



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)

December 2, 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, December 4

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. "Jesus and Empire," presented by Bob Reuschlein.

*11:45 a.m. Discussion of possible building design

Wednesday, December 7

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal@ Prairie

Thursday, December 8

7:00 p.m. Social Action Committee meeting, home of Bob and Barb Park

Sunday, December 11

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. Children's R.E. Nifty Gifty program

*10:00 a.m. "Lighting Our Lives with Hope—The Christmas Message," presented by the Rev. Jody Whelden.

*11:30 a.m. Book Club has potluck and meeting to discuss *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story* by Timothy Tyson

Wednesday, December 14

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal@ Prairie

Sunday, December 18

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. Symbol Tree intergenerational service, presented by Erin Bosch.

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

NEXT PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINE: SUNDAY, DEC. 11

Wednesday, December 21

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal@ Prairie

Sunday, December 25

6:00 p.m. Vesper service of carols and readings

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, December 4

Bob Reuschlein spent five years in two-hour classes every Sunday afternoon discussing the "Teachings of Jesus" lead by Boyce Tetz at the local Friends Meeting House on Roberts Court. Starting with the book "Jesus Before Christianity" by Albert Nolan, he learned this man was far more subtle than the simplistic deity he's been portrayed as by modern religion. His message of radical egalitarianism contrasts with the "corrupted by power" individuals who preach in his name today.

Marcus Borg, one of the main Jesus Seminar types, has concluded that the main mission of Jesus was to challenge the system of dominance of some people over others. In this very fundamental way he challenges the essence of empire, which is control. That control alienates the rich and powerful from others, diminishing them as "hollow sepulchers full of dust", as they cut themselves off from the "kingdom of heaven", i.e., enjoying the full fellowship of human experience. Thus, we can see Jesus as one of the first Unitarian Universalists. Bob will cite several scriptural passages to support his conclusions.

Sunday, December 11

The holiday season is a time of hearing stories about hope in the world. These include the story of the birth of Jesus, the burning oil lamps of Chanukah (Jewish), the African American celebration of Kwanzaa, and all people around the world ushering in the New Year. This morning the Rev. Jody Whelden looks at the story in the Gospel of Luke in the months before the birth of Jesus. The story engenders hope for values that prioritize (1) love of one's neighbor and (2) the needs of society's downtrodden...not only then, but today.

Note from Rev. Jody: This service, "Lighting Our Lives with Hope – The Christmas Message," will use the Christian Scripture text about the weeks before the birth of Jesus. One of the best ways to study religious texts is to create your own impressions before absorbing others' opinions. For those interested in reading the passages ahead of time, the short version would be Luke 1:47-55. Jesus' mother-to-be, Mary, is prophesying about her unborn child. The long version would be all of Luke 1. Luke is often cited as the most beautiful of the four Gospels in the Christian Scriptures. It is assumed the author was an evangelist and did not know Jesus, who died at about 33. Like all the Gospels, Luke was written in the late first century.

Sunday, December 18

Our traditional Symbol Tree intergenerational service begins with the RE students in a candlelight Santa Lucia procession. After a story and some singing, we have the symbol tree ceremony. You are invited to bring a symbol of some noteworthy event from your life in the past year, to say a few words about it, and then place your symbol on the tree.

Poems, other short readings, or quotations with a more universal quality are also welcome. Please bring cookies or other finger foods to share after the service.

OUR SOCIETY

HOLIDAY NEWSLETTERS

If you write a holiday newsletter for friends and family, we invite you to share it with Prairie members by putting a copy in the decorated folder on the back table of the meeting room.



THE VIEW FROM MY BRANCH



Prairie is considering growing. Some of the transitions you are considering are moving to a different building, a different size and perhaps an ordained minister. I am going to begin a series of columns that will share basic information about churches in transition.

In this issue, I want to talk about the size of churches and their characteristics. For this topic, I have depended heavily on, and have borrowed generously from, Alice Mann's book, *The In Between Church*, published by the Alban Institute, www.alban.org.

Research shows that there are predictable characteristics for churches, depending on size. Keep in mind, Prairie has 85 members as of last week. It is growing from a Matriarchal/Patriarchal Church to a Pastoral Size Church.

The Matriarchal/Patriarchal Church (up to 50 people attending)

The healthy small church is also called a Family Church. It is run by 1 or 2 major families and has the sense of, "we all know each other." The part-time minister's main job is primarily pastoral care and a respectable Sunday service. The congregation may be known in the community by one particular identity, like a specific social justice project it maintains or kind of program it offers.

The Pastoral Size Church (50-150 attending)

This healthy pastoral size church is like a multi-cell organism-- "a coalition of several overlapping family-friendship networks." It unifies around the minister as a point of organization and religious leadership. It requires strong lay leadership and a good relationship between the Board and the pastor. It is big enough to look to the visitor like a "real" church, and small enough to feel personal. It is known in the community for 2 or 3 specific projects and Sunday Services with a personal touch.

The Program Size Church (150-350 attending)

This church is known for a variety of programs which reflect a variety of interests. It is known for the quality of its programs. It has a larger and more diverse membership from a wide arch of interests, and age groups. The minister creates Sunday Services and is entrusted with the Free Pulpit of the

congregation. S/he is depended on as the religious leader and supervising staff and programs. Ordained and lay ministries expand in time and scope. The healthy church uses a strong democratic process and and creates a sense of excitement, possibility and purpose.

The Corporate Size Church (350-500+)

This church has a strong institutional presence in the community. There is a sizeable professional staff a notable building, a variety of services, educational opportunities, spiritual experiences and social interactions are available. The 2-5 clergy people focus on the large worship service, head an extensive staff and offer leadership to ordained and lay leadership alike. There is a prominent Senior Pastor, usually well known for excellence in preaching, supervision of the large staff and managing the day-to-day operations of the church.

I encourage you all to look for Alice's book, or others that help describe what to expect when changing. As we all know from living a human life, the changes are exciting, anxiety-provoking, and well worth it as we make it to the next stage.

*The Rev. Jody Whelden
Consulting Minister*

BUILDING DESIGN PRESENTATION

Please come next **Sunday, December 4**, from 11:45 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. (after the Prairie Program) to learn about and provide feedback on two possible designs for a new Prairie building in Fitchburg Center. BWZ architects have been very responsive in providing imaginative designs with the features asked for in earlier input sessions.

The Prairie Building and Fundraising committees have worked with Bob Shipley and Christine Chambliss of BWZ Architects to prepare possible 1-story and 2-story designs. The features of the designs will be described in a medium amount of detail (floor plans, landscaping, parking). We hope a lot of members and friends will come to provide feedback. We would like to know what you like about the designs and what improvements should be made.

Please bring finger foods to share prior to the discussion. Child care will be provided.

Ken Skog and Norma Briggs

CIVIL RIGHTS BOOK IS DECEMBER BOOK CLUB SELECTION

Timothy Tyson, son of the white United Methodist minister whose family was driven out of Oxford, North Carolina, for trying to get the town to face its racism after the murder of the 23-year-old Vietnam veteran Henry Marrow, is now a professor of Afro-American studies at the UW–Madison. He says this event and the hell that broke loose in Oxford because of it during the summer of 1970 marked him “for good and forever.” His biography and history, *Blood Done Sign My Name: A True Story*, is the Prairie Book Club selection for **December 11**.

The Prairie Book Club is open to all who have read the book or just wish to hear Prairie people discuss the book. Bring food to share. Usually the discussion starts about 11:30 and ends by 1:30.

Mary Mullen

CRADLE CLUB BABY ITEMS DONATIONS

Don't forget to pick up that new baby item for the Cradle Club when you're out shopping. Check your local Walgreens; your gift need not come from Neiman-Marcus!

Pat Watkins

HUMANLIGHT HUMANIST HOLIDAY

Fellow freethinkers, now we have *our own* December holiday and it's called HumanLight! Join us for our festive HumanLight celebration, cosponsored by Prairie's Humanist Union and the Doubters Group of FUS, to be held for the first time at First Unitarian Society in the Lower Meeting House on **December 23**. We'll begin with a potluck dinner at 6 p.m., followed by a fun program, plus singing Humanist-friendly songs, and much more.

Mark your calendar and go to <http://humanist.madisonwi.us/events.htm> for important details. Space is limited, so RSVP quickly via the Web form provided (or via e-mail to humanist@madisonwi.us or a phone call to Barb and Bob Park). Of this year's holiday celebration we can cheerfully say: "Don't 'Myth' It!"

CONGREGATION VISIONING WORKSHOP RESULTS OCTOBER 30

About 40 Prairie members and friends attended a workshop on Sunday, October 30 where Jim Hobart, the Congregational Services Director for CMWD, guided attendees in several small groups to answer two questions about Prairie's future:

1. What do you envision for Prairie in 5 years?
2. What should be in a 2-year plan to reach these visions?

The small groups were not asked to reach consensus and a wide range of answers were recorded. To report the answers here I have attempted to organize the answers in two ways. First, I have organized the responses as they pertain to

1. Ultimate outcomes for Prairie
2. Intermediate outcomes
3. Intermediate means (to achieve outcomes)
4. Ultimate means (needed for intermediate means and for outcomes)

Within these categories I have organized by topics such as RE, growth and support of members, ministry, and so on. In my view, the first of the discussion questions, "What do you envision for Prairie in 5 years", is primarily about "ultimate outcomes" and "intermediate outcomes", and the second question is primarily about "intermediate means" and "ultimate means".

So here is what I came up with in grouping the responses. Sometimes items appear in more than one place since I was not sure where to place them on the "ends-means" spectrum.

Ultimate outcomes for Prairie

Religious Education

1. Active education program for all ages—including adult RE programs
2. Loud, happy, friendly RE program with 75-100 kids, with the ability to offer more (smaller) classes

Nurture & support members' inclusion, well being, growth

3. Programs that affirm range of points of view—theological, cultural

4. Small groups for community, e.g., families, elders
5. More specialized groups/programs--more than Sunday
6. Ongoing meditation group
7. More thoughtful way of greeting and including new members/Buddy System for new members

8. Place where everyone is valued and has a role to play
9. Leadership opportunities for many people to participate
10. Vibrant musical and artistic program--build on or strengths

Community

11. Safe, civil atmosphere—so they want to continue participating for the next time
12. More sense of community w/ many issues behind us
13. More multicultural

Outreach

14. Broadened commitment in community for social action—adults and children
15. Expand our social action-service to the community—living our faith in action
16. Upstream promotion of social justice?? (UURHOME.COM—Fundraiser for church)

Intermediate outcomes

Membership growth

17. More members (double would be nice); Double # of families (pledging units); 200 families (pledging units) – 50 now; More members, but not more than 200; More members, but not too big
18. More mixed age – 20's, 30's, 40's
19. Greater diversity (incl. political, class, sexual, racial)
20. Younger average age of congregation
21. More kids and teenagers; More young families with children; More kids so there are cohorts
22. More poorer people or less affluent
23. More "sugar daddies/mommas" (to pay for new bldg!)

Community

24. Enthusiastic consensus for "Quality Growth"

Ministry and programming

25. Ministry—1/2 to F-T?; Perm min. longer term but P-T
26. F-T minister—retain lay-led pgms ; Perm P-T minister
27. Appealing to the 20's, 30's and 40's
28. Vibrant musical & artistic pgm--build on our strengths
29. Programs that affirm a range of points of view—theological, cultural

Outreach

30. Better known in community—stronger identity in Madison

Leadership/ growth opportunities

31. Leadership opportunities for many people to participate ; New people on the Board
32. Maintain the strength of our lay-led community—we don't want to be First Society

33. Good democratic process in place

Improved Facilities

- 34. In a new home, space will be accessible to everyone
- 35. Better RE space ; New child-friendly building
- 36. Adequate meeting spaces
- 37. Co-sharing of building with stable weekday tenants
- 38. In new building space for a library
- 39. New building –green as we can afford ; Have the plans completed for a “green” building
- 40. Break ground before deadline

Intermediate means

Religious Education

- 41. Adult RE programming (minimum monthly)
- 42. Increase and improve Youth RE

Growth in membership

- 43. Individualized attention to new members (Buddy)—invite people to specific things, make sure they get the newsletter, asked to join circle dinner, join, Prairie News, New Member Packet, Buddy, or assign someone to check that new people have the info they need
- 44. Greeting process & followup (Kris Long volunteered!)
- 45. Work on being a Welcoming Congregation (membership, hospitality, start ride-share program)
- 46. “New member Sunday”—everyone brings someone
- 47. Make it fun to be here
- 48. Advertise on WORT; Advertise at UW
- 49. Advertise at each others’ churches—UU –our own personalities (friendliness, chance for personal growth)
- 50. Well-known in community—publicity Logo?! Slogan?! “Brand that conveys”
- 51. Advertise our growth and desire for people who want to help us grow
- 52. Teens chat group on website

Professional Minister and staff

- 53. Ministry—half to full-time? ; Permanent minister—longer term but part-time; Full-time minister—retain lay-led programs ; Permanent part-time minister
- 54. Work effectively together with minister—Examples: Jody call new people; Adult RE; help Jody however she needs it; give Jody feedback; brainstorm—everyone together with Jody; Jody visit each Circle Dinner once?? (Controversial—effective use of time?)
- 55. RE—Keep RE Director longer than one year

Leadership/growth opportunities

- 56. Leadership opportunities for many people to participate ; New people on the Board

57. Maintain the strength of our lay-led community—we don’t want to be First Society

58. Good democratic process in place

Planning/conflict resolution/community building

- 59. Strategic plan...meet with UU fundraising experts ; Clarify and work towards a shared mission ; Mission statement every member can recite
- 60. Establish common goals so we can move forward with a minimal amount of rancor
- 61. Contingency plan in case we are not able to build
- 62. Remember why we are a community
- 63. Build a new reality—environment, social justice, sustainable
- 64. Conflict resolution in the face of change
- 65. Communicate better about land, building, financing with congregation

Outreach

- 66. Expanded cooperation with other UU congregations
- 67. Better known in community—“branding”
- 68. Letters to Editor regularly (PUU Social Action Committee)
- 69. Picket ; PUUS placards @ events or Banner (make a new smaller one)
- 70. Build a new reality—environment, social justice, sustainable
- 71. More community action involving whole congregation
- 72. Sponsor non-Christian Boy Scout & Girl Scout troops
- 73. Expand cooperation with other UU congregations
Keep community informed (at least other UU congreg's)

Administration and finance

- 74. More administrative staff—accounting, bldg custodian
- 75. Weekly ad (Sunday section)
- 76. Website—new design on the way ; Website updated, friendly and informative
- 77. More fundraisers—open to public—famous speakers

Ultimate means

Time, money, and people

- 78. Invest more ourselves—personal energy and money
- 79. Fundraising that is fun
- 80. More money ; Raise 1.25 million ; Encourage people to give generously ; Help us understand what generous means ; Raise money without neglecting outreach

Organization

- 81. Better organized

Ken Skog

MEDITATION GROUP FORMING

Have you always wanted to try meditation, but didn't know how to do it? Would you like an opportunity to reduce your stress in the middle of the week? Would you like to get together with like-minded UU's from other churches?

Here's your chance. Our minister (Jody Whelden) and members of Prairie UU Society are interested in starting a meditation group in January. We plan to meditate on Wednesdays at 6:00 pm at Prairie. The meditation group will meet the half hour before our mid-week potluck. We welcome your participation in the potluck as well.

If you are interested, please contact Judy Skog at 273-4813 or jaskog (at) tds.net.

MODIFICATION OF PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINES AND PUBLICATION DATES

To avoid conflict with holidays, the deadline and publication dates for the Prairie Fire in November and December will be advanced by one week:

<u>Deadline Date</u>	<u>Publication Date</u>
December 11	December 16



The normal newsletter deadlines of the first and third Sundays will resume in January.

MEMBERSHIP

Please note these updates:

Rev. Jody Whelden
minister (at) uuprairie.org

[Ed. Note: @ is replaced by (at) to keep these addresses from being used by unscrupulous individuals.]

PRAIRIE WEB SITES

Society Home Page: prairie.madison.uua.org
News Group: groups.yahoo.com/group/prairienews/
Views Group: groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/
Social Action: socialaction.madisonwi.us
Humanist Union: <http://humanist.madisonwi.us>
Long Range Planning: www.execpc.com/~prairieu/planning (no space)

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

WHY DOES IT GET DARK SO EARLY?

Have you noticed the sun is lower in the sky and that it sets earlier? We need sunlight--some more than others--to keep our balance. In fact, some people seem to need extra vitamin D during these months. Many of us, kids and adults, feel an extra stress from the holiday season. Maybe we should all take an extra nap!

Did you enjoy Thanksgiving? What lessons did your family share? I enjoyed learning a new song and listening to the flute and percussion ensemble in the service we shared. At the James Reeb service, members from 5 UU Churches talked about gratitude and friendship in wonderful ways. I hope people liked my Ding-Dong story.

We are getting ready for the Christmas, solstice, Chanukah, Kwanza and New Year holidays. Does your family celebrate one or more of them - any others? Can you help us learn about your traditions and rituals? Don't forget that we'll make holiday presents on Sunday, December 11 as we do our Nifty Gifty. We start a half-hour early that day. We're asking adults to help us--provide nice snacks or lead a project or help set up or do clean up or in other ways.

I think being a UU is difficult during these holidays. In comparison to some of our friends, we have an uncertain feeling about what or why we are celebrating. I always wondered why we don't sing Happy Birthday on Jesus' birthday--until I found out that some of us do. For me, talking about those uncertainties with our families and friends is a great form of religious education.

Please share with us--the RE Committee, teachers and director--any ideas, comments or concerns that your family has about Prairie RE. We also request your help, support and tolerance. Is there an activity or lesson that you can share with the Prairie kids--maybe during one of our YoUUth Circles?

Thank you. See you in church.

Bob Radford, DRE

NIFTY GIFTY

When: **Sunday, December 11**, starting at 9:30 am

Where: Prairie, downstairs

Who: All Prairie children & their guests, all ages

What is Nifty Gifty? It's a chance for kids to make gifts that kids can give to family and friends, teachers or classmates during the winter holidays. There will be eight different projects to do – plus, we'll wrap the gifts right there! We have snacks and music and FUN!

We need help: Adult volunteers are asked to lead projects - we supply the ideas & materials. Can you bring snacks? Help kids do wrapping? Be a DiscJockey? Set Up? Clean Up? Please call or e-mail Bob Radford or contact Kathy Converse.

Why do we care? Nifty Gifty is a Prairie tradition that has been going on for many years. It's special to a lot of people. We hope you join us to make this year's even better.

What should you bring?

- * A photo of yourself, about 2" by 2" - for a project
- * \$1 from each kid to help buy supplies - if you can
- * a list of who you want to give presents to

UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST NEWS

UUSC WORKSHOP OFFERED IN MILWAUKEE ON DECEMBER 10

Jackie Ladd will lead a workshop on the work of the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee on **December 10** at 10:00 a.m. at First Unitarian Society, Milwaukee.

From the workshop, we will join a vigil to speak out against torture, planned by Peace Action Milwaukee. The vigil will last from noon to 1:00 p.m. At the Ruess Federal Building at 3rd and Wisconsin Ave. in Milwaukee.

OFFICE MANAGER/ADMINISTRATOR SOUGHT

Seeking experienced office manager with excellent organizational and communication skills to run the office for a liberal religious organization's district office, located in a great Hillside (western suburb of Chicago) office building.

Bookkeeping/financial experience required (oversee operating budget; create and maintain income/expense records and reports; handle collection/disbursement of congregational, district and denominational funds), as well as computer skills: database management, desktop publishing, word processing and Web site updating. Professional attitude, attention to detail and ability to maintain confidentiality are required attributes. Will report to two district executives who travel, so initiative and ability to prioritize projects are important. Will supervise part-time office assistant and work with several other part-time employees who work out of the district office. College degree and minimum of five years office management experience preferred; event planning experience is helpful.

Salary: mid-thirties-commensurate with experience; health insurance (80%) and professional expense budget included; pension (10%) after one year of employment.

Send resume and references to Doris Davenport, Central Midwest District-Unitarian Universalist Association, cmwdmessenger@aol.com.

VACATION WITH UU'S IN SOUTH FLORIDA

The Southeast Unitarian Universalist Winter Institute in Miami (SWIM) is all about having fun in a supportive UU community in the warm Miami sunshine. The SWIM annual intergenerational retreat runs from December 26 through January 1.

Enjoy outdoor adventures (tours, hikes, windsurfing, canoeing, sailing, etc.), workshops on spirituality and personal growth, fantastic food, and a new community of friends from across the continent.

For more information, see www.swimuu.org. Also see the inside cover of the Spring 2006 issue of *UU World*. SWIM is a member in good standing of the Concil of UU Camps and Conferences, an independent affiliate of the UUA.

JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS NEWS

DECEMBER 1 IS WORLD AIDS DAY

Since the AIDS epidemic began twenty years ago, over twenty-eight million people have died and an estimated forty-two million are living with HIV today. Although antiretroviral medicines have dramatically extended life for some, there is still no cure, no vaccine, and no short-cut to accessing effective healthcare for the millions affected who live with poverty, stigma, and little care or support.

UUA President William G. Sinkford, recently returned from his trip to Africa, will be in Washington, DC meeting with David Gartner, Policy Director for the Global AIDS Alliance. The UUA is a member of the Global AIDS Alliance (see www.globalaidsalliance.org/.)

The Unitarian Universalist Global Aids Coalition is launching their Red Ribbon Congregation program on this day. To find out more about this program and about what UUs are doing to assist people with AIDS and stop the spread of Global AIDS see our special feature at <http://www.uua.org/>. You will also find lots of great resources for your congregation, including for children.

Please note that UUA Committee on Socially Responsible Investing is engaged in shareholder advocacy on your behalf with corporations doing business in Africa as well as with pharmaceutical companies. For their report, see www.uua.org/finance/sri/aids_corporate.html.

A SPECIAL INVITATION: NOMINATE YOUR CONGREGATION FOR THE SOCIAL JUSTICE BENNETT AWARD

Applications are due March 1. Let us know what you are most proud of your congregation for in your social justice efforts. The winning congregation will receive a \$500 cash prize, will receive the award at a plenary session at General Assembly, receive coverage in UU World, Interconnections, www.uua.org, and of course in SAC-News.

{Runners-up will receive coverage as well for their best practices}.

We would particularly like to hear from congregations that have engaged in internal anti-racism and anti-oppression work and translated that into authentic partnerships for dismantling racism and oppression in their communities.

Go to: <http://www.uua.org/awards/bennett.html> for more information about how to apply and to read about past year's recipients including the 2004 award winner the Berrien UU Fellowship in St. Joseph MI.

LET JUSTICE ROLL

Living Wage/Just Minimum Wage Resources & Worship materials for Martin Luther King, Jr. Sunday are now available on the UUA Justice Web pages at www.uua.org/programs/justice/060115_king.html. Dr. King spent his life working for racial and economic justice and understood the connections of race and class.

If you decide to participate or hold a service please register at www.LetJusticeRoll.org so that we can stand up and count UU participation!

Susan Leslie

*Director for Congregational Advocacy and Witness
Unitarian Universalist Association*

OTHER NEWS

ADVENT RETREATS AT SAINT BENEDICT

Saint Benedict Center in Middleton offers the following retreats in December. Visit www.sbcenter.org or call 831-9304 for details.

- Welcoming God: A 24-hour Advent retreat for women and men, **December 9-10**. Take time for silence, listening to that still small voice, prayer, and group sharing.
- Vigil for the New Year: A family-friendly alternative on **December 31**. Spend New Year's Eve in a gathering of prayer, sharing, reflection, and other joyful activities.