From the President's computer:

It was a very cold, snowy Sunday and the day of the SuperBowl to boot. I wasn't sure if anyone would show up for the Sunday morning service, let alone for the Parish meeting. I was wrong! Thirty-six stout-hearted members not only came, but stayed to participate in the selecting of three members for the Committee-on-committees. Nikki Bromberg, Paula Pachciarz, and Nancy Schraufnagel were picked.

Now is the time to start thinking what role you could play at Prairie next year. Think in terms of both officers and committees. Be ready to say "yes" if these folks contact you in the coming two months. If you are interested in joining a committee, but you aren't sure what they do, there will be an All-Committee night at Prairie, tentatively scheduled for March 12. Watch for further information on this.

Arleigh Birchler has agreed to continue putting out the Prairie Fire for us, but we are still actively seeking a new administrator to relieve him. In the meantime, the deadline for getting information to Arleigh will be the first and third Sunday of each month. However, to take some pressure off of him, we will move the publishing date to Thursday of that week. If you have time sensitive information, keep this in mind when submitting it.

Thank you again to all the people who came and stayed on Sunday to participate in the shortest Parish meeting on record. Thanks, as well, for all your words of encouragement as I tackle this new role as President.

—Barbara Park

Shaarei Shamayim

The members of Shaarei Shamayim are thrilled that, after several years of use, we now have a formal space-sharing arrangement with Prairie Unitarian Society. We couldn't be happier with the generosity and flexibility with which Prairie has always made its space available to us. We feel blessed that you are able to share your home with us.

Dating back to biblical times, Jews both individually and communally have developed a ritual in which we dedicate our homes and gathering places as sacred space. It is a ceremony called, in Hebrew, "hanukat ha-bayit" meaning the dedication of a house. The ceremony involves the affixing of a mezuzah to a doorpost in the entranceway. A mezuzah is a small case containing a parchment scroll on which are handwritten two passages from the bible (Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and 11:13-21). These two passages contain the sacred task "to write the words of God upon the "mezuzot" (Hebrew for doorpost) of your houses and on your gates."

On Sunday afternoon, February 9, following our annual meeting (probably between 4:30 and 5 PM), Shaarei Shamayim will be dedicating Prairie as sacred Jewish space by affixing a mezuzah on the front door. We welcome all of our friends and hosts from Prairie Unitarian Society to join us in our celebration of this community milestone.

In the words of Psalm 122 (verses 1, 7-9):
I rejoiced whenever people said to me,
Let's journey to the house of The Source of Life...
May there be well-being inside your walls,
peace within your halls,
For all my kin and friends,
may I now say: Shalom to you!
And for the house of the Source of Life, our God,
I seek only your good.

—Rabbi Brian Field 245-3775
New Members

New Prairie Society member, Barbara Golden, is a prime example of today's woman who successfully manages a number of roles such as parent and homemaker as well as career woman, community activist and part-time University graduate student.

Of all her responsibilities, Barbara views her family as most important. This includes teen-aged son, Elias who helps with the Prairie nursery, son Devin, 13, who plays the saxophone in the all-city band of senior high and middle school member, daughter Samantha, 12, a swimmer, musician and active in an asthma support group and husband Bob, also devoted to his family and helps support them as a wholesale food merchandiser. Winter is a difficult time for many family activities but with a household full of music and good books the Goldens manage well.

Barbara is also an education activist with a special interest in local school issues and who sees herself as an advocate for all the children in her school district. She serves on a number of committees and has recently become a campaign worker in a school election.

Barbara also works part-time as a family specialist for Head Start, teaching parents the skills they need to raise their children. To top off this active life, Barbara is working on her master's degree in education. Her research for her thesis is centered on parent involvement.

SERVICE AUCTION COMING

Sunday, February 16, is the time for our Annual Prairie Service Auction! You are urged to come and bid on unique services from dog-sitting to ethnic meals. Orange Schroeder has agreed to again be our gracious auctioneer. Of course, to make this work, we need to know what service you or your teens can offer. We also need volunteers that day to help cook, serve food, record bids, etc.

Lunch and munchies will also be sold. This is our major fund-raiser of the year, so we encourage everyone to participate in some way. We promise you'll have a great time.

Call Nikki Bromberg or Aileen Nettleton to offer your service or Ken Skog or Jennifer Parker to volunteer to help at the lunch and auction.

Pledge Drive Successful

A tremendous "thanks" to members and friends for helping us come very close to meeting our pledge drive goal of $38,000! This represents pledges from more members than last year and increases in some pledges. By making your pledge, Prairie can plan a responsible budget and follow through to give a sound basis to carry out our programs during the year. Thanks to everyone for your generous pledges. Your checks for pledge contributions can be sent directly to the treasurer, Judy Skog, 626 Orchard Dr., Madison, WI, 53711, or put in the collection basket passed at Prairie.

Nancy Schraufnagel first came to Prairie Society with Bob and Linda Nelson in 1986, for a George Caiden service on Refuseniks (memorable)! She had grown up in Wisconsin, reared in a Roman Catholic family. In a high school philosophy course, she had misunderstood Immanuel Kant's three proofs of the non-existence of God, and had been churchless ever since then.

She received her B.A. degree in Russian Language and Literature and an M.A. in Library Science at U. of W. Madison, and currently she is a librarian with the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Reference and Loan Library, with specialties in medical, chemical, and periodical requests. In case you do not know Nancy's face, she's the one with red berries in her hair, taking part in Mary Mullen's latest Sunday service. She enjoys music (emphasis on jazz!), folk dancing, TV mysteries and Star Trek.

Nancy appreciates the openness, opportunities, and thought provoking services at Prairie Society, the kind and good works and social activism in our membership, and the friendships she has found here. She lives at 501 N. Whitney Way, #7, in Madison 53705. Phone: 273-3195.

Caring Committee

Prairie has recognized the need for a Caring Committee. The first meeting to discuss how to support Prairie members in need will be held Monday, February 17, at 7:30 PM, at Prairie. You can also call me at 838-8540.

—Marilyn Peters

A Belated Thank You ...

... to everyone who helped make Maya's dedication in November such a lovely, moving experience for us. Special thanks to Erin Bosch, our Emcee; Elizabeth Alexander, composer of the beautiful song that surprised us so much; and Barb Park, who sang the song. And thanks to Everyone who contributed to Maya's dedication book. The Prairie family is really great!

—Anne, Lee, & Maya Koboski

New Group

A Spirit Group has formed! An organizational meeting was held on January 26 and our first true gathering was held at Peter Michie's on January 29. We'll have another gathering in February, date to yet be determined. Give Anne Pryor or Jan Howe a call if you want more information.

Sarah Weddington To Speak

Sarah Weddington, the lawyer who argued Roe V. Wade, will be speaking at the UW Memorial Union on Tuesday, February 25, at 7:30 PM. Check the February Planned Parenthood of Wisconsin newsletter for more details. PPW will have an information table at the lecture.
R. E. CORNER
(news of Prairie's Religious Education Program)

Happy New Year! I hope all is well so far in 1997. During December, I was very ill; the kind of illness where one is sure they are the first of a deadly viral plague. After three days of bed-ridden anxiety and several weeks of recuperative fatigue, I was beginning to feel that only health could beckon. Then Christopher, my son, got chicken pox and my mother, who has had cancer for years, was in the hospital. Sure enough, I got a sinus cold for our fabulous and low-key overnight "Wild Wintering." I was surprised that so many (15 youth in all) came on the Eve of the Packermania Climax, also known as the Super Bowl. I was told that a part of the overnight's "highlight reef" was a multi-task indoor obstacle course. Ian Park had the fastest time. Judy Wacker, the next best time. Then there were many tied for third. Many thanks (again!) to Carl Wacker, Paula Pachciarz and Dean Schroeder.

One of Prairie's shining traditions will begin soon. Secret Friends is one of the most effective intergenerational programs I have been honored to facilitate. The adult registration will begin Sunday February 2nd. I look forward to becoming the Sunday "mailman" of March once again.

February 2nd, the Senior Youth Class will be leading our regular monthly Spirit Circle. That same Sunday (from 1-3pm) will be the Parent Meeting of youth attending the Youth Sexuality Weekend. By the way, it is not too late to register youth grades 7-12. At least one parent must make arrangements to attend the Sunday meeting. The registration form can be brought there.

The Youth Sexuality Weekend (February 7-8) will be a lot of fun, but also informative. The youth will be divided into age specific smaller groups. Those groups will be facilitated by UU adults. I am very grateful and honored to introduce the co-facilitators: KK Anderson and Michael Butkus-Bomier, Rachel Long and Ned Frey, Chris Liu and Kelly Frankenburg. Several outside groups will be giving presentations: Briarpatch's teen drama group, Men Stopping Rape, and Planned Parenthood.

Thanks to everyone for their suggestions, especially KK and Arthur Thexton. Two co-facilitators and several youth from James Reeb UU joining us for the Youth Sexuality Weekend.

Further down the road of 1997, I will be attempting to lead our Valentine Intergenerational Service (February 16) - I have never led a full UU service before. The service, at this point in planning, will include a "Valentine Tree," recognizing special people in our lives. It seems very complementary to Prairie's December tree tradition.

In Service,
John-Brian Paprock, Director of Religious Education

PYGs

A PYGs meeting will be held on February 2 after the service and will end at 1 PM. Bring stuff for playing in the snow and bring food to eat. The skating party will be rescheduled for February 23. (We can't go skating on February 2 because of the parents' meeting for RE that same day.)

MADISON AREA INTERFAITH NETWORK
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 5 AT 7:30 PM.

Prairie UU Society and Shaarei Shamayim will co-host the bimonthly public gathering of the Interfaith Network. As a co-host, the first order of business is to introduce UUism to the various individuals of different faiths. Shaarei Shamayim will have the same opportunity. There is an opportunity to ask questions and make announcements. After that, there is a shared refreshment and informal discussion. Since instituting the bimonthly "General Meeting," MAIN has been to Ananda Marga and the Bahai Community Building. Future meetings are scheduled at St. John's Lutheran Church and The Islamic Center of Madison. Over 30 different faith traditions have been represented at MAIN activities.

EARTH, AIR, WATER, AND FIRE

BECAUSE the seven principles of the Unitarian Universalist Association connect the values of democracy, personal growth, and social justice to a recognition of the interdependent web of all existence; and

WHEREAS safe air to breathe, safe water to drink, and a sustainable environment are essential for life; and

WHEREAS government support for environmental protection and energy conservation programs is inadequate:

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Unitarian Universalist Association urges its member congregations, affiliate organizations, and individual Unitarian Universalists to increase their efforts to:

1. Protect endangered species and their habitats;
2. Advocate for clean air, both indoors and outdoors;
3. Promote the protection of public lands, the responsible stewardship of private lands, and the protection of public water sources;
4. Support and practice energy and water conservation and safety and the use of renewable sources of energy;
5. Advocate the use of public transportation and other environmentally sound alternatives; and
6. Reduce the waste of resources in our congregations and in our own homes.

Referred to local congregations for study and response by the 1996 General Assembly delegates in June 1996.
**Sunday, February 2**  
10:00 AM  
Seasonal Celebration  
Nancy Vedder-Shults  
RE: Spirit Circle  
Secret Friends sign-up  
**after program**  
PYGs meeting  
1:00 PM–3:00 PM  
Parent meeting for Youth  
Sexuality Weekend  

**Wednesday, February 5**  
7:00 PM  
James Reeb – Sexual Orientation  
Private Beliefs and Public Policy  
7:30 PM  
Madison Area Interfaith Network at Prairie  

**Friday, February 7 & Saturday, February 8**  
Youth Sexuality Weekend  

**Saturday, February 8**  
7:30 PM  
Prairie Playreaders  
Aileen & Al Nettleton  
238-6053  

**Sunday, February 9**  
9:00 AM  
Choir Practice  
10:00 AM  
Valentine’s Day Intergenerational  
John-Brian Paprock  
Noon  
Annual Service Auction  
**after program**  
Women’s Discussion Group  

**Monday, February 17**  
7:00 PM  
Spanish Speaker’s Pot-Luck  
Kate Tucker  
call for details - 221-2168  
7:30 PM  
Board Meeting  

**Friday, February 21**  
7:15 PM  
Shaarei Shamayim  

**Saturday, February 22**  
9:30 AM  
Shaarei Shamayim  

**Sunday, February 23**  
9:00 AM  
Choir Practice  
10:00 AM  
Gold Keys & Blue Ribbons:  
Internet Security & Censorship  
Al Nettleton  
RE: Secret Friends  
**after program**  
PYGs skating party  
PYGs Bake Sale  

**Tuesday, February 25**  
7:30 PM  
Sarah Weddington  
(Attorney who argued Roe v. Wade)  
UW Memorial Union -- PPW  

**Saturday, March 1**  
7:00 PM  
Cabin Fever Musicale  
at Prairie  

**Sunday, March 2**  
9:00 AM  
Choir Practice  
10:00 AM  
Jeopardies To Civil Liberties From New Technologies  
Carole Doeppers  
RE: Spirit Circle & Secret Friends  

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**UUA Facts and Figures**  
There are 1,026 UUA societies. Of those, 649 are Honor Societies. Honor Societies are those which gave 100% of the Fair Share dues, or $36 per member. There are 351 Honor Societies which give 5% or more of their annual budget.  
Now comes the good news. Prairie has consistently been an Honor Society. The number of years we have not met our commitment to the denomination’s goals is very small. Not only that, our UUA dues comprise 8% of our budget. What a committed group!  

**FIRST BLOOD DONATION:**  
A RITE OF PASSAGE  
There are some significant milestones that mark our life journey: first day at school, first kiss, 16th birthday, graduation, marriage, the birth of our children.  
There is one other “first” that changes our lives and our self-image: our first blood donation. The giving of oneself to help others is an act of philanthropy that forever sets us apart. Blood donors make a positive difference in our world every time they give the gift of life.  
Rob Steinhofer, chairman of our social action committee, is the only Prairie Society member who gave during January 1997.  
If you are healthy, weigh at least 110 pounds, and are 17 or older, chances are that you can donate blood. Red Cross is extremely careful in all its procedures of questioning and testing; you cannot possibly be hurt physically by its procedures. The Sheboygan Avenue center is open Mondays 12 - 4 PM, Tuesdays 12 - 6 PM, Wednesdays 9 AM - 1 PM, Thursdays Noon - 7 PM, Fridays 9 AM - 1 PM, & Saturdays 8 AM - noon. Let’s increase Prairie Society participation!