The deadline for the next issue of Prairie Fire is Sunday, March 17. Submit items for March 21 - April 4.

Sunday, March 17
9:00 AM
Choir Practice
10:00 AM
"Mendelsohn" Musical - Warren
Hagstrom
11:30 AM
St. Patrick's Day Secret Friend's Party
and Potluck
1:00 - 2:30 PM
"Sandwich Generation" Discussion
Group will meet downstairs at Prairie.
(See Page 2.)

Saturday, March 23
7:30 PM
Prairie Playreaders meet (See page 2.)

Sunday, March 24
9:00 AM
Choir Practice
10:00 AM
"Spring Equinox" - Nancy Vedder
Shults
1:00 - 2:30 PM
"Sandwich Generation" Discussion
Group will meet downstairs. (See Page 2.)

Sunday, March 31
9:00 AM
Choir Practice
10:00 AM
"The Chalice and the Blade" - Betty
Jallings
NOTE: There will be NO RE because of Spring Break.
1:00 - 2:30 PM
"Sandwich Generation" Discussion
Group will meet downstairs at Prairie.
(See Page 2.)

Monday, March 11
6:30 PM
Spanish Speaking Potluck at the house of Ema Pachon (238 - 4382 for directions or a ride)

TODAY'S QUOTE:

"Whether the hocus pocus of a dancing Hotentot or the high incantations of a Catholic Archbishop, religion is every man's effort to discover the power that controls his destiny and to persuade that power to be kind."

—H. L. Mencken
(Submitted by Dave Johnson)
President's Column

When Rick Ruecking requested a volunteer from the Prairie Board to write this issue’s column, I seized the chance to have final opportunity to promote Prairie’s Visioning Workshop on Saturday, March 9.

Prairie has not held a "future-oriented" workshop such as this since the mid-1980s. We should be proud that our congregation has accomplished many of the goals set at that time. They included making the meeting house handicapped accessible, developing a more ritualized format for our Sunday services, and hiring part-time administrative help.

But now is no time to rest on our laurels. While we’ve come a long way since the mid-1980’s, there are still many possibilities open to us for making Prairie a more effective religious organization.

The goal of the Visioning Workshop is to help us, as a group, determine what things we want to make happen in the next 5 to 10 years. That’s why it’s so important for YOU to attend on March 9. The more input we have, the better our decisions will represent the congregation’s wishes.

With that in mind, I hope that everyone will take some time to consider the following questions before the meeting:
- Why is Prairie here? (what is our mission)
- What is expected of ME? (what are our goals)
- How well is our group doing?
- What’s in it for me? (what are the rewards of being a friend/member)
- What happens when I need help? (what level of support is available)

These questions could also be expressed in the following ways:
- What do I want from this church?
- What feelings am I hoping for as a result of being involved here?
- Which of my talents do I want to give to this church?
- What do I want this church to mean to the world?

That’s a lot to think about, I know— but how you answer these questions will help us determine the future of Prairie’s UU Society for the next 5 - 10 years. A large turnout is essential to ensuring that a wide range of views is represented. Please plan to attend! I look forward to seeing you on Saturday, March 9.

Anne Urbanek - Long Range Planning Chair

General Assembly

The Denominational Affairs Committee invites Prairie members who may be interested in attending the General Assembly either as a delegate or an observer, to submit their names to Rachel Siegfried. The General Assembly will be held in Indianapolis from June 20 - 25.

Detailed information will appear in the March/April edition of the U.U. World, but for preliminary planning, you may wish to know that the cost of the entire 5 - 6 days could cost between $500 - $1000 plus transportation. It is also possible to register for just a weekend, or to work as a volunteer in order to decrease the registration fee. Also, Prairie usually subsidizes a portion of the costs for our official delegations. By letting the committee know of your interest, you will make it possible to coordinate some more affordable means of attendance. Please respond by April 1.

G.L.A.D.E

Several members of Prairie were in attendance at the GLADE school board forum held at James Reeb on Saturday, March 2. Pat Watkins, Nancy Graham, and Judy Skog heard Peter Williams, Calvin Williams, Carol Carstensen, and Ray Allen (the other invited board members did not attend) talk about their stands on harassment, curricula, and student support groups. Most moving were the testimonies by high school students who were targets of harassment due to their own sexual orientation or the orientation of parents or other family members.

Ethnic Dinner Circle

The Ethnic Dinner Circle met at the Taste of India on Friday, March 1, with fifteen participants having a wonderful meal and a great time. The next Ethnic Dinner will be held in May (every other month) at the International China Buffet at Hilldale. The Fish Dinner Circle will meet on March 22. Watch for further details or call Pat Watkins at 233 - 5795.

Grindrod Memorial

If you would like to contribute to a stained glass window for John, please send a check, made out to Prairie and marked "Grindrod Memorial" to Dick Bonser, 5213 Milward Drive, Madison, 53711. (My apologies for misspelling John’s last name in the last issue.)

The Prairie Women’s Group

Prairie Women’s Group is an opportunity for Prairie women to eat, meet, talk and get to know each other better in an informal setting. The Women’s Group usually meets at the meeting house, at noon on the third Sunday of the month. All women (teens included) connected to Prairie are welcome.

"Sandwich Generation"

The “Sandwich Generation” Discussion Group will meet from 1:00 - 2:30 PM, downstairs at Prairie. The group will meet every remaining Sunday in March. People in the "Sandwich Generation" have children and aging parents to care for, and are often caught between them. Topics include paying the bills, family dynamics: respecting one’s self and each other, local resources, and physio-psycho-social health issues. Plan to attend. If you have questions, contact Reid Miller at 437 - 3588 or Barbara Park at 273 - 8775.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

March 10

"Of Babies and Bathwater" -- Many members or our society have "come out" of other denominations as they rejected ideas taught in childhood. Yet there may be valuable remaining ethical teachings that still can buttress a liberal religious faith. We will think about these, and share as we may wish, at our meeting on March 20, when Barbara Rames will concluding her lay ministry on the theme, "Harvest."

George Calden suggested that we talk about the songs and hymns that we have sung at Prairie Society; we will explore some of the expressive new ones that are on our new hymnal as well. "Be not the first to lay the old aside, nor yet the last to leave the new untried."
Community Focus

Having come to the conclusion that community building is a Prairie priority, your Social Action Committee announces a program of partnership with the Dunn's Marsh Neighborhood Center. Prairie volunteers will be organized for participation in the center's weekly programs and special events. Opportunities for Prairie partners include daytime adult and summer kids tutoring, after school drop-in sessions, and week-end field trips with children of all age groups and interests.

Prairie folks can find our more about becoming partners in the community by calling Bob Steinhofer at 221-9417, or Nancy Graham at 244-6595.

Welfare Troubles

Many protests have been mounted against Thompson's W2 (Wisconsin Works) bill, ostensibly meant to revamp Wisconsin's welfare program. The well known result, however, will be severe punishment of young and single poor mothers and their children. Hearing about an upcoming protest against this bill, I attended the initial planning meeting. A number of local church representatives met with activist Nan Cheney, who proposed that a chair be placed at each of the 16 pillars in the capitol rotunda, and that a church or group be responsible for eight-hour staffing of each chair. Unitarians had a chair and made a good showing thanks to Shirley Grindrod, Betty Jallings, Alice Bullen, and Pat Cautley. Rev. Jonalu Johnson from the James Reeb Congregation was also a participant.

Thanks in part to all this effort, the Joint Finance Committee has hastily put together some 50 amendments to the bill. Most of them are purely cosmetic -- after all, based on the silk purse/sow's ear principle, one can hardly make a fair law out of a Thompson Idea -- but it's more than they would have done without the protests. The bill will be debated in the Assembly (and is predicted to pass) in early March.

---Nancy Graham

Shelter Troubles

In recent months it has been increasingly difficult to find Prairie people willing to staff the shelter during our monthly AM shift. Not being a morning person myself, I can understand why this may be so, and have been wondering lately whether or not Prairie should discontinue its AM shift commitment. The Social Action Committee feels I should consult you, the members of Prairie, before taking any such step. Our shelter work is a long-standing Prairie tradition, and serves an important need in the community. How would you feel about such a change? We must give at least two months notice to the Shelter before making any change. If you feel it is a mistake to quit, show your concern by volunteering. I welcome all feedback on this issue.

---Fran Zell

Cereal Drop-off

Please note the addition to the Prairie foyer of a Homeless Shelter drop box. Please fill it with boxes of breakfast cereal and other breakfast staples. We are trying to make work easier for our AM shelter volunteers, who are required to bring food for the morning meal. Even if we discontinue our morning shift commitment (see above article) the Social Action Committee would like to remain committed to providing food.

Homeless Shelter

Many thanks to Thomas Wordell, Betty Jallings, Orton Gray, and Frank Iltis who volunteered in February at the Men's Homeless Shelter at Grace Episcopal Church. Prairie members and friends work at the shelter the fourth Monday evening of every month and the following Tuesday morning. Evening shifts run from 7:45 - 11:30 PM, and breakfast shifts are from 5:00 - 8:00 AM. Morning volunteers bring, prepare, and serve breakfast. Evening volunteers bring milk and help serve dinner. Kathy Converse has arranged with Bagels Forever to provide bagels for our monthly breakfast shift. Talk to Kathy about arrangements for bagel pick-up. Anyone wishing to be reimbursed for their shelter expenses should turn receipts in to Fran Zell, Social Action Chair.

We continue to need volunteers to work at the shelter during the coming months. Contact Fran at 235-0213 if you can help. Also please read the other article pertaining the the Homeless Shelter.

Democracy Campaign

Be part of the trickle up democracy movement. The Wisconsin Democracy Campaign is an independent, non-partisan coalition dedicated to campaign finance reform for equal access to government. A Democracy Day forum will be held on Saturday, March 23. If interested in the forum or how to volunteer, contact the WDC office at 608-255-4260 or Bob Steinhofer at 221-9417.

CLASS UPDATES

PRESCHOOL

Well, the diverse attendance has made planning difficult, but making "play dough" was a planned adventure for all.

K-1-2: Holy Days and Holidays

With spring on the way, heroes and heroines seem to have their days. St. Patrick, Susan B. Anthony, Harriet Tubman, (Women's History Month,) President's Day (Abraham Lincoln and George Washington,) have all been discussed.

3-4-5: Time Travels

Kerry Beheler-Amass, who has been sharing the teaching role with Paula Pachciarz, is now officially on maternity leave. She is expecting in mid-March. Randy Converse will be finishing the year with the class. After visiting the ancient Celtic Isles, the class visited the Aboriginal culture of Australia and has entered into ancient China.

6-7-8: Church Across the Street

Diversity marked the 6-7-8 class this last month. Discussion and visits to a Jewish Synagogue, Greek Orthodox Church, and a Buddhist Center (actual visit 3/10).
9-10-11-12: Life Issues Facing Teens

After dealing with issues of spiritual identity, the teens have demonstrated an active role in RE by planning and facilitating the March Spirit Circle and made a large mobile (which is hanging in the downstairs kitchen) that demonstrates the duality of March.

Secret Friends

Secret Friends continues until St. Patrick’s Day when we will have a potluck party and the secrets will be revealed.

Thank You

Thank you Rod Stevenson for speaking about Deer Park to the 6-7-8 class and for donating 3 books on Buddhism to the RE library!

Lost Pendant

A UU chalice pendant was found a few months ago downstairs. If it’s yours, please see me.

—John-Brian Paprock

Youth Sexuality Workshop Planning

It’s been several years since Prairie has offered a sexuality class for youth. Since the UUA’s “About Your Sexuality” (AYS) curriculum is in the midst of a major revision, the RE committee has decided to take a different approach to this important topic. We are planning to offer a weekend workshop for Prairie youth in grades 6-12 sometime in February of 1997. The format would include a presentation by professionals from the community, followed by discussions in small, age-specific groups, each facilitated by an adult. John-Brian Paprock will begin planning for this event now and continue through next fall. Parents: Do you have any ideas for topics that you want to be sure the workshop includes, perhaps something you feel is not covered well in the public school curriculum? Call John-Brian at 274-4405 or Erin Bosch 238-6285 or any RE committee member. Next winter we will have a parent meeting to discuss specifics regarding format, speakers, and any other concerns parents may have.

Prairie Playreaders

Mark March 23rd on your calendars for the next get-together of Prairie Playreaders, one of our society’s many small group social activities. Participants read from and discuss a wide variety of plays. Call Pat Watkins at 233-5795 for more information.

Prairie Directory Update

Please check your name, address, phone number, and membership status on the clipboard in the back of the meeting hall. Also, please update information about other members if you can. Julia Bonser and Doleta Chapru will produce a quick, low budget directory as soon as possible.

Equinox Service

Nancy Vedder-Shults will guide participants in a service based on the Spring Equinox. The service will be held on March 24 at First Society. She will reflect on “Balancing the Dark and Light in Our Lives.” The service will be conducted within the framework of a pagan ritual, using a short guided visualization, stories and songs, including several from Nancy’s recent recording “Chants for the Queen of Heaven.”

Spanish-speakers Potluck

Spanish-speaking Potluckers will meet at the house of Ema Pachun at 6:30 PM on Monday, March 11. We are a group of people with widely-ranging Spanish language skills, and a unified and abiding interest in Hispanic/Latino people and their cultures. Some of us have lived in Spanish-speaking countries, some have traveled extensively in Central America, and some of us learned all our Spanish in high school in the U.S. So, don’t worry about your skill level. Just bring a dish to pass, (no it doesn’t have to be “Hispanic,”) and a desire to spend a couple of hours eating well and chatting in Spanish (mas o menos.) For further information or a ride, call Kate Tucker at 221-2168 or Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382.

Challenging the Radical Right

Leona Balek, of First Unitarian Society, presented a very informative and somewhat frightening view of the radical right, which comprises ultra conservative religious groups and leaders as well as extreme right-wing politicians and groups.

If you want to learn more about these groups, there is plenty of information available on the Internet. People of the American Way has launched a national campaign called Expose the Right! Campaign. Its broad purpose is “to expose to the American People the dangerous agenda of religious political extremists and others on the far right, and to force the 1996 presidential candidate to either repudiate or embrace that extreme agenda.”

The Expose the Right! Campaign has a World Wide Web site located at: http://www.mainlink.net/expose/. A link to this web site will appear soon on Prairie's home page, (http://www.execpc.com/~prairiev/.)

Rachel Siegfried has also given Prairie a list of sources pertaining to challenging the extreme right. The link is now posted on the Prairie Fire Bulletin Board.

Quilting Show

The Annual Sun Prairie Quilt Show will held one Monday, March 25 from 9:00 AM - 8:00 PM and Tuesday, March 26 from 9:00 AM - 4:00 PM. For anyone who enjoys art or beautiful things, this show is a "must see."

For directions or if you want to carpool Monday night, call Judy Skog at 273-4813.

UU Singles

UU singles will be meeting every Friday at 6:00pm at the Sunporch Restaurant on University Avenue. Contact Jeff Nelson at 249-2414 for more information.

Lost Yahtzee

I walked off with parts to a Yahtzee game at Upham Woods last November. They are now in the Prairie lost and found.

—Marcia Johnson