

April 22, 2009

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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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Prairie Fire

Calendar

Wednesday, April 22, 2009

7:00 pm - Presentation by Father Thomas Pallithanam, human rights activist of India.

Sunday, April 26, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.
9:00 am - RE committee meets.
10:00 am - service - "Ending Hunger in Our Lifetime," presented by Bob Mohelnitzky.
11:45 am - All-Society Potluck.
12:30 pm - UUA Presidential Candidates visiting Madison. Lunch at 12:30, presentations at 1pm at First Unitarian Society.

Tuesday, April 28, 2009

2:00 pm - Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood. Topic is Health Care in the US.

Thursday, May 1, 2009 - Prairie Fire Bulletin calendar item deadline.

Sunday, May 3, 2009

9:00 am - Choir Rehearsal.
10:00 am - service - "Curing Nature Deficit Disorder," presented by Sam Dennis.
11:30 am - Prairie Spring Parish Meeting. Potluck at 11:30, meeting begins at 11:45.
3:00 pm - Humanist Union joint meeting with Madison Skeptics, presentation by Prof.
Ronald Numbers.

<u>Saturday, May 9, 2009</u>

9:00 am - WOW meets at Prairie for breakfast potluck.

Sunday, May 10, 2009

9:00 am - Choir Rehearsal.
10:00 am - service - "Women Composers; or, Who was Hilda Neupert?," presented by Jim Reilly.
11:45 am - Hospitality committee meets.

Friday, May 15, 2009 - Article & calendar deadline for Prairie Fire.

Sunday, May 17, 2009

9:00 am - Choir Rehearsal.
10:00 am - service - "Transition Sunday," presented by Religious Education.
12:00 pm - Ethical Humanism study group potluck, presentation by Ron Solomon at 12:45.

Save the Date!

June 24-28, 2009 UUA General Assembly in Salt Lake City. October 23-25, 2009 Prairie's Annual Family Retreat at Pine Lake Camp

Upcoming Sunday Programs

Sunday, April 26, 2009 "Ending Hunger in Our Lifetime" - presented by Bob Mohelnitzky. An estimated 40% of all food in the United States never makes it to our tables. The issue of domestic hunger is not one of lack of food resources but how surplus and unsaleable groceries are allocated. The mission of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin is to end hunger in southwestern Wisconsin. Second Harvest centralizes the food acquisition and distribution process for more than 400 partner food pantries, shelters and meal sites that serve 16 southwestern Wisconsin counties. Bob Mohelnitzky has been President/CEO of Second Harvest Foodbank since 2001 prior to which he was executive director of the Dane County Mental Health Center for 22 years.

<u>Sunday, May 3, 2009</u> "Curing Nature Deficit Disorder" - presented by Sam Dennis. Many children suffer poor health outcomes associated with a profound estrangement from nature. Every day seems to bring alarming new insights into this insidious condition. Treatment, though, is cheap, fun and brings immediate relief. Samuel Dennis Jr, PhD, ASLA, is a geographer and landscape architect whose research practice focuses on creating environments more supportive of human health and well-being. He is particularly interested in preventing chronic disease through environmental design. Professor Dennis' current projects include parks, natural playgrounds and community gardens in Wisconsin, Montana and Honduras. Partners include Native American tribes, urban community-based organizations and international NGOs. He is currently Assistant Professor of Landscape Architecture at UW- Madison and has affiliate appointments in Environmental Studies, Family Medicine and Urban and Regional Planning.

Sunday, May 10, 2009 "Women Composers; or, Who was Hilda Neupert?

Join us for a program of music by women composers, from Baroque times to the well known Romantics (Fanny Mendelssohn, Clara Schumann, and the American Amy Marcy Cheney Beach) to little known figures such as Hilda Neupert. With an American excursion at the end into songs by Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday, just for a little nonclassical balance. Jim Reilly is a tenor and pianist, working most often as a vocal coach and accompanist for other singers. He has been director of music at several Twin Cities churches. He has been a frequent guest performer on the Friday noon series at our neighboring First Unitarian Society in Madison (and will perform there on May 8 just before he visits us). He was raised in Universalist Churches (before the merger) in New Jersey and Syracuse New York before coming to Minnesota in the 1960's, and at the age of twelve he met and became a friend of Prairie's choir director Barbara Park.

<u>Sunday, May 17, 2009</u> "Transition Sunday" - presented by Religious Education. Prairie will celebrate Transition Sunday, an annual event that marks the end of the Religious Education year. We will recognize our youth who are about to embark on a new journey in their educational lives. We will also honor those, especially teachers, who have helped shape each child's spiritual and educational needs throughout the year. Music and readings will be provided by Prairie youth of all ages. During this time, new members will also be recognized.

Religious Education News

With only two weeks left before the end of RE classes it's hard to think we will have completed yet another successful school year. Our social justice theme has educated our youth on issues of hunger both locally and globally. They have learned about homelessness, various kinds of family structures, sexual orientation and the environment.



This Sunday will be our last service project of the year. Weather permitting we will be outside tending to Prairie's lawn and garden. If there's rain we will be inside doing some Spring cleaning in the RE area.

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 On May 3rd we will have an intergenerational service outside and on the 10th we will celebrate the end of the RE year with games in the park and a potluck picnic.

May 17th will be our annual Transition service. At this time we will recognize our youth who will be embarking on another stage in their educational journey. Cheyenne Hale will be transitioning to high school and Reuben Arnold will be graduating from high school and attending college in the Fall.

As a gift to Reuben I am compiling photos and letters from Prairie members, friends and youth to put in a memory book that he can take with him to college. If you have a photo or memory of Reuben you'd like to share please give me your letter no later than Sunday, May 3rd.

Finally, I'd like to address the issue of our canceled Spring Fling event. Our RE program runs on the hard work of our volunteers. We need not only parents but members of our congregation to help raise the youth in our community. If we do not get volunteers for events like our overnights or for classes, we will need to cancel them. Hopefully this will be a one time thing and in the Fall we'll be able to continue these fun activities. I'd like to thank all who offered to help with the event: Heidi Hughes and Katherine Peterson, and of course our RE chair, Karen Deaton. I'd also like to thank Carl Wacker for offering his homemade obstacle course for the evening.

On that note, we are in need of 3 more teachers for this Fall. The theme is: Our UU Principles and Heritage. If you are able to be a co-teacher please let me know.

Rebecca Malke (YREC) youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org

Our Society

Prairie Elders Meets Tuesday, April 28

Prairie Elders meets Tuesday, April 28, in the Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks building, Oakwood Village West. Informal conversation at 1:30, discussion at 2:00. Newcomers are welcome. Call contacts below for directions or a ride.

TOPIC: How can the U.S. provide health care for all? National single payer versus corporate? A combination? Other? What action can we take when we, family members or friends cannot afford health care? If you have time, explore specific health care plan options, examples of effective political action, and particularly any stop-gap programs for people without adequate health care. You are welcome to distribute helpful written information. Expect this session to be an evention, that stimulates more detailed discussion or specific action.

information. Expect this session to be an overview that stimulates more detailed discussion or specific action. 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. 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.

Humanist Union to Hear Ron Numbers

At 3 pm on Sunday May 3 the Humanist Union will have a joint meeting at Prairie with Madison Skeptics to hear a talk by UW Professor of the History of Science and Medicine Ronald Numbers, followed by discussion. Professor Numbers is the author of *Darwinism Comes to America* and *The Creationists*, and has merited his own Wikipedia page at http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ronald_L._Numbers. Madison Skeptics (http://skeptics.madisonwi.us/) is a group started late last year by Prairie member Jennifer Bunner which has been meeting every other Sunday afternoon at various locations around Madison.

Prairie Women's Group

Prairie's women's group, known as WOW, will be meeting Saturday, May 9th, at 9am for a potluck breakfast and conversation. We will meet at Prairie and do an art project - more details to follow.

Prairie Film Group

The Prairie Film group will be taking a brief hiatus. There will be no movie for the month of April; check your Prairie Fire and Orders of Service for when the group will resume.

GREAT GREEN NEWS!

Our application to the UUA's Green Sanctuary Program was accepted! Our application was praised for having "a well-rounded action plan," a large number of involved congregational members, and for the inclusion of a mission and vision. Overall, our program "looks diverse, well balanced, and exciting. " Congratulations and a big thank you to all the committee members who worked hard to get us to this point. You can read the entire letter of acceptance on the bulletin board in the back of the meeting house.

Interfaith Hospitality Network Week, May 10-17

Prairie teams up with Midvale Lutheran Church to host homeless families at Midavle Lutheran. Please consider volunteering to help homeless families. 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... andyou can sign up online by going to this address and then clicking on IHN signup: <u>http://www.midvalelutheran.org/</u>

Prairie Book Club Announces New Spring Book Selections

Everyone is invited to read the books selected by the Prairie Book Club and attend its discussions. This is an open book club that meets once a month at Prairie after a Sunday service. Participants bring food to share to the Sunday meetings which begin about 11:45 and continue until 1:00 or 1:30 p.m. Even if you haven't read the book but want to hear the discussion, you are welcome to attend. For more information or to be put on the e-mail list: Mary Mullen, mmullen@chorus.net, 608-298-0843.

For Sunday, May 24, the selection is Loving Frank, by Nancy Horan. This novel is based on the affair between Mamah Borthwick Cheney and architect Frank Lloyd Wright and is focused on her life more than his. They met when he was engaged to design and build a house for the Cheneys in Oak Park, IL. A theme is early 20th Century feminism. The publisher's blurb: "Drawing on years of research, Horan weaves little-known facts into a compelling narrative, vividly portraying the conflicts and struggles of a woman forced to choose between the roles of mother, wife, lover, and intellectual. Horan's Mamah is a woman seeking to find her own place, her own creative calling in the world, and her unforgettable journey, marked by choices that reshape her notions of love and responsibility, leads inexorably to this novel's stunning conclusion." About the author: Nancy Drew Horan is a writer and journalist whose work has appeared in numerous publications. Loving Frank is her first novel. She lives in Oak Park, Illinois, with her husband and two teenage sons. For reviews of this book, http://www.litlovers.com/guide_lovgfrank.html> & http://www.litlovers.com/guide_lovgfrank.html

For Sunday, June 21, the selection is <u>Nickel and Dimed</u>, by Barbara Ehrenreich. Learn what it is like to be a minimum-wage worker. The author lived the life for a few months, taking several different kinds of low-wage jobs including waitressing, working for a house-cleaning firm, and employment at Wal-Mart. You won't be able to put this book down, and you will have a lot more respect for these workers when you finish.

Father Thomas Pallithanam to Speak Wednesday, April 22

Seen Slumdog Millionaire? Want to know more about children living in poverty in India and learn how you can help? Then come to Prairie Wednesday, April 22 at 7 p.m. to hear Indian human rights activist Father Thomas Pallithanam. Fr. Pallithanam is a lawyer and Salesian priest who has dedicated his life and work to helping the poor in India. He is director of the People's Action for Rural Awakening, a NGO in the southern state of Andhra Pradesh, India that works for the rights of the Dalits commonly known as untouchables here in the United States. Pallithanam's work has branched out to help Dalit farmers, land laborers, women and children. PARA also houses a boarding school where child laborers are taken out of the streets to receive an education and to learn ways to better themselves.

Pallithanam will talk about PARA, his activist work, which spans throughout India and beyond, and the recent religious violence in the northern state of Orissa. The event is free but donations to PARA are appreciated. For more information on the event call Rebecca at 608-695-3435 or email at <u>malkerm@yahoo.com</u>.

All-Society Potluck, Sunday, April 26

Our next church potluck will be held after the service on April 26. Please bring a dish to share. The potlucks have been very popular with excellent turnout and we expect the same for this one. We will be making some calls to line up volunteers to clean up ahead of time, so don't be surprised if you hear from us! *Paula Pachciarz, Hospitality and Membership*

Hospitality & Membership News

Please extend a warm welcome to Lee and Sandra Haspl, who recently signed the book at Prairie. Please add their contact information to your directories:

Lee & Sandra Haspl, 5654 Pennwall St., Fitchburg, WI 53711, (608) 276-8102, northlightstudio@hotmail.com

Thank You!

The Hospitality and Membership Committee would like to thank all of the volunteers who have kept the coffee flowing and the kitchen clean during the past few months. We appreciate the gift of your time and energy: The following people deserve special mention: Dave Johnson and Vera and Gordon Cunningham for their cheerful and reliable coffee making, Phoenix Wardell for his many shifts washing coffee cups, and Rose Smith for her warm presence at the greeting table. Thank you to all for greeting, making coffee, bringing flowers, and cleaning up: Randy Converse, the Finance Committee, Heidi Hughes, Christina Klock, Kris Long, Elizabeth Macasaet, Barb Park, Molly Plunkett, Jerry Simmons, Andy Somers, Karleen and Ralph Tyksinski, and Ingrid and Rae West.

Thanks,

Paula Pachciarz, Hospitality and Membership

Spring Parish Meeting, Sunday, May 3

It's time to start thinking about our Spring Parish Meeting. Watch for the written reports on all we have been doing this year, as well as the slate of officers and proposed budget. These reports will come to you by email, and also be available on paper at Prairie at least a week before the meeting. Please read these ahead of the meeting!

We will meet Sunday, 5/3/09, with a pot-luck at 11:30 am and meeting at 11:45 am. Childcare will be provided. Please plan to come. The agenda is below.

Rachel Long, President

Spring Parish Meeting, 5/3/09

- 1. Opening words
- 2. Distribution of Prairie Fire survey
- 3. Election of Officers
- 4. Recognition of those who served the congregation this year
- 5. Verbal reports from Membership and Strategic Planning Committees
- 6. Adult Education Committee
- 7. Survey on Prairie programming and spirituality
- 8. Minister Report
- 9. Vote to approve retaining our Consulting Minister for the 09-10 year
- 10. Vote to approve budget
- 11. Closing words

Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

Serving as Prairie's Consulting Minister for the past three years has allowed me to serve in multiple ways a warm and caring community. (I'm using the word "minister" from its Latin *ministrare* root, which means to

serve.) Serving in this role has also allowed me to be an observer and consultant on issues that all congregations face in the normal life span of a religious community. For example, issues around: purpose, leadership, growth, mission, budget, programming, facilities) Prairie is coming to a place in its life span when some of these issues will become more pressing and will require greater congregational deliberation and "soul searching".

Prairie has its own history and its own particular culture and traditions. However, it is not without comparison to other UU congregations. During the past year Prairie has been experiencing an upsurge in growth, growth in children attending our Religious Education program, growth in adult membership, which translates into larger attendance numbers at our Sunday services and that has happily meant that we have more singers in our wonderful choir.

Questions that are asked when a congregation undergoes these kinds of changes are: (The following is taken from a talk given at the UUA General Assembly in 2004 by Rev. Dennis Hamilton, senior minister of Horizon Unitarian Universalist Church in Carrollton, Texas. It can be read in its entirety on www.psduua.org)

* Do we really want to grow?

* Why do we want to grow? to meet the budget shortfall or satisfy a need to feel like a success? Or is it because we are called to serve this community, to bring the good news of a liberating religion to the people, and to deepen our own lives doing it?

* If we really want to grow, what are we willing to do to grow?

* Are we willing to change the way we do church?

* Are we willing to change the way we govern and do business?



* Are we willing to make this church a central part of our lives? Are we willing to fund it generously, and to invest in it for future generations?

Some of these are questions have already been addressed by Prairie in the sessions we have had in doing our Strategic Planning. If Prairie decides that it favors a Growth model for congregational health then it should consider these attitudes that stifle growth:

Rev.Dennis Hamilton's list of attitudes that stifle growth:

1. Anti-authority. It is almost a definition of our faith that to be a UU, one must also be willing to doubt, to question, to be an individual and to discover one's own beliefs. While this is a good start, if it does not lead to another way of being that involves trust and mature leadership, it will end in a state of anti-authoritarianism. Too many of our churches are plagued with what I call "faux democracy," the unwillingness of the congregation to trust its leadership. This is at the heart of our movement. If you look at the successful UU churches, you will find they are quite democratic, but have excellent leadership and a clear delineation of authority and responsibility. Our less successful churches are jealous of their power, disrespectful of their leaders and rather adolescent in their attitudes. They say they are democratic, but too often they are held hostage by a small group of anti-authoritarian people who actually have absconded with the power. They have become an unelected rump board, and that is not true democracy.

2. Lack of trust. We can look at the issue of authority in another way. Successful churches have a sense of trust at their core. Conflicted churches and dwindling churches do not. This is also a theological issue. As Universalists, we ought to have trust as our basis, but as rebels, we do not.

3. Lack of accountability. A healthy church has well defined responsibilities, the authority to carry out those responsibilities and a system of accountability which is part of a professional model of non-profit management. In our less healthy congregations, because there is a lack of accountability and a lack of trust, governance ends up at the congregational level. This stifles leadership, change, growth and spontaneity. Newcomers don't come to church for the politics or to micromanage. They come for community, for solace, for help with raising their children or taking care of their aging parents, for hope and for inspiration. How much of this do we offer compared with how much time we spend governing?

4. Anti-religious. Another characteristic of the unsuccessful church is the domination by an anti-religious segment of the congregation. Newcomers expect to find an actual church, but they find a club where no one prays, God (in whatever form) has been banished, Jesus can't come in, and they eventually drift on to a place that may not reflect their theology but at least allows them to be reverent. If we are to grow as a religion, first we must agree to be a religion, and to affirm the several theologies embodied in our congregations.

5. Anti-change. Most people are resistant to change. It is a natural survival response. But only those churches that are spontaneous enough to respond to changing conditions that are willing to change the way they govern and worship are growing. Even such conservative bastions as the Latter Day Saints are modernizing, and the new Southern Baptist and Methodist churches are not your grandfather's church.

6. Inappropriate behavior. Unhealthy congregations are not able to establish clear and respectful boundaries. They let some individuals act out inappropriately and undermine the health of the entire congregation. Healthy congregations need to be safe places for people who covenant to be respectful of one another.

7. Extreme informality. While informality may be attractive to some, it can be a sign of lack of preparedness, lack of respect, and an undervaluing of the power of the worship service. Celebration, joy, movement, great singing are not that same as informality. Apologizing because one is not prepared is. We need to do better and to take ourselves more seriously.

8. Consumer mentality. Roy Phillips brought this into focus for us a few years ago. Who and what is the church for? It all ties into the third point above. When the church is about the spiritual life of the individual, they will invest in it as a source of constant nurture. Consumers ask, what is in it for me? People on a spiritual journey ask, how can I help this church be a transforming force in our community? How can I deepen my own life by serving this church and this faith? What do I have to do to spread the faith? How can I articulate my faith?

9. Overfunctioning. This term comes from family systems theory as presented by Murray Bowen and Edwin Friedman. It refers to how one member of a system can do too much for the rest of the system. The result is underfunctioning by other parts of the system. In church life there are two prominent places where this can limit growth.

I have included this overview of the roadblocks to growth as considerations that a congregation may want to use as it goes forward in its Life Span movement. Churches are complex and, although they do have common patterns, are idiosyncratic as well. It is wise to look over where Prairie is and to see what roadblocks are in place, and it is just as wise to see what we are doing well. Successful, vibrant churches may not all be growing in numbers, but they are growing souls, growing in depth and changing people's lives. This is my understanding of what it means to be in "Beloved Community".

Glad to journeying with you, *Rev. Ralph*



Denominational News

UUA Presidential Candidates Visiting First Unitarian Society, Sunday, April 26

This June, at the national General Assembly (GA) in Salt Lake City, UU delegates will elect a new president for our national association. The two candidates who are running for this office will have a candidates' forum at the District Assembly (DA) held this year in Waukesha the last weekend in April. Following this DA, on Sunday April 26, both of the candidates, Rev. Peter Morales and Rev. Laurel Hallman, will be in Madison to visit FUS.

After the second service at 12:30, there will be a light lunch in the Hearth Room of the Landmark Auditorium. This will be followed at 1 PM by presentations by the candidates. There will be a moderated discussion with time for questions. Members and friends from FUS and the other area UU congregations are invited to this opportunity to support our democratic process. (Due to schedule limitations, the previously announced between services opportunity to meet the candidates will not occur.)

Rev. Morales is minister of Jefferson Unitarian Church in Golden, CO, near Denver. During his tenure there it has

grown from 400 to 775 members. Before becoming a UU minister, Peter had a varied career that included being a newspaper editor and publisher. Visit his web site at <u>http://www.moralesforuuapresident.org</u> for more information.

Rev. Hallman is Senior Minister of First Unitarian Church of Dallas, TX. The adult membership of that church doubled from 550 to 1100 since she started there in 1987. Laurel taught piano, yoga, and elementary school before becoming a UU minister. Visit her web site at <u>http://www.hallmanforuuapresident.com</u> for more information.

Please set aside time on April 26 to listen and talk to these candidates. With the new administration in Washington, liberal religious leaders have more access to decision-making processes. It is important that we have a strong and focused leader as president of the UUA. The president is the chief executive officer of the UUA and is the UUA's chief spokesperson.

For more information, contact FUS Denominational Affairs committee member Gordon Olson (<u>olson99@tds.net</u>, 836-1779) or FUS staff person Alice Delaquess (<u>aliced@fusmadison.org</u>, 233-9774).

James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation seeking DRE

"JRUUC in Madison, WI is seeking a part-time (50 hr/month) Director of Religious Education. Our Congregation is growing and energetic with over 50 youth, children and babies in the religious education program. We provide them with an inspiring program in which they explore Unitarian Universalist (UU) principles and the other religious traditions from which UU's draw. Qualifications are: interest in Unitarian Universalism, strong organizational skills, and program coordination skills. We are looking for a creative person with a strong desire to connect with the congregation's families and children. Basic computer skills helpful. This position is for 50 hours/month, with the intention of growing the position as funds allow in coming years. Compensation is in accordance with UUA guidelines and includes professional development. All are welcome to apply; please see the full job description for our non-discrimination clause. To apply send a letter of interest and resume Attn: DRE Search. JRUUC, 2146 E Johnson Street, Madison WI, 53704 or email office@jruuc.org. "

Input Deadlines:

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



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