



PRAIRIE FIRE

... 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. *From Prairie's Bond Of Union*
The Prairie Fire is the newsletter of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society and is published semi-monthly.
e-mail version available

Monday, November 10, 1997

<http://www.execpc.com/~prairie/>

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DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

AMENDMENT TO THE PRAIRIE BY-LAWS

At the November Parish meeting, I will once again ask Prairie members to vote on an amendment to our By-Laws defining membership. When this amendment was put to a vote two years ago, I was, regrettably, out of town, and therefore, unable to justify, defend or explain its rational. I not only hope to be present this year, but am explaining the reasoning behind the amendment in advance, in the hope that you will think about it and discuss it with each other. The proposed change (addition is underlined; deletions lined out) is as follows:

Members of the Society are only those persons sixteen years or older who have signed the official Membership Book, and have either made a monetary pledge equal to or exceeding the annual area, district, and national dues, or have requested in writing a waiver of all or part of these dues. Members may resign from the Society by submitting a written resignation. Membership is also terminated when repeated attempts to locate a member over a two year period have been unsuccessful.

I have so far heard only two objections to this amendment. The first is the fear that this change will have an adverse effect on pledges. It seems to me highly unlikely that the extremely intelligent pledgees at Prairie would interpret our request for a written

indication of membership intent from non-pledgees as a license to decrease or eliminate their own pledges. The second objection to this amendment and the one most frequently heard is the reluctance to institute a monetary requirement for membership. To this, I can only reply, PLEASE re-read the proposed amendment. **No monetary pledge has ever been required for membership in Prairie, nor is it being required by this amendment.** The amendment simply asks that you indicate in writing whether you are a Prairie member or friend, and whether you are making a pledge, paying all or part of your fees, or are unable to do so. The annual pledge form can be designed to enable you to do this without pain, and can indicate what the annual fees are.

From the above explanation I hope you can see that the intent of this amendment is not to make a monetary contribution a requirement of membership, although we certainly hope members would help financially to the extent possible, but to give the treasurer and the finance and membership committees the information they need to determine what Prairie's membership is in the most convenient and expedient way. Under the present system, we go to our Membership Book with its multitude of names, many of whose owners have not been seen in a long time. We know where some of them live, while other's whereabouts are unknown. What do we do? Are they still members? Under the present By-Laws, someone must take the time and effort to track them down, determine their status, and persuade them to write a letter

of resignation. Otherwise, we must carry them on the books for two years before eliminating them as members. You may ask what difference an accurate membership count makes, but it matters in several ways whether we have a correct, a dependable, and an easy way to determine membership. Prairie currently pays \$52 per year in fees for each member. And, if you have signed the Membership Book, have not pledged, are no longer interested in belonging to Prairie, and have not written a letter of resignation, we must continue to pay these fees for you, even though you may no longer consider yourself a member. The number of delegates the society is entitled to sent to General Assembly is determined by the number of the Society's members, and several awards given to congregations are based on the participation of a percentage of their membership. Frankly, I find it quite disconcerting when I read documents and reports made by Prairie, and find, as I

OUR SOCIETY

Spanish Speakers Group

We will be taking a small vacation from the "potluck" part by meeting on Nov. 19th, Wed., at 6:30 PM at Taqueria Gila Monster (on King St. across from the Majestic downtown). Call Kate Tucker about a ride or other questions at 221-2168.

Annual Parish Meeting

Don't forget to be active in your society and attend the November 16th Potluck at 11:30 AM followed by the Annual Meeting at 12:45 PM.

Choir

Choir will be meeting at 9:00 AM every Sunday morning in November.

Orientation of New Members or the merely curious

There will be three consecutive Tuesday evening meetings here at Prairie for those who wish to learn more about us. November 18th - we will share our personal religious journeys up to this point; November 25th - what UU's believe (it is more than nothing); December 2nd - what Prairie can offer you and visa versa? The meetings will begin at 7:00 PM. If possible, call Erin Bosch at 238-6285 to express your interest in attending.

have over the past year, that in Sept'95 our membership was reported as 113, in July '96 (the same church year) it was published as 119, in April '97, it was listed as 103, and one month later, in May '97, it was listed at 128. Are these figures possible, or is there a problem in the way we are counting people?

I urge you to vote for this amendment. Simplify the definition of membership, remove the burden of locating and verifying membership from our volunteers and shift the responsibility of confirming their membership to our members. Save Prairie the expense of paying for people who no longer consider themselves members, and finally, enable us to accurately report the correct membership figures for our society early at the beginning of our fiscal year, rather than at its end or not at all.

Submitted by Pat Watkins

Prairie Youth Group (PYGS) Party

On Saturday, November 22nd, from 7:30 PM to 11:00 PM the PYGS will have a party at Prairie. Come check it out!

General Assembly Memories

Jennie Mae Rall, an 87 year old dynamo, who is a member of First UU Society has brought (to our back bench) a box containing six program notebooks of General Assemblies she has attended. Feel free to borrow any tp browse from them. She will be out of Madison for five or six months at least.

A Letter To Prairie Society Members

Dear friends, if you missed hearing the Sunday service November 2nd, you can still experience a meaningful wiff of the thoughts expressed in our meeting that morning. Karen Gross' words about a week she had spent in Door County invited us to share our remembrances of our own individual relationships with nature--and the many members' words made that hour a very touching experience.

People who think they have a religious communion with nature in the Arboretum or on the gold course---have missed what enriches my life for each week to come: the words (and

smiles, and laughs, and eye contact) that knit us together in an empathy hard to describe but very real. I picked up from the floor, when it was over, one of the quotes she had read to us:

"It must have been late Spring, for I remember that the ice had already broken and the cold weather had passed from the Lake Michigan shoreline. I was a high school dropout, an unruly dissident not quite drinking or voting age; in short, a rebel without any good cause. I was a gandy dancing on a track repair crew in the steel mills-doing anything I could to keep from working indoors-and hoping to save enough money to try my luck again with formal education in the Fall."

"At that moment, my mind was neither on the work before me nor on the prospects of school. I had glanced up from driving spikes into railroad ties, and had caught sight of a half-dozen blue herons loping by above me, looking for a place to land."

Each one of us present thought of some poignant precious memory of our own. THANKS for the sharing! By now you know my quirk of remembering bits of poetry; what came to mind then was part of "Daffodils" by William Wordsworth.

"But oft when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
That is the bliss of solitude...."

But if you missed that memorable Sunday morning meeting, the tape that Laurie Larson was running for us has much of the ambiance of the program, and it will be available next Sunday for borrowing. We probably do not, often enough, use that way of "reconnecting". Barbara Rames.

Congratulations To Barbara Rames

Barbara was nominated for the J. Martin Wolman Outstanding Service for Youth Award in Madison. Thank you for all you do Barbara.

Childcare Available by Prairie Member

Susan Vennard is offering childcare in her home on Mandan Crescent Monday through Friday. You can reach her at 233-1816.

Getting to Know Gail Coover

Gail Coover is a woman who has worked, studied and traveled in her quest to find out what she wanted to do with her life.

Born in northwest Indiana, Gail attended the Presbyterian Church, a denomination she left at an early age. Her resolve was to escape the Midwest. In later years she added the goal of becoming an international journalist.

Coover's first venture at independence was to enroll at Indiana University at Bloomington where she majored in journalism and French. Following graduation, Coover struck out for Strasbourg, France. Here she decided that she would be an international journalist. As she explored this appealing career, she came to the conclusion that, at least at this time, it was not for her. The reason was because as a journalist dealing with foreign policy issues, she could not be as critical as she believed she would have to be.

Coover's next venture was to acquire funds to pay for a trip to Morocco. Driving cab turned out to be the most lucrative means of raising those needed dollars to visit her best friend who was serving in the Peace Corps at the time. She then spent three months visiting American and Moroccan friends.

Returning to the states, Coover enrolled at the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor. She was still interested in international journalism and sought a master's degree in communications.

However, a master's degree did not open enough doors for her so she moved to Los Angeles to attend USC and receive a PhD. One of the main reasons for her interest in USC was the presence of three professors who were doing research in the areas where Coover wanted to work -- the racial and gender aspects of stereo-typing.

Finally Coover completed her doctorate and applied for a job at UW-Madison in the Dept. of Communication Arts and was accepted, starting her new job in January of 1996. During this period, Coover met Mark Wehrly at a USC party for graduate students. They fell in love and were married in August of 1996.

Recognizing that they were going to be sinking roots in the Madison area, the young couple

chose to join the Prairie Society. Another factor in their choice to settle in Wisconsin was the easily accessible beauty of the state. These decisions meant that Coover would once more call the Midwest home.

UPCOMING PROGRAMS

November 16

#2 of Issues in Public Education

The guest speaker will be Virginia Henderson, former director of the Diversity 7 Advocacy department of the Madison School District. Dr. Henderson is currently chairing the "Schools of Hope" committee on parent involvement. She will speak on educational issues affecting students of color and other protected classes. This lay ministry is led by Barbara Golden.

November 23

Abraham's Dream

Two and a half months in South India: an attempt to start a progressive school in a remote rural site. Led by Marcia and Dave Johnson.

November 30

Thanksgiving Intergenerational Program

Toby Pachciarz-Wacker, Nicholas Rosebear-Ace, Mei Lien Converse, Judy Pachciarz-Wacker, Robin Carre, Mike Sheehy and friend will be presenting this program.

December 7

Christmas Eve: From the Outside Looking In

Rosemarie Lester will be presenting. More info in the next newsletter.



PRAIRIE CALENDAR

Sunday, November 16

9:00 AM; Choir Rehearsal
10:00 AM "# Two of Issues In Public Education".
Guest speaker Virginia Henderson.
11:30 AM; Potluck
12:45 PM; Prairie Annual Meeting

Tuesday, November 18

7:00 PM; Prairie Orientation-sharing of our personal religious journeys up to this point.
6:45 PM; GLSEN (Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network) meets at the Central Madison Public Library.

Wednesday, November 19

6:30 PM; Spanish Speakers Gathering at Taqueria Gila Monster downtown.

Saturday, November 22

7:30 - 11:00 PM; PYG's Party at Prairie.

Sunday, November 23

9:00 AM; Choir Rehearsal
10:00 AM; "Abraham's Dream" led by David & Marcia Johnson.

Tuesday, November 25

7:00 PM; Prairie Orientation-what UU's believe.

Sunday, November 30

9:00 AM; Choir Rehearsal
10:00 AM; "Thanksgiving Intergenerational Program"

Tuesday, December 2

7:00 PM; Prairie Orientation-what can Prairie offer you and vice versa?

Sunday, December 7

10 AM; "Christmas Eve: From the Outside Looking In", presented by Rosemarie Lester.

Sunday, December 14

Renoir Exhibit Bus Trip to Chicago

Next Prairie Fire Deadline is November 16th.