



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." (Bond of Union)

February 11, 2005

Prairie Fire is the semi-monthly newsletter of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. The two most recent issues may be seen at www.prairie.madison.uua.org

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PRAIRIE CALENDAR

Sunday, February 13

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

☞ 10:00 a.m. "Valentine's Day Intergenerational," presented by the Religious Education Committee.

☞ 11:45 a.m. Book Club at Prairie.

Wednesday, February 16

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Saturday, February 19

2:00 p.m. Playreaders outing to the Bartell Theatre to see "Signs of Intelligent Life in the Universe."

Sunday, February 20

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

☞ 10:00 a.m. "Our Dynamic UU Principles," presented by the Program Committee.

Tuesday, February 22

☞ 2:00 p.m. Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood West

Wednesday, February 23

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

☞ 7:30 p.m. Humanist Discussion Group meets at Prairie on the topic, "The Conflict Between Darwinism and Religion," led by Galen Smith.

Sunday, February 27

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

☞ 10:00 a.m. "Creativity...The Best Medicine," presented by Metje Butler.

☞ 12:00 noon. Lunch and annual Service Auction.

(☞) = *Details follow in this issue.*

NEXT PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINE: FEBRUARY 20

Friday-Sunday, April 15-17

UUA Central Midwest District Assembly, Arlington Heights, Illinois

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, February 13

The annual Valentine's Day intergenerational program is again presented by the Religious Education Committee. We'll be enjoying love in some of its more light-hearted forms—poetry, song, and of course we'll be making valentines! Feel free to bring a short poem or two of your own (family-friendly, please) to share, and be ready to let your creative juices flow.

Sunday, February 20

Unitarian Universalist principles present an awesome challenge. UU congregations are meeting this challenge in exciting ways, which members of the Program Committee will briefly review. In small groups we will ponder our beliefs in relation to the principles and share the way those beliefs govern our actions and our well-being. For people who are new to Prairie and for regulars struggling to connect names with new faces, this program offers an easy way to "break bread together" and get better acquainted.

Sunday, February 27

For the program, "Creativity...The Best Medicine," Metje Butler speaks on experiences she has had using creativity as an implement for healing. Several of her art works will be on display.

OUR SOCIETY

PRAIRIE BOOK CLUB'S NEXT SELECTION

The Prairie Book Club meets at Prairie on **February 13**, starting about 11:45 a.m. We will discuss *Krakatoa, The Day the World Exploded: August 27, 1883*, by Simon Winchester (385 pages). The explosion of the volcano-island Krakatoa (near Java) also caused a tsunami. You can find more details and a reading guide at <http://www.bookbrowse.com/>.

HUMANIST DISCUSSION GROUP NEWS

The humanist discussion group, started by a group of Prairie members, continues to grow. More than 20 attended our lunch and discussion gathering at the Prairie Meeting House on January 16, including several from outside the membership of Prairie. We discussed *Humanism and Its Aspirations, Humanist Manifesto III*, a statement of humanist principles developed in 2003 by the American Humanist Association as a successor to the original Humanist Manifesto of 1933. We all seemed to find ourselves in accord with this brief document, though some would have favored a document that went further and was more specific.

Drawing on her own background as a religious humanist, the Rev. Sarah Oelberg provided some very informative background on the development of humanism along secular and religious lines in America and within the Unitarian Universalist denomination. We also talked about the possibility of affiliating with the American Humanist Association, and about possible names for our group, matters we decided to pursue further at our next monthly meeting.

We will follow the popular meal and discussion format when we next gather at the Meeting House on **Wednesday, February 23, 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.**, following the Midweek Meal potluck (which starts at 6:30 as usual). Galen Smith will lead a discussion on *The Conflict Between Darwinism and Religion*. Those interested in the humanist discussions can stay informed by sending e-mail to rwpark@loonfoot.com asking to be added to the humanist email list, or by checking the Events page of our Web site at <http://humanist.madisonwi.us>.

Bob Park

PRAIRIE MEETING FEBRUARY 20 WILL DISCUSS BUILDING CONCEPT DRAWINGS

Prairie members will have the opportunity to discuss the concept drawings on display outside the kitchen in a special congregational meeting after the Sunday service on February 20. Feedback will be solicited by the Long Range Planning Committee.

Please take some time to familiarize yourself with these concept drawings for a building adjacent to Eage School in Fitchburg.

The Long Range Planning Committee also invites members to submit information about alternate sites as soon as possible. See the January 7 *Prairie Fire* issue for more information.

PRAIRIE ELDERS MET ON FEBRUARY 22

Prairie Elders meets Tuesday, February 22, at 2:00 p.m. in the second floor activity room of the Oaks Building at Oakwood Village West on Mineral Point Road. Topic: Age Discrimination. Participants are welcome to relate examples of age discrimination and offer suggestions for effectively counteracting it.

Prairie Elders was organized in August 2004, to provide mutual support and good times for members and friends over 65. The group has around 25 participants, including a few south-migrated snow birds.

This animated group has a preference for lively topics, which have ranged from the presidential election to a moving photo exhibit of family, friends, mentors, and pets who have influenced our lives. The upcoming discussion on age discrimination was suggested by a member who recently experienced it.

Humor and support are a given at each meeting. Sharing tips is common. A casual comment at the January meeting resulted in a valuable exchange that provided one person a needed piece of equipment and another some welcome space in the living room.

For further details contact Doleta Chapru, 238-4970; Donna Murdoch, 260-8551; or Rosemary Dorney, 238-4382.

2005 SERVICE AUCTION IS COMING!

The Annual Service Auction is scheduled for **February 27**, at 12:00 immediately following the Sunday program. We will follow the our fun-filled tradition and have Orange Schroeder as our auctioneer. Let's see if we can top previous years in donations of original and very much needed contributions. Of course we want everyone to attend even if you cannot donate a service, to bid on services offered by others!

A luncheon will be provided at a modest cost and child care will be provided.

Last year donated services included home-baked breads, cakes, and salsa; a bed and breakfast weekend; musical evenings; several different home-cooked dinners for 8 plus people, dreamcatchers, a wilderness adventure, piecrust making workshop, music lessons, pet sitting, housecleaning, child care, swim party, a test drive in a mini coupe, portrait sessions, and assistance with various computer, CD and Web page projects. It never fails to amaze me how many talents and skills emerge in time for the auction. We have a request already from a member who would like to bid on pet-sitting again this year.

Consider the talents and skills that you have to offer that others might appreciate. Please call, write, or e-mail Kathy Converse at conversekrtn (at) msn.com, 238-1856, or 630 Pickford Street, Madison 53711. Call or e-mail us now and save us a phone call.

Kathy Converse, Finance Chair

(We protect our e-mail addresses. Substitute @ for (at) and type addresses without spaces.—Ed.)

PRAIRIE WEB SITES

Prairie UU Society:

prairie.madison.uua.org

Prairie News Group:

groups.yahoo.com/group/prairienews/

Prairie Views Group:

groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/

Social Action:

socialaction.homestead.htm

Humanist Discussion Group:

<http://humanist.madisonwi.us>

Long Range Planning Committee:

[www.execpc.com/~prairieu/ planning](http://www.execpc.com/~prairieu/planning) (no space)

(For this last address, type it directly into your browser. Omit the space before "planning".)

Thursday, February 10, is the Islamic New Year, 1426. This day is a reminder of the prophet Muhammad's Hijrah (migration) from Makkah (Mecca) to Madinah (Medina) in 622 C.E. Some modern-day Muslims send greeting cards and celebrate the new year. However, no religious services are associated with the holiday.

DENOMINATIONAL AFFAIRS

UPDATE ON THE UU-UNO

Education, because of its monumental impact on society, has been chosen for the UU-UNO's 2005 Every Child is Our Child program, which aims to underwrite the education of 1200 children orphaned by AIDS in eastern Ghana. The goal is to support these children throughout their schooling, ultimately expanding to help children in other countries as well. The first priorities in this effort will be:

1. An assessment of the specific needs of these children, who have lost one or both parents to AIDS or are caring for their ill parents. These children are either alone, or bearing responsibility for other children. Some have never been to school.
2. Identification of the local schools in the Many Krobo District which can provide education and other basic needs and monitor the children's progress.
3. Funding for start-up costs. In the years to come, the UU-UNO will follow the children's progress and witness the changes in their lives.

To be a part of this journey from the beginning, become a member of the UN-UNO. Contact Pat Watkins at 233-5795.

Pat Watkins

PRAIRIE OFFICE ADMINISTRATOR HOURS

Mondays 8–10 p.m.; Saturdays 10 a.m.–12 noon

SHAAREI SHAMAYIM CALENDAR

Saturdays 8:45 a.m.–1:15 p.m.

Prairie Liaison: Celeste Robins 249–5933

UUA GENERAL ASSEMBLY EXHIBIT INFO

This year the General Assembly will be held in Fort Worth, Texas, the city “Where the West Begins.”

Approximately 60,000 square feet will be available for GA exhibitors.

Congregations can reserve space singly or cooperatively, and are encouraged to “incorporate the talents of congregation members into their exhibit space.” Members can also sell items through UNI-UNIQUES on a consignment basis (for more information on UNI-UNIQUES, contact Nancy Warren-Oliver at (585) 248-5688, email nancy@uniuniques.com, or visit www.uniuniques.com. Requests forms for exhibitor space or ad space in the GA program must be delivered to the GA office by February 2, 2005. Call (617) 948-4209 or gaoffice@uua.org for details.

MEMBERSHIP

Please welcome our new members!

Ron and Corrine Hornbeck (and daughters
Rowan and Cadence, and son Graham)
4213 Manitou Way, Madison, WI 53711
274-3895
ron (at) obviousproductions.com
corrine (at) obviousproductions.com

(We protect our e-mail addresses. Substitute @ for (at) and type addresses without spaces.—Ed.)

REMEMBERING DAN WILLARD

As reported by Rick Owens, Prairie friend Dan Willard passed away at the age of 70 on January 21, 2005, at his home in Bloomington, Indiana. Memorial services were held at the Unitarian Universalist Church in Bloomington.

Dan was an ecologist and wetlands biologist, and an inspiration to many colleagues and students. After teaching for 30 years, he served as president of the Sycamore Land Trust in Indiana from 2001 to 2004. “During his term as president, the land trust really took off,” according to a spokesman for the group. “The acreage we protected grew about 600 percent during that period.” The land trust protects 3,500 acres across 12 counties in south-central Indiana.

Rick wanted to share the following remembrance that his father, a close friend of Dan's, wrote:

Dan was a rare individual: a competent scientist and naturalist, with a deep concern for the natural environment, a kind and generous person, and a genuinely funny man with a light-hearted view of the crazy world we live in.

My favorite memory of him relates to a float trip down the east fork of White River. About 14 years ago, I built a 17-foot wooden boat, based on the lines of the combination rowing/sailing boats used as water taxis in the New York and Boston harbors a century before. Dan saw the boat and fell in love with it. We named it “Callipygous,” Greek for “having beautiful buttocks.”

In the late summer of 1995, he, my son Rick and I launched the boat, powered by a small outboard and laden with food, beer, and a tent in the tailwater below Williams Dam, west of Bedford. We putt-putted slowly down White River, in near idyllic surroundings. For miles we saw no people nor houses. Wildlife was everywhere. There were bald eagles, and the trees near the water showed the toothmarks of hungry beavers. (There) were a pair of black swans, incredibly handsome creatures with glossy black feathers and bright red beaks....The whole trip was like a hike in the Sierra with John Muir as our personal guide....

Dan loved to row the boat, and kept it much of the time in subsequent summers. I wish he could be here to use it this summer. Dan was a unique and wonderful man. We'll miss him.

PROGRAM

BOOKS FROM “DEATH AS PART OF LIFE'S JOURNEY”

Someone suggested I list in the *Prairie Fire* the books I referred to in my presentation on January 23. The ones I specifically referred to were:

- *A Year to Live*, by Stephen Levine
- *Buddhism Without Belief*, by Stephen Batchelor
- *The Tao of Physics*, by Fritjof Capra
- *No Death, No Fear*, by Thich Nhat Hanh
- *How We Die*, by Sherwin Nuland
- *The Fall of Freddie the Leaf*, by Leo Buscaglia (the children's story)

There are others, if anyone is interested.

Linda Sheehy

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hello, UUs!

I'm a UU from southeastern Wisconsin, working with Christians for Equality in Wisconsin www.marriage-equality-wi.org, a group of people of faith who support LGBTQ rights. Our state legislature will be voting on a proposed amendment to the Wisconsin constitution that would define marriage "or anything similar" as between a man and a woman. Such an amendment would likely result in rescinding currently offered partnership benefits, as well as in denying equal rights for LGBTQ people in the future. CEW aims to publicize the fact that Christians and other people of faith oppose the amendment and support LGBTQ rights. We held a well-attended seminar in Milwaukee on December 4 and many members of the press said they were surprised to hear that Christians opposed the amendment. That's why we still have work to do. You can help prevent the erosion of equal rights:

1. Contact your state senator and arrange to meet so you can express your opposition to this amendment.
2. Write a letter to the editor of your local paper expressing your opposition to the amendment.
3. Attend the CEW Rally Day on **Tuesday, February 22, 10:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

The CEW Rally Day Schedule

10:30—Press conference.

11:00-Noon—Advocacy training with UU social justice coordinator Wendy Cooper.

12:15-12:45—Capitol Rally. Music and speakers.

1:00—Constituent meetings with state senators.

Call your senator's office and make an appointment.

(For help, see www.legis.state.wi.us/waml.)

Please send a reply email to me to let me know you'll be there. We'd like to get an idea of how many to expect and we'd like to expect MANY!!!

For more info, see: www.marriage-equality-wi.org

In Peace,

Jennifer Thomson

United Unitarian and Universalist Society,

Mukwonago, Wisconsin

OTHER NEWS

IHN RUBY SLIPPERS BENEFIT: THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE HOME

The Interfaith Hospitality Network invites you to its annual Ruby Slippers Benefit to support programs for homeless families with children. The benefit takes place on **Saturday, February 28**, at 7:00 p.m. at the Concourse Hotel.

A silent auction will begin at 7:00 p.m., and a live comedy auction, hosted by Jonathan and Kitty from 105.5 MMM, will start at 8:30 pm. Tickets are \$35 per person. A table of eight can be purchased for \$280. For more information, call 294-7998.

BUS TOUR OF CIVIL RIGHTS SITES

Have you ever wanted to see some of the sites of the civil rights movement: the Edmund Pettus bridge in Selma; 16th Street Baptist Church in Birmingham; Money, Mississippi, where Emmett Till was lynched? These and many more are included in a tour being offered this spring by the Unitarian Universalist Fellowship of Elkhart, Indiana.

The **April 9-17** tour has been planned and will be led by the Rev. Dr. Gordon Gibson, minister of the Elkhart Unitarian Universalist Fellowship, who was involved in the early stages of the 1965 Selma voting rights campaign and was the Unitarian Universalist minister in Mississippi, 1969-1984. The Rev. Ed Harris, a native of Birmingham, will also be on the tour as a resource.

The tour, by luxury motor coach, will include all admission charges, overnight accommodations, and most meals. Videos on the bus and visits with 1960s activists will supplement the site visits. The tour will begin and end in Birmingham, Alabama.

For full details on cost and schedule, you can go to the Elkhart Fellowship's Web site at www.uufe.org. You can also request a printed version by writing UUFE, P.O. Box 584, Elkhart, IN 46515, or by e-mailing judygibson@juno.com. Registration is on a first-come basis with only 30 seats available.

A participant in the 2004 Tour said, "the stories from the folks who were 'in the trenches' make the Movement come alive." Another participant described it as "seeing the Movement through the real experiences of real people."

UUSC NEWS BULLETIN

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC): advancing human rights and social justice in the United States and throughout the world.

UUSC, UUA join in humanitarian relief for earthquake/tsunami victims

The Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC) is committed to helping to address the immediate dangers faced by survivors of the earthquake and tsunami, as well as helping restore livelihoods they have lost. Fishing communities in all areas have been hardest hit. In the months to come, we will be working to help these communities so that the fishing boats can once again provide an income for those who work on them and provide food for the communities surrounding them.

So far, your generosity and compassion has raised \$984,000 for the UUSC-UUA Tsunami Relief Fund. Read stories of those who survived the disaster, how UUs and UU congregations are responding and how your donation is being used: www.uusc.org/tsunami.

Action alert: U.S. must help end 'disaster' in Congo

While the world's attention is focused on the devastation caused by the tsunami, another major disaster continues to take its toll in Central Africa. With a loss of more than 3.5 million lives, and an infrastructure of basic medical and social services left in ruins, the Democratic Republic of Congo has paid a high price for a six-year war. For peace and stability to return to the Congo, governments such as the U.S. must provide support to ensure that elections take place as planned in June 2005.

Restoring stability to the eastern part of the Congo is the most vital issue at hand in order to curtail the violence. Increased U.N. presence, a firm commitment to protect civilians, and an increase in humanitarian aid to help save lives by meeting basic needs will be beneficial in putting the Congo back on a track towards peace and reconciliation.

Urge President Bush and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to support peace and successful elections in the Congo. For an action alert, visit: <http://www.uusc.org/news/alert013105.html>.

Action alert: Stop the "Salvadoran Option" - U.S. considers death squad tactics in Iraq

The U.S. Department of Defense, faced with the growing quagmire in Iraq, is planning to develop and utilize death squad teams similar to those which ravaged the populations of El Salvador and Guatemala throughout the 1980s. The Central American death squads, which were linked to the U.S.-backed

military forces, were responsible for systematic war crimes, and for the worst human rights violations in the Western Hemisphere. U.S. officials are calling the new plans for Iraq the "Salvadoran Option."

Contact your members of Congress now to tell them to strongly oppose the creation or support of any kind of de facto death squads in Iraq. For an action alert, visit: <http://www.uusc.org/news/alert011305.html>.

Sudan peace agreement reached; genocide continues

For millions in southern Sudan, the new year has finally brought them peace and a journey back home. On Jan. 9, the government of Sudan signed a peace agreement with the Sudanese Peace and Liberation Army (SPLA), ending 21 years of war that claimed the lives of two million people and displaced over four million.

While this hard-won peace agreement is a victory for all sides, it does not recognize the war that is being waged by the government against the people in the Darfur region of western Sudan.

Info: <http://www.uusc.org/info/article013105.html>.

UUSC joins suit to protest 'anti-terrorist' rules

The UUSC has joined more than a dozen organizations, including the American Civil Liberties Union and Amnesty International USA, in withdrawing from the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC) and pursuing legal action against the government's new "anti-terrorist" regulations.

UUSC withdrew from the CFC, a workplace-giving program, in protest of the new federal policy that requires participating organizations to certify they do not employ or provide funds to people or organizations identified on lengthy government lists as suspected terrorists.

Info: <http://www.uusc.org/info/article012905.html>.

UUSC responds to Haiti disaster

In October, floods and winds from Hurricane Jeanne took the lives of thousands and left thousands more homeless. With support from the UUSC Haiti Relief Fund, some local organizations have begun the process of rebuilding lives and livelihoods in the wake of the devastating storm.

UUSC channeled donations through the Lambi Fund of Haiti, an organization already operating in Haiti on programs of social and economic empowerment.

Info: <http://www.uusc.org/info/article013005.html>