **Tuesday, July 8**, at 6:30 p.m. at the home of Amy Schulz, 2304 South Syene Rd, Madison. For directions, call Amy at 273-2639. For rides or other information, call Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382.

'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)

Karen Deaton

REV. RALPH'S RUMINATIONS

I recently attended a course on "Leading Change in Congregational Life" sponsored by the UW Extension Division. The course leader was Gill Rendle. He was the key note speaker at last year's UUA General Assembly in Portland, Oregon and a highly regarded consultant on congregational dynamics.

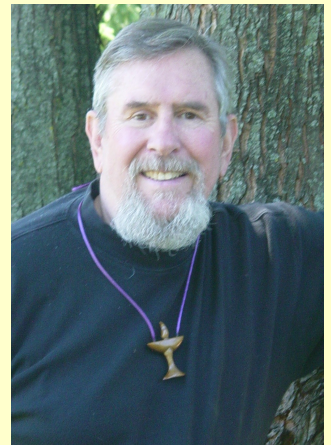


Rendle challenged the more than 50 clergy professionals attending to begin thinking about leadership in new ways. Rendle's claim was that we have been trained to find solutions to problems—we define the problem, look at the options, make a decision, take action—but looking at everything as a problem is part of an outgrown leadership style. Many situations we are working with in our congregations do not have solutions, because they are not problems, Rendle said. They are the conditions of a changed world. We at Prairie might take some of these observations to heart as possible perspectives on how we are revisioning our future as a congregation.

Rendle said that a generation or two ago, we had a "convergent environment," in which the questions and the answers were the same for everyone. Everyone agreed about what church was supposed to be and organized around that understanding. Now we live in a "divergent environment" in which we still have many of the same questions, but have widely varying answers.

One example relates to attitudes around money. Many church members believe strongly that one should save it for a rainy day, and some of them feel that there will never be a rainy enough day to spend it. Others have the attitude that it should be spent now, because it will not be worth as much in the future. Both attitudes are often represented in congregational discussions about the "Basics" of parish life, Bodies, Books, Building and Bucks. If these are treated as a problems to be solved, we will not be able to make much headway.

Rendle explained that there is a significant difference between management, which asks the question, "Are we doing things right?" and leadership, which asks, "Are we doing the right things?" We think our job is to make the congregation satisfied, he said, but a satisfied congregation doesn't want to change because it is happy with things the way they are.



He pointed out that not everyone will agree in our congregations, although we think agreement is necessary for harmony. Rendle reminded the audience that "singing with a single voice is not harmony, it is monotony." He also explained that often we are in a "reactive space," where we are dealing with what is coming at us, when we need to be in the "balcony space," where we can see the big picture and learn something new.

Leaders need to learn to shift from good answers to worthy questions, from action to learning, from control to agility, and from neatness to experimentation and messiness. They need to change from providing answers to posing worthy, significant questions the congregation needs to

face. Rendle suggested that three basic questions need to be posed to our congregations:

1. Who are we?—a question of identity
2. What are we called to do—a question of purpose
3. Who are our neighbors?—a question of context, which acknowledges that the world around us is changing as much as we are.

Rendle got a hearty guffaw from many of the ministers present when he posed the question "Why is it that we are asked to go find the solution, and when we return, we are told "Thank you, but no thank you?" Our congregations ask for leadership, he said, but reward management. He emphasized that, once again, this is not a problem to be solved. It is a normal reaction, because people are averse to loss, and change brings loss. There are three stages to any transition:

1. letting go
2. the confusion of in between times
3. beginning the new.

Rendle also observed that "everyone wants to start with step three, because the first two steps are painful."

There is a roller coaster path of the energy during this process, Rendle said. Leadership announces the change, and the excitement and energy rise. As people confront the loss of change, the energy drops. Then the congregation decides if they are going to stay with the change, and if they do, the energy starts to rise again. The leadership is ahead of the congregation on this roller coaster, and "often the people who asked you to come up with a plan are the ones who resist it at first."

To overcome this resistance, we need to concentrate on the leadership of listening, Rendle said. "We don't need to listen until everyone is happy, but we must listen until people have had a chance to express what they need to in order to move through the stages of change."

Rendle asked us to imagine the difference in behavior if people changed from operating with the idea that "leadership means challenging the community to follow the leader's vision," and instead operated with the idea that "leadership means influencing the community to face into its questions." In order to move into leadership rather

than management takes courage, because it leads people into not knowing what the answers will be.

Rendle told the participants that the secret to success in change is to give the congregation a new story to tell about themselves. They will quibble over details, he said, especially if the details include numbers, but "when you tell them a story that helps the people see the possibilities, they will understand." He observed, congregations tend to describe themselves down the safe middle. Finding a bolder story changes a church. "Bold stories create strong congregations, even when not everyone agrees with the story," he said.

Rendle also noted that leaders help shape the hopes and fears of the people. To give a congregation a new story, leaders need to challenge the existing story. This process tends to follow the *forming*, *storming*, *norming*, *performing* path. The *forming* time is a time to learn the present story—a time of polite interaction and of discovering our similarities. The *storming* begins when the leadership challenges the story, an uncomfortable time, a time of discovering differences, and a time when far too many congregations balk and turn away from the path. *Norming* begins when the congregation creates a better, more powerful story, setting the new norms, and the *performing* comes about as the congregation begins to live the new story.

Rendle encouraged the course attendees to help their congregations create bolder stories, and not to be surprised or try to "solve the problem" when there is resistance. He acknowledged that most leaders in congregations, if they were given any training at all, were most likely trained in the old, problem solving kind of management style, but he encouraged all leaders to nonetheless have the courage to help their congregations face their important questions and create a powerful story that opens up possibilities for the future.

The message that I came away with from this course and would like to share, especially as we are engaged in our long range visioning process: "What are Prairie's important questions and what is the story that we have to tell that will open up the widest possibilities for a vital future for the congregation?"

Glad to be journeying with you, *Ralph*

UN INSTITUTE CONFERENCE

The United Nations Association—Wisconsin Division and Edgewood College are jointly sponsoring this conference on **Saturday, July 12**, from 9 am to 4 pm on the Edgewood College campus. The conference will focus on two emerging themes: 1) the interpretations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as interpreted by each new generation, including our own, and, 2) the new "Responsibility to Protect" principle that authorizes the international community in extreme cases to intervene within countries in order to protect vulnerable populations.

In addition to the three speakers, there will be break-out small sessions which will focus on the themes of the Institute and provide opportunities to move from information to informed action.

Early registration is encouraged. For further information and registration materials contact: Unitednationsassociationwisc@tds.net

JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS (JTW) NEWS

The Washington Office is busy preparing for General Assembly. In this bulletin you'll find several GA events that you won't want to miss. Come by our booth and say howdy! We're booth number 450 and if you take action via our on-site online action center, you get a "Social Justice Superstar" bracelet!

Or if you can't make it to GA this year, keep up with what's happening with our live blogging from Ft. Lauderdale. Speaking of our blog, Inspired Faith Effective Action was recently listed as one the Top 100 Civil Liberties Activist blogs! Thanks to criminaljusticedegreesguide.com for including us in their list and letting us know about it!

Peace - Urge Diplomacy with Iran

Are you sick of war? Are you ready for diplomacy?

The UUA recently became a member of the Campaign for a New American Policy on Iran. In doing so we are joining a broad coalition of organizations whom all believe that sustained, direct, bilateral, and comprehensive talks without preconditions between the governments of the United States and Iran represent a realistic way to resolve long-standing conflicts.

Help us realize a future that embodies that belief by sending a message to your Representative to support diplomacy with Iran.

Marriage Equality in California

Check out Meg Riley's post about California's historic decision on our blog, Inspired Faith, Effective Action.

Truth and Reconciliation - Traces of the Trade

A groundbreaking film about slavery, truth, and reconciliation premieres Tuesday evening, June 24 on PBS.

In *Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North*, Producer/Director Katrina Browne tells the story of her forefathers, the largest slave-trading family in U.S. history. Given the myth that the South is solely responsible for slavery, viewers will be surprised to learn that Browne's ancestors were Northerners. The film follows Browne and nine fellow family members on a remarkable journey which brings them face-to-face with the history and legacy of New England's hidden enterprise.

Family member Tom DeWolf has chronicled his experience of the family's journey, in *Inheriting the Trade: A Northern Family Confronts Its Legacy as the Largest Slave-Trading Dynasty in U.S. History*, a book published in 2008 by the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations' own Beacon Press.

For more info on the film and book, see: <http://www.tracesofthetrade.org>. A UU Study Guide for the film will be available shortly.

General Assembly: FEMA Trailer Tour-Katrina-Ritaville Express

Take a 'tour' of a FEMA Trailer with Derrick Evans, Executive Director of the Turkey Creek Community Initiative. TCCI and several other Gulf Coast organizations have purchased two FEMA trailers that are touring the country to raise awareness of the ongoing crisis in the region and the continued lack of coherent government action to rebuild in a way that meets the needs of poor and minority residents. Learn how you can bring the Katrina-Ritaville Express

(www.krvexpress.org) to your community. The FEMA Trailer Exhibit will be parked in the parking lot (NE Lot) across from the Convention Center and adjacent to the Fountain (a big sailfish). Tours will be held every lunch hour and at various times during GA. (Times will be posted at the Trailer).

General Assembly: Public Witness Event - Valuing ALL Families

This year's Public Witness event at General Assembly will be Friday, 5:00-6:30 PM.

Join UUA President William Sinkford & interfaith and community leaders as we stand on the side of love with Immigrant and Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, & Transgender Families. There will be testimonials from a UU BGLT family about how Florida laws have kept them apart, stories from immigrants (Florida Immigrant Coalition), a call to support Vote No on 2 (Florida ballot initiative mandating that marriage be defined as between a man and woman) and support for immigration reform and the Citizen Child Protection Act (which keeps undocumented parents of citizen children in the US). And food and music!

General Assembly: Advocacy and Witness Workshops

Thursday, June 26
11:00-12:15—Theology of Immigration
1:30-2:45—Justice in the Tomato Fields:
Coalition of Immokalee Workers
Thursday, 3:15-6:15 and Saturday, 1:30-4:30—
Organizing, Advocacy and Voter Mobilization:
Faithful Democracy 2008
Thursday, 5:00-6:15 and Sunday, 1:30-2:45—
Grassroots Organizing for a New Century

Friday, June 27

1:30-2:45—Organizing for a Just Gulf Coast Recovery

1:30-2:45—Welcoming the Stranger: Immigrant Justice

3:15-4:30—Youth and Adult Partnerships: Comprehensive Sex Education

OTHER NEWS

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK BULLETIN

Did you know? IHN has a new name! As of July 1, 2008, IHN will be known as The Road Home Dane County: Solutions for Homeless Families. We chose this name – the Road Home - because we are expanding to include a larger variety of services, all of which relate to helping homeless families reach stability in their lives and permanent living arrangements. We also wanted a name that was easily recognizable, memorable, and represented the inclusiveness of all of our community partners. The shelter program will continue to be called Interfaith Hospitality Network and will be a program of The Road Home.

On the same day, we are relocating to 128 E. Olin Avenue, Suite 202. The new space will accommodate our growth and better meet the needs of staff and families alike. The mission of the organization remains the same and all current programs will continue. The Road Home thanks our participating faith communities for the initiative to open our Interfaith Hospitality Network nine years ago and the energy and passion that have continued our work. The tireless efforts of your volunteers over these years has sustained this successful shelter program and helped the agency grow and deepen our services. To date, 281 families including 568 children have been served by the Network.

For additional information, including contacts and the 2007 Annual Report, please visit our Web site: www.ihnmadison.org until July 1; www.trhome.org after July 1.

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>