

Prairie Fire

newsletter of

PRAIRIE UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST SOCIETY

... 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.—PRAIRIE'S BOND OF UNION

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CALENDAR

SUNDAY, MARCH 2

10:00 a.m.--GAIA: THE LIVING EARTH - Anne Forbes and Jim Lorman. The ancient idea of a living earth has recently gained new credibility in Western culture; both the scientific and spiritual aspects of this idea will be explored. Continuation of Elisabeth Jones' lay ministry.
10:00 a.m.--R.E.Classes, baby & child care.

TUESDAY, MARCH 4

7:30 p.m.--Prairie Men's Group meet at Rick Rueckings, 5721 Elder Pl., 238-2924. See story.

SATURDAY, MARCH 8

Playreaders' Theater Party: Cloud 9, at University Theater. Call Pat Watkins for information, tickets, and after-theater reservations. All welcome!

SUNDAY, MARCH 9

10:00 a.m.--LIGHTS, CAMERA, ACTION - Spirituality in sports, dance and the martial arts. Elisabeth Jones with Mary Mullen, Norma Briggs, David McKee and Phillip Zarrilli.
10:00 a.m.--R.E.Classes, baby & child care.

SUNDAY, MARCH 16

10:00 a.m.--EXPERIMENTS IN UU RITUAL, by Elisabeth Jones. A participatory service.

TUESDAY, MARCH 18

5-7 p.m.--Program Committee Meeting at Mary Mullen's, 4337 Milford. Potluck.

MONDAY, MARCH 24

7:30p.m.--Board Meeting at Prairie. Everyone welcome.

MONDAY, APRIL 21

7:30 p.m.--Board Meeting at Prairie. Everyone welcome.

SUNDAY, APRIL 27

7:30 p.m.--Annual Spring Parish Meeting.

R.E.CORNER

Preschool - These children are working on jigsaw puzzles using their own drawings which will be cut into puzzles. They also continue with individual and group play.

K-1-2 - On March 2 these children will celebrate their own births with/birthday party. On March 9 they will learn about handicaps as the start of a unit on handicaps, illness, and aging.

3,4,5 - On March 2 and 9 this class will study the cultures of Europeans who emigrated to North America. On March 2 they will see a movie about a Polish immigrant. On March 9 The Ethnic Connection will again share their music with the kids.

6-7-8 - On February 23 Shirley Grindrod shared with this class her experience growing up Jewish. The class will follow up with a visit to a synagogue on Friday night, March 7. The details of time and place will be sent to middle school families. On March 2 the class will be about religious cults, especially the Moonies.

Youth Group - Wonderful news!! Marty Drapkin and Argine McDowell are both joining Erin Bosch as advisors of the Youth Group. Thanks to all three of them!

NEXT PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINE: MARCH 9

LESLIE LYONS

On Sunday, February 9, Leslie Lyons died suddenly at his home of a heart attack. He was an active and valued member of Prairie, having joined the Society in 1979.

Les had served in many capacities, including lay minister and chairperson of both the denominational affairs and social concerns committees. In addition, he participated in district-wide and national Unitarian Universalist Association efforts. He was firmly committed to world peace and was deeply involved in anti-nuclear activities and in the sanctuary movement as well. Music was a particular joy, which he shared with others by playing in small recorder groups. He is survived by his children: Ann, Joan, Jill, Thomas, and James, all residing in Ontario, Canada; his sister, Mrs. Isabel Walter of St. John, New Brunswick. He will be sadly missed by his family and his many friends in Madison the United States and Canada.

Rachel Siegfried, who had been asked to speak at Les Lyons' memorial service, left a note, which was read instead.

February 14, 1986

A note from Rachel Siegfried:

I wanted to be here for Les' memorial service, but have been making plans for weeks to visit Lynda Lewis, my former roommate. It was a terrible dilemma to have to choose which to do. Lynda lives in River Falls which is at least 5 or 6 hours from Madison. We had planned to spend Saturday experiencing Minneapolis and then go to a play at the Guthrie Theatre.

So I thought I'd ask my good friend, Les, what I should do and he said, "Don't be ridiculous!" Go see Lynda - she needs you more than I do now."

My memories of Les include many instances of his saying, "Don't be ridiculous!" He was one of Prairie's toughest critics - also one of it's most devoted, hard working and conscientious members. I served on several committees with Les - Social Action, Long Range Planning, and Program. He always made it to the meetings and on time. He always took his assignments very seriously and carried them out to their fullest. (I still haven't absorbed all of the report on membership which he made for the Long Range Planning Committee in December. It was very thorough and full of implications for Prairie's future growth and deserves careful study.)

He was often impatient with us - we frequently didn't measure up to his standards. And he would grouse about it. He groused when suddenly everyone had gone off to the Pizza Hut or other pursuits and left the coffee cups unwashed - then he'd roll up his sleeves and do them.

Les suffered a lot, too. He missed his children a lot and talked about moving back to Canada. He was often depressed and lonely. But, he had many friends; both in Prairie and at First Society. He also had a streak of fun in him. He loved to get dressed up for Halloween and go with friends down to State Street. One of his funniest costumes was a Christmas tree, complete with green face, lights, tinsel, and a star on his head!

And I also remember a Prairie Memorial week-end canoe trip on the Kickapoo. He and I were sharing a canoe and it was raining cats and dogs. Well, we just started singing all the rain songs we could think of and had a great time while getting soaked to the skin. Les was serious but he was fun, too.

A memorial service, attended by a capacity gathering of Les' friends and family was held at Prairie February 14.

Prairie will miss his integrity, his enthusiasm, his painstaking work, his warm friendliness, his criticism when we didn't measure up, and his humor.

Prairie volunteers lent their services on Saturday, February 22 to paint and clean Les Lyons' house in preparation for sale. Those assisting Les' son, Tom Lyons, were Lee Bullen, Marty Drapkin, Arline Ferguson, Bill Fetzner, Shirley and John Grindrod, Lance Green, Barry Heist, Linda Nelson, Rick Ruecking, Rachel Siegfried, Dorothy Wetherby, and Jack Jallings. Special thanks to all as we got four rooms or halls repainted!

The Lyons family left a book, BETWEEN FRIENDS, ENTRE AMIS, to his Prairie family.

I will miss Les very much.

Rachel Siegfried

AGENDA ITEMS DUE FOR SPRING PARISH MEETING

This is a call for agenda items for the Spring Parish Meeting to be held on Sunday, April 27, at Prairie, at 7:30 p.m. Please send any items you wish placed on the Parish Meeting agenda to Rick Ruecking, 5721 Elder Place, Madison 53705. Agenda items should be in writing.

UNICEF CONCERT

First Congregational Church, University Ave. & Breese Terrace, will host a concert to benefit the United Nations Children's Fund, Friday, April 4, at 7:30 p.m.

Three performing groups, the Narodno International Dancers, The Madison Boy Choir, and the Unkalung Choir, a Thai group, will perform. Tickets will go on sale after March 1 at Orange Tree Imports, 1721 Monroe St. and at The Puzzle Box, 230 State St. and will be available at the door. Admission is \$5 for adults and \$3, children, students, and senior citizens.

The Prairie Recorder/Flute Group is looking for recorder or flute players among Prairie members and friends. A tenor recorder player is especially needed. The group meets weekly at members' homes and performs about 6 times a year at Prairie for services Call Ruth Calden, 233-5717, for details.

Prairie Men's group meets Tuesday, March 4 at 7:30 p.m. We will meet at Rick Ruecking's, 5721 Elder Place, 238-2924. All men are welcome to join our discussion which will center on the concept of freedom.

INDIAN FRY BREAD

Indian Fry Bread was made with the 2,3,4 Sunday School class and there have been requests to have the recipe available.

- 4 cups flour
- ½ cup instant non-fat dry milk powder
- 3 T baking powder
- ½ t salt
- 2 cups water
- enough oil for 1" in fry pan

Stir together dry ingredients; add water. On a floured surface kneed 10-12 strokes, and let rest for 10 minutes. Make the dough into small balls 1½" in diameter. Flatten the balls into tortilla shape but not as thin. Fry 1 at a time at 400° until bumpy and golden brown - about 1½ minutes. Turn once while frying. Drain on paper towels.

CALLING ALL SONGBOOKS

We really have a problem, folks. At last count we were down to 34 Prairie Songbooks, about half what we had 1½ years ago. Our budget presently allow for addition (or, in some cases, replacement) of about 15 books annually. If we want to add songs (and we do!), each new book costs more, and our replacement number is accordingly smaller.

How YOU can help:

1. Don't take songbooks home - if you're presenting a coming service, plan to come early or stay late so you can look the songs over as you plan.
2. If you want the words/music to a particular song, arrange to come early/stay late to copy it, or ask a Program Committee member to get it xeroxed for you.
3. Handle the songbooks gently! Lee and Alice have accomplished wondrous repairs, but even their powers are limited.
4. Share! It's especially awkward for newcomers, who often sit in the back, when the books run out. We want everyone to feel welcome and a part of every service, so be alert for those who need to look on with you.
5. Be the person who picks up the songbooks right after a service and puts them in the box in the office (upstairs). The longer they sit around, the more likely they are to be damaged - or to stray.

As you all know, Prairie is growing these days. It's hard to assess exactly how much space, or how many songbooks, we'll need before a given year's end. Until the next year, and the next budget, we'll have to make do with the present 34 plus the 15 songbooks we're about to get. So let's work together to make them last and to insure the fullest participation of all comers by sharing books.

Your Program Committee

A spiritual discussion group led by Elisabeth Jones and John Ohliger will begin meeting in March on the first and third Wednesdays of each month. The first meeting will be held at Prairie on Wednesday, March 5 at 7:30 - 9:00 p.m. Everyone is welcome.

STOP A MINUTE!

Do you have ideas about the Prairie building? We want your suggestions for improvements or renovations now. What would you like done? Please write down your ideas or your drawings and send them to Rachel Siegfried, 5209 Tolman Terrace, Madison 53711.

CONSIDER BEING A PRAIRIE LAY MINISTER

One of the most unique features about Prairie is the fact that we have no professional minister. Instead we rely on our many talented members and friends to plan and lead Sunday Services. This choice - which has been Prairie's for nearly the complete 18 years of our existence provides for a great deal of participation and variety. It also makes our Society attractive to many people who would never consider a "regular" church.

However, it requires choosing new lay ministers each year around this time! So - this is a request for each and every Prairie Fire reader to give serious thought to four things: (1) Being a lay minister sometime between September 1986 and June 1987; (2) Suggesting another person - Prairie member, friend, or even someone from outside Prairie - for lay minister; (3) Suggesting a theme for a lay ministry; (4) Volunteering a topic for an individual service and/or your time to lead a single service.

By the way, being a lay minister is not as difficult as it may sound. (And it pays \$350 too.) While a lay minister takes on responsibility for 8-10 services, usually on one theme, there's a range of ways to handle and particular Sunday. The lay minister can plan and conduct the entire service herself or himself. At the other extreme the lay minister may arrange for an outside speaker and rely on the Program Committee to choose music readings, and even arrange the chairs.

The Program Committee also has some materials to help with service planning. These include: (1) Lay Minister Responsibilities, a kind of job description; (2) Sunday Service Plan, a checklist of activities; (3) Things to Consider for Prairie Sunday Services; (4) Music Makers and Readings Resources, who to call on for music and reading materials; (5) A letter to send to outside speakers describing what to expect at Prairie and what we expect from speakers.

You can get these materials from Program Chair, Mary Mullen (271-5192). The first 3 are recommended reading if you're thinking of offering your services. It might also be reassuring to talk to a recent lay minister such as Elisabeth Jones, Marty Drapkin, Pat Watkins, Judy Spring, David McKee, Rick Ruecking, or Dodie Chapru. Any of them can tell you the benefits they got from the experience as well as tricks they learned to make the job easier.

To become a lay minister, let a member of the Committee on Committees know (Marty Drap-

kin, 256-1239 or Mary Mullen, 271-5192). This committee recommends lay ministers to the membership at the Prairie Annual Meeting on April 27 and the Board makes the final selection.

This won't be the only way to serve Prairie this year but it may be the most exciting thing you could do for yourself and the rest of us. (And it's a whole lot easier than spending years in school studying to be a professional minister.)

THANKS FOR SERVICE PARTICIPATION

I'd like to recognize all the people who took part in the February services that I coordinated. You all lent a very personal touch to make those Sunday mornings memorable for me.

Dave Zakem presented the February 2 "sun festival" which included slides, drums and South American music.

On February 16, Erin Bosch, Lee Bullen, Sandy Mann, Argene McDowell, Fredericka Schilling, and Andrea Torres shared their views on death. We were reminded of the importance of making plans for our own services and talking to each other about this difficult matter.

The service February 23 about creativity involved Mac Robertson, Christopher McKee, Annis Pratt, and Bob West. Each shared a bit of their own creative labors.

My lay ministry will conclude with three services in May. Judy Spring

FIRST CALL FOR "SHOAH"

Some Prairie folks are planning to make a group event of the movie "Shoah" at the end of March, beginning of April. "Shoah" is a different kind of movie about the Holocaust: "no archival footage, little narration," relying instead on interviews with "Holocaust survivors, with Poles who lived and worked around the camps, and with former SS and Nazi officials", intercut with shots of the original sites.

The movie is shown in two parts. We'll see Part I on Friday, March 28 at 7 p.m. and Part II the following Friday, April 4 at 6:30. Each part is about 4½ hours long. If people feel like meeting afterward at a restaurant, that would be possible. Series tickets cost \$15 which is a cut of \$5 off the price of \$10 per part if tickets are bought separately.

Please contact Pat Watkins (233-5795 or 262-7960 at work) if you are interested in attending with the group for one or both parts.

A Report on Prairie Membership for the Long Range Planning Committee meeting December 16, 1985, by Les Lyons

I. TASK: Develop a summary of Prairie membership similar to that in First Unitarian Society's Long Range Plan

II. THE DATA -- Table 1

1. Members and the year they joined.

Source: the Membership Book.

Exclusions: (a) signers who were too young at the time.

2. Active Members in 1979.

Source: names with asterisks in the 1979-80 Prairie Directory and insert.

Exclusions: (b) names not in the membership book, and (c) people who joined after 1979.

Additions: people who joined in 1979 and were active, but whose names were not in the directory or insert.

3. Active Members in 1985

Source: names designated "M" in the 1985 Directory.

Exclusions: (a) and (b), and 8 members who have moved away.

Additions: The 9 members who have joined since the directory was printed. (I retained the names of 16 people whose "active" status I consider problematic.)

III. LENGTH OF MEMBERSHIP -- Table 2

To some extent in 1979, and more so in 1985, Prairie has a lot of recent members (up to 3 years), a lot of longer-term members (8+ years), and relatively few who have been members for 4 to 7 years. Since the ability, if not also willingness, to contribute financially to the Society tends to increase with length of membership, the "age distributions" in Table 2 seem unhealthy from the viewpoint of fundraising.

About 56% of current active members joined since 1979.

IV. RETENTION OF MEMBERS -- Table 3

Prairie has kept 37% of its lifetime membership. This seems pretty low, but maybe it is usual for groups like Prairie.

Retention rates are, as might be expected, highest among the most recent members. It is doubtful if this reflects an unusually powerful attachment or loyalty to Prairie; it may just be that there has not been enough time yet to acknowledge some recent members' inactivity.

Retention has been above average among those members -- the "founders" -- who joined in 1967 to 1969.

Only 14% of the people who joined from 1971 to 1975, inclusive, are still active! Does anybody know why?

We seem to keep fewer members than First Society does. Prairie's 1979-85 retention rates for 1-5, 6-10 and 11+ years of membership are 57.4, 52.4 and 72.7%, while the 1977-82 rates at First Society were 61.7, 72.0 and 84.7%. (Yes, 6-year rates ought to be lower than 5-year rates, but probably not that much lower.)

V. PRAIRIE'S FUTURE IN RELATION TO RETENTION OF MEMBERS -- Table 4

Whether Prairie decides to grow or not to grow, the rate of retention of members needs to be taken into account if we are to plan rationally. It seems worth asking how retention affects the number of new members needed to keep membership constant, and the number we need so we can grow at whatever rate we choose.

Let's say that back in 1979 Prairie decided to stay the same size for the next 6 years. Without recruitment, membership would have declined by 40% to 54 by the end of 1985. To keep membership at 90, enough new members would have had to join that 36 of them would still be active by the end of 1985. Since one-third of new members become inactive in 6 years, the Society would have had to recruit not 36, but 54, new members, or 9 per year. That is, there would have had to be an "apparent growth" of about 10% per year just to stand still. Only more recruitment than ^{that} would have yielded "real" growth.

This argument and the same assumptions about retention can be used to estimate how many new members Prairie will need in the next 6 year -- by 1991 -- to achieve various rates of "real" growth (Table 4). If we choose not to grow at all, we will need 73 new members (12 per year), of whom 49 will still be with us in 1991 to replace the current members who will no longer be active by then. Similarly, if Prairie were to decide in its democratic wisdom to grow to 150 active members by 1991, we would need to recruit about 120 people, or about 20 per year. And so on.

Incidentally, so far in 1985 we have signed 9 new members -- fewer than the number needed for maintaining zero growth.

The important question seems to be: How do we keep members once we get them?

Table 1

Prairie Membership Data, December 1985

| Year of signing | No. signing | No. active in 1979 | No. active in 1985 |
|-----------------|-------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 67 & 68 | 42 | 9 | 4 |
| 1969 | 32 | 13 | 12 |
| 1970 | 12 | 0 | 0 |
| 1971 | 23 | 7 | 3 |
| 1972 | 16 | 4 | 1 |
| 1973 | 24 | 8 | 5 |
| 1974 | 11 | 2 | 2 |
| 1975 | 14 | 7 | 1 |
| 1976 | 31 | 18 | 13 |
| 1977 | 13 | 10 | 4 |
| 1978 | 3 | 3 | 1 |
| 1979 | 10 | 9 | 8 |
| 1980 | 30 | - | 14 |
| 1981 | 8 | - | 5 |
| 1982 | 23 | - | 14 |
| 1983 | 13 | - | 10 |
| 1984 | 19 | - | 16 |
| 1985 | 9 | - | 9 |
| Total | 333 | 90 | 122 |

Table 2

Length of Membership, 1979 and 1985

| Years of membership | No. active members | | | Percent of members | |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------|------|--------|--------------------|------|
| | 1979 | 1985 | Change | 1979 | 1985 |
| < 2 | 12 | 25 | + 13 | 13.3 | 20.5 |
| 2 & 3 | 28 | 24 | - 4 | 31.2 | 19.7 |
| 4 & 5 | 9 | 19 | + 10 | 10.0 | 15.6 |
| 6 & 7 | 12 | 9 | - 3 | 13.3 | 7.4 |
| 8 & 9 | 7 | 17 | + 10 | 7.8 | 13.9 |
| 10 + | 22 | 28 | + 6 | 24.4 | 22.9 |
| Total | 90 | 122 | + 32 | | |
| Average length of membership in years | 5.3 | 6.4 | | | |

Table 3

Prairie Member Retention Rates

| Year of signing | No. signing | R e t e n t i o n R a t e s | | |
|-----------------|-------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| | | From signing to 1979 - % | From signing to 1985 - % | 1979 members to 1985 - % |
| 67-69 | 74 | 29.7 | 21.6 | 72.7 |
| 70-71 | 35 | 20.0 | 8.6 | 42.9 |
| 72-73 | 40 | 30.0 | 15.0 | 50.0 |
| 74-75 | 25 | 36.0 | 12.0 | 33.3 |
| 76-77 | 44 | 63.6 | 38.6 | 60.7 |
| 78-79 | 13 | 92.3 | 69.2 / 23.4 | 75.0 |
| 80-81 | 38 | - | 50.0 | - |
| 82-83 | 36 | - | 66.7 | - |
| 84-85 | 28 | - | 89.3 / 66.7 | - |
| Total | 333 | 39.0 | 36.6 | 60.0 |

Table 4

Some Membership Growth Choices, 1986-1991
in Light of Prairie's Experience
in Retaining Members

| Real annual growth % | No. active members in 1991 | No. new members to be recruited by 1991 | No. new members left in 1991 | Average no. new members needed per year |
|----------------------|----------------------------|---|------------------------------|---|
| 0 | 122 | 73 | 49 | 12 |
| 2 | 137 | 96 | 64 | 16 |
| 4 | 154 | 121 | 81 | 20 |
| 6 | 173 | 150 | 100 | 25 |
| 8 | 194 | 181 | 121 | 30 |
| 10 | 216 | 214 | 143 | 38 |

MAX GAEBLER ANNOUNCES RETIREMENT PLANS

In a letter sent to members and friends of First Unitarian Society, the Rev. Max Gaebler, minister of the church for the past 34 years, has announced that he will retire July 31, 1987. Mr. and Mrs. Gaebler plan to remain in Madison, except for about a year immediately after retirement.

It is planned that an interim minister will be hired for the year after Gaebler's retirement while the search for a permanent replacement proceeds.

Dave Johnson offers two working appliances to Prairie members. A Hotpoint refrigerator with a large freezer and a G.E. electric stove. Both are in good condition. If interested call 715-228-4153. He has a truck and can deliver.

I HAVE LIVED AMIDST ETERNITY

It is worthwhile to live
and fight courageously
for sacred ideals.

Oh blow ye evil winds
into my body's fire
my soul you'll never unravel.

Even though disappointed
a thousand times
or fallen in the fight
and everything would worthless seem,
I have lived amidst eternity--
Be grateful, my soul--
My life was worth living.

He who was pressed from all sides
but remained victorious in spirit
is welcomed into the choir of heroes.

He who overcame the fetters
giving wings to his mind
is entering into the golden age
of the victorious.

This prayer is by the Rev. Norbert Fabian Capek, founding minister of the Unitarian Church of Prague, Czechoslovakia who was martyred at Dachau concentration camp in October, 1942. The prayer was composed in Dresden prison in 1941, shortly before Dr. Capek's transfer to Dachau. The translation is by Dr. Capek's daughter, the Rev. Bohdana Capek Haspl. In July the Rev. William F. Schulz, UUA Executive Vice President, read the prayer at a memorial service in Prague marking the 40th anniversary of Dr. Capek's death (WORLD, Sept. 15).

AIDS AND HTLV-III INFECTION

A conference exploring the public health and social issues raised by AIDS and its related HTLV-III infection will be held March 26-27 at the Wisconsin Center, sponsored by UW-Madison Department of Health & Social Services. The conference is designed to interest health professionals, legal personnel, employers, school officials, counselors and therapists, clergy, landlords and tenants, prison officers, insurance officers and the general public.

The opening day's program will consider the impact on the individual and associates, a support network, and medical, legal and financial problems involved. The second day (Saturday) will be devoted to self care for medical and other service providers for aids victims.

Persons interested can call Prairie's Carolyn M. DeJoie, the coordinator of the program, at 262-2730.

READINGS FROM THE MEMORIAL FOR LES LYONS

Let us be honest with death.
Let us not pretend that it is less than it is.
It is separation.
It is sorrow.
It is grief.
But let us neither pretend that death is more than it is.
It is not annihilation - as long as memory endures his influence will be felt.
It is not an end to love - humanity's needs for love from each of us is boundless.
It is not an end to joy and laughter - nothing would less honor a gentle soul than to make our lives drab in counterfeit respect.
Let us be honest with death, for in that honesty we will understand him better and ourselves more deeply.

"It is necessary, while in darkness, to know that there is light somewhere, to know that in oneself, waiting to be found, there is a light."

James Baldwin