

Prairie Fire

February 22, 2009

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News

The full-featured **Prairie Fire** is published on the 22nd of every month. The **Prairie Fire Bulletin** is a calendar-only newsletter that is published on the 6th of every month. Both are published by Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. View past issues at www.uuprairie.org

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Calendar

Sunday, February 22, 2009 - Interfaith Hospitality Network Week Begins.

9:00 am - Choir Rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "Forgiveness and Justice," presented by Amy Owen.

11:45 am - Prairie Service auction. Lunch at 11:45, the auction will begin shortly after.

Tuesday, February 24, 2009

2:00 pm - Prairie Elders meets at Oakwood.

Sunday, March 1, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "This I Believe," presented by Anne Lundin.

11:45 am - Denominational Affairs committee meets downstairs at Prairie.

12:00 noon - Ethical Humanism Study Group meets.

Prairie Fire Bulletin deadline for calendar and program items.

Saturday, March 7, 2009

9:00 am to 4:00 pm - "Building the Beloved Community: Realizing Racial Justice" workshop. Contact Mary Somers for more information.

Sunday, March 8, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "Military Recruiting Abuse," presented by Vicki Berenson.

11:45 am - Brief Parish meeting to approve the congregation's application to the Green Sanctuary program.

Saturday, March 14, 2009

9:00 am - Prairie WOW meets at the home of Kathy Converse.

Sunday, March 15, 2009 - Prairie Fire article deadline.

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "From Principles and Purposes to Covenantal Relationships," part one of three, presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

11:45 am - Prairie Book Club meets to discuss Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, and Madness at the Fair that Changed America by Erik Larson.

11:45 am - Prairie Pledge Luncheon.

Sunday, March 22, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "From Principles and Purposes to Covenantal Relationships," part two of three, presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

11:45 am - Prairie Board Meeting. Potluck begins at 11:45, meeting begins at noon.

Save the Date!

April 24-26, 2009, Central Midwest District Assembly in Waukesha.

June 24-28, 2009 UUA General Assembly in Salt Lake City.

Upcoming Sunday Programs

Sunday, February 22, 2009 "Forgiveness and Justice" - presented by Amy Owen.

What is forgiveness? Can it coexist with justice? This service will explore these questions, the ways that forgiveness is related to our UU principles, and some of the ways the term forgiveness has been used unjustly. Presenter Amy Owen is a member of James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation, where she currently offers an adult RE class on forgiveness. She has been studying forgiveness for over nine years, particularly how forgiveness can benefit mental health and substance abuse treatment, and comparing the concept and process of forgiveness across cultures. She recently earned her Master's in Counseling and her PhD in Educational Psychology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Sunday, March 1, 2009 "This I Believe," presented by Anne Lundin. This popular lay ministry series presents the spiritual journeys of three of Prairie's members. In this installment, we get to follow beliefs through 3 generations when Phyllis Long, Rachel Long, and Reuben Arnold share their stories with us. The emphasis in this series is on the diversity of beliefs in our shared community.

Prairie Web Sites:

Society Home Page
www.uuprairie.org

News Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie_news/

Views
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie_views/

Social Action
<http://socialaction.madisonwi.us>

Humanist Union
<http://humanist.madisonwi.us>

Sunday, March 8, 2009 "Military Recruiting Abuse," presented by Vicki Berenson. Most people view military recruiting of youth as a necessary and expected part of our society. But the constant presence and glorification of the military in civilian arenas contributes to the ease with which we accept violent solutions to social problems. Vicki will talk about local and statewide initiatives, and the rewards and difficulties facing us as we challenge this major social institution. Counter-recruitment work can be touchy, but by focusing on finding common ground and building bridges, we can open eyes and move closer to a more respectful and compassionate world.

Vicki Berenson is currently the Technology Coordinator for the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence. As a parent, she has worked for a number of years with East High school on military recruiting issues, and finally connected with others doing similar work in spring of 2007 as a member of a newly formed group called TAME (Truth and Alternatives to Militarism in Education). She is a member of the Madison Friends Meeting, and she and her husband Shel Gross have two children, ages 16 and 20.

Sunday, March 15, 2009 "From Principles and Purposes to Covenantal Relationships" Part One - presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski, Consulting Minister.

In a three part series, on March 15, 22, 29, I will be exploring the meanings and current relevance of the [7 UUA] Principles as they bear on our core understandings of what "Unites" us as UU's and what are the beliefs that connect us with one another in a bond of abiding relationship. With all of our diversity of beliefs, perspectives, frames of meaning, what "bonds" us together as Unitarian Universalists?

Religious Education News

For last month's theme on hunger we had Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin president and CEO, Bob Mohelnitzky, speaking to students in grades 4-12. The following week our young people in grades 1-12 took a trip to Centro Hispano, a food pantry off of Park Street. Students collected food donations to give to the pantry and then helped shelve food.



February's theme is prejudice. Students in grades 1-3 are learning about various kinds of family structures, grades 4-6 are learning about gender identity and the middle and high school students are learning about discrimination based on one's sexual orientation. March 1st will end the session with a speaker from Gay Straight Advocates for Education (GSAFE) who will speak to our middle and high school classes. March will be dedicated to discussing homelessness in Wisconsin and around the country.

Last week was our annual Valentine's Day intergenerational. I would like to thank Madeline Arnold and Lew Blank for doing the readings for that morning and Aaron Liu for lighting the chalice. I also want to thank all the students and teachers for sharing why Prairie and their RE class are special to them.

Wild Wintering is this weekend. As much as I don't want snow I do hope there's enough on the ground for our students to go sledding at Elver Park. If there's not enough we'll go bowling. I can't believe I'm writing this but I hope there's snow this weekend!

Each month there's always something new and fun going on in the RE program. For updates be sure to check the RE board upstairs or the Coming Events section at www.uuprairie.org/re

See you Sunday!
Rebecca Malke (YREC)
youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org

Our Society

Prairie Book Club Selections

Prairie Book Club meets once a month after service to discuss a chosen book. Here is the list of selections and the dates they will be discussed for the next couple of months:

Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, & Madness at the Fair that Changed America, by Erik Larson, Sunday, March 15th.
Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan, Sunday, April 19th.

Happy reading!

Prairie Service Auction February 22, 2009

One of Prairie's largest (and arguably most fun) fundraisers is coming up on Sunday, February 22nd after the service: the Prairie Service Auction! Members and friends offer up various services such as rides to the airport or pet-sitting, items like fresh baked cookies, or "events," such as a theme dinner. Then, under the experienced hand of our fabulous auctioneer, Orange Schroeder, members and friends bid on these items, with all proceeds going to Prairie. Come and join the fun!

Prairie Women's Group (WOW)

WOW will meet at 9:00 am on Saturday, March 14, 2009, for a breakfast potluck at the home of Kathy Converse.

Memorial Service for Richard (Dick) Bonser, Saturday, April 11, 2009

A memorial service will be held at Prairie for Richard (Dick) Bonser at 2:00 pm on Saturday, April 11, with his family. Dick was an active member of Prairie from 1975 to 1996, and was the editor of the Prairie Fire for 10 years. He and his wife Julie left Madison for the retired life of "roaming the USA" with their motor home, and had settled in Tucson, Arizona.

Movie Group Meets Thursday, March 26, 2009 at 7:00 pm

The Movie Group will view "In Bruges," the 2008 film written and directed by Martin McDonagh. Roger Ebert says this is "an endlessly surprising, very dark, human comedy, with a plot that cannot be foreseen but only relished. Every once in a while you find a film like this... Yes, it's a 'thriller,' but one where the ending seems determined by character and upbringing rather than plot requirements." Please bring snacks to share; the movie will begin at 7:00 pm.

Green Committee News

The Prairie Green Committee has prepared an application to the UU Ministry for Earth for Green Sanctuary Candidacy. Copies of the application were distributed to Prairie News and by mail to those members without email. (If you would like a copy and did not receive one, please contact the Prairie Administrator at 271-8218 or admin@uuprairie.org.) The plan proposes 12 projects we as Prairie members and friends will undertake between September 2009 and June 2010. Upon completion of the projects we will vote to request Green Sanctuary Accreditation which includes a pledge to continue activities that support the environment and people.

We will be holding a Parish meeting on Sunday March 8 (11:45 am) where we will review the application and ask for members to approve the application. Please plan to attend this important meeting.

The program goal is to take steps toward a world in which all people make reverence, gratitude, and care for the living earth central to their lives:

1. Build awareness of the significance and complexity of environmental issues;
2. Encourage personal lifestyle changes;

3. Engage in community action on environmental issues;
4. Strengthen the connection between spiritual practice and Earth consciousness; and
5. Work to heal environmental injustices.

Interfaith Hospitality Network Week is February 22 to March 1, 2009

This week, homeless families are housed at Midvale Lutheran, and therefore the week the volunteers from Prairie are needed to help out at Midvale Lutheran. It happens about 4 or 5 times over the course of a year. Please consider helping out. You can call Erin Bosch for more information about IHN (238-6285), or... 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=11&u=true>

Spanish Speakers to Meet

The Spanish Speakers will have their next potluck at the home of Amy Schulz and Dave Welo, 2304 S. Syene Road, on Wednesday, March 23, 2009, at 6:30 pm. For more information about the group, or to arrange for a ride, please contact Rosemary Dorney at 238-4352.

Prairie Elders Meeting

Prairie Elders meets Tuesday, February 24, from 2:00-4:00 pm in the Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks building, Oakwood Village West. Newcomers are welcome. Call contacts below for directions or a ride.

TOPIC: Our topic this month is Ethical Foods. Green Sanctuary issues of social justice and environmental stewardship abound in choosing the food we eat. Were harmful pesticides used in production? Were laborers paid and treated well? Did shipping contribute to global warming? Were farmers forced to use terminator seeds? Is your food good for you? For more information check out the Prairie website Green Page and scroll down to Ethical Eating.

<http://uuprairie.org/green/index.php>

DISCUSSION FORMAT: Our "round robin" format gives all an opportunity to speak and to hear. Topics alternate between general issues and personal interests.

SNACKS: If convenient, please bring a few snacks (try out some ethical 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. Current participants range from age 65 to 90-something. We welcome other UUs who live in the facility where we meet.

CONTACTS: Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Gordon Cunningham 230-3367, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

Racial Justice Training- presented by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society

Building the Beloved Community: Realizing Racial Justice will be held on Saturday, March 7th at Prairie from 9 am until 4 pm. This is a day-long interactive workshop exploring the everyday unspoken realities of white privilege and grappling with how to be an effective ally in bringing about a racially just world. There will be a showing of the DVD, "Making Whiteness Visible" in the morning after an introduction. Lunch will be at Prairie as a potluck with suggestions of soup, salad and breads. Please bring one of these to share. In the afternoon there is a Theater of the Oppressed exercise and development of a work plan.

This program will be facilitated by Sha'an Moulert : national consultant, community organizer, educator, artist and co-founder of the African American Alliance of the Northeast Kingdom (Vermont), a grassroots organization committed to racial justice. Until recently, Sha'an chaired the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom's (WILPF) Building the Beloved Community Committee, whose mission is to provide educational information about the history and nature of systemic racism, connections between oppressions, racial justice, and the struggle for racial justice. As a WILPF delegate, attended the 2001 United Nations World Conference against Racism held in Durban, South Africa. She is contracted with WILPF as their racial justice consultant and trainer. She facilitates Theater of the Oppressed trainings and leads conflict resolution, racial justice and community organizing workshops in Vermont, throughout New England, and in other areas of the US. This workshop is free of charge and is underwritten by a generous bequest. Donations to WILPF and Prairie will be welcomed. Space is limited and reservations required. Call or email Mary Somers 276 8397, marysomers44@charter.net for reservations and more information.

New Member News

Prairie now has 108 members! Please be sure to extend a welcome to these new members: Lynn Pawelski, Linda Colletti and Wayne Hammerstrom, Gary and Katherine Peterson,

Molly Plunkett and Peter Anderson, and Anne Pryor. All these new members are listed in the new Prairie directory, which was distributed electronically through PrairieNews and PrairieViews on February 18. Printed directories are available, and you can pick one up at Prairie on Sunday or request one from our administrator, Kate Liu, at admin@uuprairie.org or 271-8218. When you ask for a directory, please specify if you would like a large print version, and if you will pick up your directory or would like it to be mailed.

Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

How Are We Doing? Where Are We Headed?

At the Prairie Board meeting on Sunday, Feb. 15, there was mention that the congregation is preparing to explore what should be considered if Prairie would decide to “call” a “Settled Minister” in the near future (a process that usually takes 12-20 months).

This is not a simple nor easy to reach decision. As your “Consulting Minister”, serving the congregation on a ½ time basis since November of 2006, I suggested that the congregation use the resources that are available from our Central Midwest District leadership. The person serving as our Congregational Services Director is Ian Evison. In a recent piece written for congregations and their leaders engaged in evaluating their “whole ministry”, (to include: religious education ministry, music ministry, outreach ministry, worship program ministry, including the “minister’s” ministry), the following key points are worthy of consideration. In preparation for discussions on this major decision these items should be studied and fully comprehended by every member of the congregation.

Evaluation: Some Basic Principles

[These basic principles are what underlie our 80 page document for UU congregations’ “Assessing Our Leadership and Congregational Self-Assessment”.

- * Evaluate the minister in the context of the whole congregation's ministry. Evaluate the minister only within the larger context of an evaluation of the whole ministry of the congregation. When the minister is evaluated but the whole ministry is not, it invites the unstated and untrue assumption that the minister is responsible for everything that happens in the congregation. This ends up blaming the minister for all the congregation's weaknesses and praising her or him for all its strengths. Ministers don't need to be invited to see themselves as the center of the universe in this way!
- * Evaluate against goals. Evaluate in the context of the congregation's goals for the year and the mission of the congregation. Evaluations that fail to evaluate against overall goals of the congregation and the minister's role in achieving those turn into beauty contests. Evaluations that ask how well people liked this or that (rated on a one to five scale), push ministers to please people and avoid offending people — and away from focus on achieving mission.
- * Do not tie directly to determining compensation. Do not, do not directly link evaluation to compensation. While, in the business world, it is popular at present to find ways to link these directly by having evaluation be an immediate prelude to compensation discussions, it is far better in congregational life to separate the two in the year — perhaps with one in the spring and one in the fall.
- * Collaborate. This should be a collaborative process. Agree in advance on what will be evaluated and how. This avoids a lot of misunderstandings.
- * Take the time this needs. Evaluation done well takes time and attention — lots of intentionality and good discussion. Another reason to do evaluations at a part of the year that is a long way from the compensation determination and budget building process is to ensure that evaluation is not rushed. Evaluation is communication and good communication takes quality time.
- * Agree what use will be made of the evaluation. Agree, in advance, on what will happen to the results of the evaluation: Who will receive them and what use will these people make of them? The single greatest failing of evaluative processes in congregations is that they are introduced as a means of dealing with emerging conflict or disagreement. The proper response to emerging conflict is conflict resolution, not an evaluation process. Evaluation not only tends to fail as a conflict management strategy. It also tends to undermine the institutionalization of evaluation in the life of the congregation. Use evaluation as a conflict management tool and you teach that it only should be and only needs to be used when there is conflict.
- * Strengths and weaknesses. Focus on both strengths and weaknesses. No congregation was ever made great by a process of focusing on and eliminating weaknesses. Likewise ministers.
- * No anonymous feedback. Build agreement in the congregation in advance that anonymous feedback has no role

in the process. Evaluation processes are one of the key ways in a congregation that good communication is taught and learned. Good communication needs to be open, honest, and direct. The gain to the congregation and to the process of communicating in this way far outweighs anything that is lost by leaving anonymous comments out of the process.

* Less is more. For most of us, it is very easy to list our weaknesses, and fairly easy to list our strengths. The challenge is to choose the one or two improvements we might make that would be both most possible and salutary. Likewise on the side of strengths: which among any person's strengths is it most important to develop at any given time? An evaluation process is generally most helpful, not in its listing of strengths and weaknesses but in its collaborative discernment of where to focus attention. The committee that facilitates the evaluation process must have the courage to say that some feedback should not be given attention.

* Do it yearly. Most congregations at some point have done evaluations. Their failure is often in institutionalizing it into a yearly process. The last act in an evaluation process should be to put next year's evaluation on the calendar.

* Keep it simple. With all due respect to our 80-odd pages of UU documents on evaluation, committees charged with devising an evaluation process often devise processes that are complex enough that it pretty much assures that they will not be repeated. An evaluation process needs to be simple enough that it can be continued even in those years when other things must have higher priority. This advice may seem to contradict the advice to take the time it needs. It need not. Simplifying the process can also open space for better quality conversation.

I hope this is helpful.

Glad to be journeying with you.

Ralph



Denominational News

Prairie Fundraising Trip to the Art Institute of Chicago, Saturday, April 11, 2009

Please join us for a bus trip to the Art Institute of Chicago, Saturday, April 11, 2009, to view the Edvard Munch exhibit. This exhibition brings together 150 of the works of the Norwegian artist, Edvard Munch, including 75 paintings and 75 works on paper by both he and his peers, many rarely seen in the United States. It is organized around specific themes, and is accompanied by a 232 page catalog with 180 color illustrations. 8:00 am departure is from the University Avenue UW Credit Union and 8:15 am from South Town Mall. We will return by 8pm. Cost is \$ 62.00 and covers transportation and all museum exhibits. Lunch is on your own. Indicate boarding location on memo line of check, and include a telephone number. Mail or give checks made out to Prairie UU Society to Pat Watkins, 230 N. Meadow Lane, Madison 53705-3331, to arrive before March 12th. You will have the option of spending the entire day at the museum or half a day in some other pursuit. Written confirmation and detailed schedule will be sent to you by March 28th. Questions? Phone Pat at 233-5795.

Ethical Eating, Food, and Environmental Justice

At last summer's General Assembly, delegates approved this topic as the Current Study/Action Issue (CSAI) for the years 2008-2012, and all UU congregations around the world are expected to be involved in it. Your Denominational Affairs Committee will be meeting on the first of March to discuss the ways in which Prairie can participate. You are invited to attend this meeting and join forces with us. You are also invited to comment on the formulation, wording, emphasis and content of the document, and Prairie's input will be given to our General Assembly delegates for inclusion in the revisions of the document the 2009 GA. This topic is to be considered in 2012 as the next UU Statement of Conscience. Below we have printed the initial material from this CSAI, and request that you read it, and send your comments, criticisms and suggestions for improvement to: pwatkins@wisc.edu before March 1st.

Current Study/Action Issue (CSAI) on Ethical Eating

ISSUE: Religious organizations throughout the world have discussed the production, distribution and use of food. Some people enjoy many food choices while others remain hungry. The food industry produces wealth, but small farmers and workers are often poor. Food production and transportation contribute to many environmental problems.

BACKGROUND AND REASONS FOR STUDY: Congregations can develop effective strategies to address two of the world's biggest problems: social inequality and environmental destruction. This CSAI is inspired by the work of the several UU affiliate and associate organizations that work with congregations in support of environmental justice. Hunger is both a community problem and an international problem that can be approached in a variety of ways. There is a need for political advocacy in support of government programs that try to feed the hungry. There is a role also for involvement with service programs that deliver food to individual families--for example, Meals on Wheels programs.

SIGNIFICANCE TO UNITARIAN UNIVERSALISM: UU's have a vision of environmental justice. One of our principles acknowledges "the interdependent web." Others affirm the importance of human rights. Together our principles form one holistic statement that is shown to define liberal religion.

Congregational Poll on the UUA's Statement of Conscience on Peacemaking

The congregational poll was taken on Sunday, January 25th, to determine whether Prairie wanted the current CSAI (Congregational Social/Action Issue)--"Peacemaking" to appear on the agenda at the June 2009 General Assembly to be voted on as the new Statement of Conscience. There were 44 yeas, 1 nay, and 4 abstentions. The results were submitted by our administrator to the UUA in time to meet the deadline of Feb.1.

Cradle Club Wrap-up

The cradle club donations were inventoried by Vera Cunningham and delivered by her to Orange Tree Imports, which generously offered to take care of shipping the materials to the Southwest Indian Agency for distribution to mothers of newborns as part of our effort to help fulfill two of the UN Millennium Development Goals. The items donated consisted of: several pacifiers, an assortment of baby powders, creams, swabs, wipes, and pins; several toys; 1 bottle brush, 6 baby bottles, 8 pairs of socks, 1 rose velvet dress with tights, 2 bibs, 14 sleep footies (or rompers), 1 receiving blanket, and \$20.00 in cash. We were unable to ship the large package of diapers, and ask that the person who donated it contact either Vera Cunningham or Pat Watkins to let us know what you would like done with it.

Central Midwest District Assembly

The Central Midwest District Assembly will meet in Waukesha on April 24-26, 2009. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend if possible. Most of us cannot attend General Assembly, but this "mini" assembly provides a smaller but still delicious taste of the G.A. experience: social events, workshops, speakers, and an opportunity to meet people from the entire midwest district and learn what they are doing in the various congregations. The theme of this year's assembly is "Leadership in Times of Profound Change," and the keynote speaker will be Sharon Daloz Parks, author of "Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith," and co-author of "Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex World." At this year's General Assembly, we will be voting for a new President of the UUA, and the CMwD Assembly will provide an opportunity to meet and hear the candidates, Dr. Laurel Hallman and Rev. Peter Morales, who are running for the office. Let me know if you are interested in being a Prairie delegate. Complete details of the Assembly are (will be) available at: www.cmwd-uua.org You can also register online at www.regonline.com/690962.

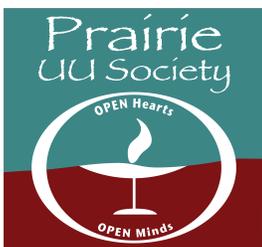
A charter bus may be available for door-to-door service to and from the CMwD Assembly, depending on how many people are interested in signing up. All four area congregations will be invited to join us. The cost could be as low as \$10 one way for a full bus. Think green! Please e-mail me at pwatkins@wisc.edu if you have any interest in the bus, and specify which day you would like to go and return. This is not a firm commitment on your part, but I need the information for preliminary planning purposes.

The International Convocation of UU Women will take place in Houston, Texas on Feb.26-Mar.1. Prior registration is required. If interested, contact Laura Nagel at: admin@icuuw.com no later than February 26th.

2009 General Assembly will take place in Salt Lake City on June 24-28. It is not too early to think about who our Prairie delegates will be. If you are interested, please contact Pat at: pwatkins@wisc.edu For those of you who like to plan ahead, the 2010 G.A. will be held in Minneapolis, and we will undoubtedly have a bus going there.

Input Deadlines:

Calendar items and program descriptions are due on the 1st and 15th of each month. Feature articles for the full *Prairie Fire* are due on the 15th of each month. Please send to Kate Liu at admin@uuprairie.org or call 271-8218.



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