



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)

April 21, 2006

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

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PRAIRIE CALENDAR

Friday–Sunday, April 21–23

*Central Midwest District Assembly 2006 at the Madison Concourse Hotel

Saturday–Sunday, April 22–23

*5:00 p.m. Spring Fling overnight

Sunday, April 23

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. Earth Day Intergenerational Program, led by Mary Mullen and Larry Nahlik

11:45 a.m. Annual Meeting at Prairie

Tuesday, April 25

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

7:00 p.m. Natural Step Class meets at Prairie.

Wednesday, April 26

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Saturday, April 29

*7:30 p.m. Playreaders at the Hagstrom home

Sunday, April 30

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. "Sikhism: A Universal Religion," presented by Dr. Satwant Dhillon

*11:45 a.m. Right Relations presentation

12:00 noon. Humanist Union meets at Prairie

Sunday, April 30 to Sunday, May 7

*IHN volunteer week for Prairie at Midvale Lutheran

NEXT PRAIRIE FIRE DEADLINE: SUNDAY, MAY 7

Tuesday, May 2

7:00 p.m. Natural Step Class meets at Prairie

Wednesday, May 3

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

Sunday, May 7

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

*10:00 a.m. "My Action Is My Refuge: Hurricane Animal Rescue Work," presented by Marina Drake.

*11:45 a.m. Book Club potluck and discussion

Wednesday, May 10

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

*7:15 p.m. First session of the Story-Telling Workshop

Sunday, May 21

*11:45 a.m. Right Relations presentation

Wednesday, May 24

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

*7:15 p.m. Second session of the Story-Telling Workshop

Wednesday–Sunday, June 21–25

*UUA General Assembly, St. Louis, Mo.

(* = Details follow in this issue.)

DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS

Sunday, April 23

Intergenerational services are times for Prairie people of all ages to get together for out-of-the-ordinary ways of learning and celebrating. This

Sunday, April 23, we will celebrate Earth Day with a two-part emphasis: (1) tuning into the natural environment by “Seton sitting”; and (2) actively doing good for the Earth by applying the notions of “reduce, reuse, and recycle.” Look forward to a contest to apply the knowledge you gain.

Please help us by bringing materials that will become a part of the contest: apples, oranges, grapes (or some other raw fruit), or fruit juice, all of which we will consume during the service. Also please bring any boiled eggs that we can eat and samples of food containers that either may or may not be reused or recycled (for example, yogurt containers, drink boxes, milk or soda bottles, pizza boxes, styrofoam boxes you got for restaurant leftovers, and bags you got your groceries in). Adults will have further opportunities to learn more complicated things.

This service celebrates the “Seventh Principle” of the Unitarian Universalist Association: “Respect for the interdependent web of all existence of which we are a part.” Furthermore, it aims at one of the sources of the “living tradition we share,” primarily, “Direct experience that transcends mystery and wonder, affirmed in all cultures, which moves us to a renewal of the spirit and an openness to the forces that create and uphold life.”

This service is being planned by retired elementary teacher Mary Mullen and our Denominational Affairs Chair Lawrence Nahlik.

Sunday, April 30

"Sikhism: A Universal Religion" is the fifth session of Rachel Long's 6-session lay ministry with Rebecca Malke-Eligenti, "World Religions—Know Your Neighbor." Our guest speaker for April 30 is Dr. Satwant Dhillon.

A progressive religion when it was founded over 500 years ago, the Sikh religion today is the world's 5th largest religion. It traces its roots to northern India and espouses truth and egalitarianism. Sikhism preaches a message of devotion and remembrance of God at all times, truthful living, equality of mankind and denounces superstitions and blind rituals. It is “aligned with no religion, and respects all religions,” accepting a reality of “one God and many paths.”

Dr. Dhillon is a practicing Sikh, and has worked as

a board-certified gynecologist for nineteen years. He is currently based in Fort Atkinson at Fort Healthcare.

Sunday, May 7

In "My Action is My Refuge: Hurricane Animal Rescue Work," Marina Drake will speak about her experiences in Mississippi as a volunteer worker in the biggest animal rescue effort in history. She worked with Best Friends Animal Society to rescue, care for and reunite animals with their people or find them new homes.

Marina Drake works as a state employee and has been a Madison resident since 1991. She has volunteered locally through many organizations, including WORT, Rape Crisis Center, the Alliance for Animals, and The Writers' Place.

OUR SOCIETY

PRAIRIE ELDERS MEET APRIL 25

The Prairie Elders have their next meeting on **Tuesday, April 25, 2:00 p.m.** Please bring a small snack to pass.

Discussion Topic: Moments of Radical Change: Impact on our Lives in the United States. All are welcome to participate. Three minutes of topic-related comments per person gives all an opportunity to share and allows time for informal discussion.

Location: Oakwood Village West, Oaks Building, Second Floor Exercise Room.

Time Frame: Formally from 2:00 to 3:30. Informal visiting may last until 4:00. Participants are welcome to come and go as necessary for appointments, rides, chair attendants, etc.

Shuttle: For a shuttle from the upper parking lot, call Warren Hagstrom, 238-4970.

About us: Prairie Elders aims to provide good times and mutual support for Prairie UU Members and Friends over 65. We also welcome other UUs who live in the facility where we meet. For directions, rides, parking and further information please call Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Doleta Chapru 238-4970.

PLAYREADERS APRIL 29

Susan Hagstrom will host a Playreaders gathering at the Hagstrom residence, 916 Shorewood Blvd, 7:30 on **Saturday, April 29**. We shall be getting together to read G.B. Shaw's *The Apple Cart* (one of his more political plays), with discussion, cherry muffins, and drinks at the break time.

If you can come, please let Susan know by either leaving a message at 238-4970 or by e-mail at SusanTanyaAmI (at) aol.com.

Susan Hagstrom

DATES SET FOR CONGREGATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PROCESS

On **Sunday, April 30**, at 11:45 a.m. the Long Range Planning Committee holds a Congregational Listening Session. This plan is being developed to chart a multi-year course for Prairie. The Committee has developed a draft document. It now needs congregational input. Come be a part of the plan. Contact Ken Skog, Chair, for more information: kskog (at) tds.net or telephone 273-4813.

On **Sunday, May 21**, at 11:45 a.m. (originally scheduled for April 30), the Right Relations Task Force presents Draft #2 for Input and Dialogue.

This task force is creating a document of a set of agreements about attitudes and behaviors we want to use at Prairie in setting an atmosphere of respect, kindness, and honorable communication. Across the country, UU Congregations are making these agreements. Next year, we will work on the final agreement. Come and help us shape our document.

Contact the Committee for more information: Larry Nahlik 274-6870; Mary Somers 276-8397; Nancy Schraufnagel 273-3195; Patty Stockdale 298-0843

THE VIEW FROM MY BRANCH



The Task Force on Right Relations has started to integrate congregational input. We had an open forum two weeks ago and got good ideas from the 13 folks who attended. We will now be going through a month-long process of reviewing the material. We will present the next draft at a congregational input session at 11:45 a.m. on **Sunday, May 21**. Next year we will circulate a finalized draft document among the committees and members.

I thought you might like to know a little more about the document. This document is meant to help us set a high expectation of how we treat each other here at Prairie. We hope it will help us heal from past conflicts and set a tone for the future. It is about attitudes and behaviors that will enhance our connections with each other and define our values of caring well for each other.

The categories we are using are: (1) Serving Our Church Community; (2) Caring for Our Community; (3) Welcoming and Hospitality; (4) Embracing Diversity; (5) Listening and Speaking; (6) Transforming Conflict and Disagreement; and (7) Forgiving and Reconciling. Under each we will have a brief statement of philosophy for that category and then a list of examples of specific behaviors which we can agree on. For example:

Listening and Speaking

Philosophy: We listen and speak with respect and attention.

Examples: Assume people have good intentions; Encourage people to speak without blaming or judging; Discourage gossiping; Do not interrupt; Ask questions to understand.

This is the beginning. We would love to have more people to serve on the task force next year. Our work will involve going to committee meetings and working with small groups to make sure everyone has a chance to make input. Contact me if you would like to talk about serving - Rev. Jody at 231-9707, or minister (at) uuprairie.

Please come May 21 after the service to hear more and contribute to the conversation.

*The Rev. Jody Whelden, Consulting Minister
Office: 608-271-8218; Home Office: 608-231-9707*

BOOK CLUB MAY 7

On **Sunday, May 7** after the service, the Book club will discuss *Don't Think of an Elephant* (119 pages) by George Lakoff. Lakoff explains why Republican candidates have been so remarkably successful since 9/11. It's their "strict father" world view, he says, that resonates on a powerful psychological level. The author is a professor of linguistics at the University of California-Berkeley.

This book was suggested by Al Nettleton. Many reviews are available at <http://www.chelseagreen.com/2004/items/elephant/Reviews>.

As usual, a potluck will be shared.

The Prairie Book club is open to all on a drop-in basis. Books are available in paperback at a 20% discount at Borders Book Store on University Avenue. Just mention that the book is a Prairie Book Club selection.

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK

Prairie next assists Midvale Lutheran in hosting homeless families the first week in May. This much-needed community service organized by the IHN depends on the many volunteers who provide food and support. New volunteers from Prairie are welcome, and children also have the opportunity to participate. Please contact Paula Pachciarz to volunteer or for more information.

Volunteers are encouraged to complete training as early as possible.

The next training opportunities are: **May 23**, 7-9 p.m. at the Day Center and **June 12**, 7-9 p.m. at the Day Center. Contact Shannon Hayes to sign up for one of these training sessions (call 294-7998 ext. 306, or e-mail shannonhayes6 (at) hotmail.com).

CONCERT FEATURES PRAIRIE MEMBERS

Come hear Metje Butler, Dan Proud and Dean Schroeder sing in the Choral Arts Society Chorale Spring Concert! A wide variety of music will be performed, from Gregorian chant to spirituals, including works by Beethoven, Bach, Holst, Honegger and others. Performance: Saturday, **April 29**, 7:30 p.m. at Immanuel Lutheran Church, 1021 Spaight St.

NEW WEB SITE AND CALENDAR

Check out our new Prairie Web site:

<http://www.uuprairie.org>. The site reflects the winning design entry by Bob Park in last fall's contest and the work of Dirk Herr-Hoyman. The Web site is attractive and easy to navigate.

The Prairie calendar is now on the Web site. The calendar shows when the building is in use, and committees can enter their own meetings. (See Dirk for a short training session.) Members or committees can also request meetings or calendar events by sending an e-mail to calendar (at) uuprairie.org, and the Administrator will update the calendar. The Administrator will monitor calendar entries to ensure double bookings do not occur. The online calendar is the official calendar for Prairie.

The *Prairie Fire* newsletter on the Web site can be opened as a text file or as a PDF file. The Web site copy is now the preferred way to read the newsletter. If you need a paper copy, you can print it from the Web site. Those who must have a paper copy can request this from the *Prairie Fire* editor.

The e-mail for the Prairie administrator is admin (at) uuprairie.org, in addition to prouds (at) tds.net.

PICK SOME NEW PICTURES

Rose and Galen Smith have been providing so many beautiful pictures for such a long time for our meeting room: Thank you very much!! But it's time for a change now. Anyone willing to put up a new set of pictures—paintings, graphics, photographs—please let Rose or Galen know when an exchange can take place!

Rosemarie Lester

CALLING ALL STORYTELLERS

Join those who tell/read the "story for all ages" at Prairie Sunday services by attending the Storyteller Workshop, a 2-session workshop that will meet at 7:15 p.m. on **Wednesday, May 10**, and **Wednesday, May 24**, at Prairie after the midweek meal. Put these dates on your calendar now, and let Mary Mullen know that you plan to attend so that we can have enough materials for you. Call 298-0843 or e-mail Mary at mmullen (at) chorus.net.

See the last *Prairie Fire* issue for a list of tentative agendas.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

As a new Prairie member I want to say just how happy and excited I am to be the new Youth Religious Education Coordinator. Last year, after attending several UU congregations in Madison, I arrived at Prairie hopeful that I would find a spiritual home and left with a sense of relief after realizing I had.

I have been a Unitarian Universalist for 8 years and can honestly say it has changed my life for the better. While studying at UW-Eau Claire I met many people who not only taught me the beauty of other religions, but helped shaped my own spirituality; all of them are UU's.

Two years ago I traveled to India as a volunteer teacher for former child laborers. After working with them I saw the importance of shaping the lives of children through education, religious tolerance and love. Since September 2005, I have been volunteering at Prairie as a middle school teacher and have been so impressed with the RE children. Since I've been downstairs for most of the year I haven't had the chance to meet many of you, but if we haven't met yet we will soon!

Although classes are coming to an end we still have a lot more happening in the youth RE program. Spring brings with the "Spring Fling" overnight at Prairie, **Saturday-Sunday, April 22-23**. If you've never volunteered to help with one of our seasonal overnights, consider joining us sometime. You'll have a great time with our wonderful Prairie kids playing games and watching movies.

We're also preparing for the Service on **Sunday, April 30**, in which some of us will be doing some spring cleaning of the neighborhood while others will be helping Prairie's Building and Property Committee with some improvements to our building's energy efficiency.

Summer is thankfully on its way and there are a lot of fun activities planned! I look forward to working with all of you.

Rebecca Malke-Eligenti
Youth Religious Education Coordinator

LETTERS

SPIRITUAL ACTIVISM CONFERENCE

Dear Friend,

I would like your help in getting word out about the Spiritual Activism conference in Washington, D.C. May 17-20, 2006. The conference is the first East Coast appearance for the Network of Spiritual Progressives, co-chaired by me, Benedictine Sister Joan Chittister, and the professor of African American studies and Religion at Princeton, Cornel West.

The Network of Spiritual Progressives has 3 goals:

1. to challenge the misuse of God and religion by the Religious Right to justify war and militarism, cuts in programs for the poor and powerless in order to justify cuts in taxes for the rich, assaults on human rights and civil liberties, and destruction of the separation of church and state;
2. to challenge the religio-phobia and hostility toward religious and spiritual people that appears in some sections of liberal and progressive culture, and to help the Left distinguish between reactionary forms of religion and the progressive forms that it took with Martin Luther King, Jr., William Sloan Coffin, Abraham Joshua Heschel, and many others, and to build a new spiritual progressive politics not only for religious people, but also for those who do not believe in God but are "spiritual but NOT religious;"
3. to seek a New Bottom Line in the Western world so that institutions get judged efficient, rational or productive not only to the extent that they maximize money or power, but also to the extent that they maximize love and caring, kindness and generosity, ethically and ecologically sensitive behavior, and enhance our capacities to respond to other human beings as manifestations of the sacred and inherently valuable and to be respected, and enhance our capacities to respond to the universe with awe, wonder and radical amazement at the grandeur of all that is.

This is the ground floor of building a new kind of paradigm for progressive politics. We are taking our demand for a New Bottom Line to the Congress and the media May 17-20, along with a detailed SPIRITUAL COVENANT WITH AMERICA that

is meant to provide a positive vision of what a progressive spiritual politics is about (you can read it fully explicated in *The Left Hand of God*, which, I'm happy to say, has become a national best-seller since it was published by Harpers in February).

The spiritual activism conference will be a unique blending of progressive religious people with progressive "spiritual but not religious" people, including: Cindy Sheehan, Marie Denis (Fellowship of Reconciliation), Rev. William Sinkford (UUA), Rev. Joan Campbell (Chautauqua Institute), Harry Knox (Human Rights Campaign), Seyyed Hossein Nasr (author, *The Heart of Islam: Enduring Values for Humanity*), Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey, Rev. Lennox Yearwood (Progressive Democrats of America), Robert Thurman (Buddhist teacher and author of *The Jewel Tree of Tibet*), Bill Meadows (Wildlife Association), Katrina Vanden Heuvel (editor, *The Nation*), Holly Near (progressive music), Michael Posner (human rights), Rev. Bob Edgar (chair, National Council of Churches), and Harvey Cox.

I hope you personally will come, or join the Network of Spiritual Progressives (see www.spiritualprogressives.org), and I'd particularly appreciate it if you'd send this note to everyone you know, and in your own name urge them to come as well.

Many blessings,

Rabbi Michael Lerner
Editor of Tikkun; rabbi; and author of The Left Hand of God
RabbiLerner (at) Tikkun.org

[*Note: This is an excerpted letter from one forwarded by Dori Davenport of the Central Midwest District office. Rabbi Lerner was keynote speaker at the District Assembly in Madison.*]

PRAIRIE WEB SITES

Society Home Page: www.uuprairie.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/

MEMBERSHIP

Please welcome our newest member:

Rebecca Malke-Eligenti
2506 McDivitt Rd. #27
Madison, WI 53713
695-3435
malkerm (at) yahoo.com

UNITARIAN-UNIVERSALIST NEWS

JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS NEWS

CELEBRATE EARTH DAY!

As Unitarian Universalists prepare to observe Earth Day on April 22, and many UU congregations mark Earth Day Sunday on April 23, 2006, we recognize that we are called by our Principles to live in right relationship with the web of life. Across the country, Unitarian Universalists have joined with other people of faith to make personal, congregational, and denominational commitments to support our fragile planet.

Reflecting on the need to honor our planet on Earth Day and in our daily lives, the Rev. William G. Sinkford, UUA President said, "This earth is a creation which we have been given. Our Unitarian Universalist theology helps us know that our role is not to exercise dominion or control over the earth but to stand as stewards of the finely balanced system which sustains all life. We call this the interdependent web of existence. We watch with anguish as this delicate web is damaged and life itself threatened by changes to our environment caused by our presence."

More information and resources can be found here:

http://www.uua.org/news/2006/060422_earthday/

Audra Friend
Assistant, Office for Congregational Advocacy & Witness, UUA
www.uua.org/justice

GENERAL ASSEMBLY REGISTRATION AND BUS INFORMATION

Register by **April 30** for the UUA General Assembly (June 21-25 in St. Louis) and you can qualify for much cheaper rates. You can register for General Assembly online at <http://www.uua.org/ga>. The site has plenty of details on housing, scholarships, transportation, volunteer opportunities and more.

Buses from First Unitarian Society are being organized and will leave Wednesday, June 21 and return Monday, June 26. The cost is \$125 per person (round-trip).

Contact Elizabeth Barrett at [ebarrett \(at\) chorus.net](mailto:ebarrett@chorus.net) to sign up for the bus.

Nancy Schraufnagel

DISTRICT HIRE ANNOUNCED

The Rev. Dr. Ian Evison has accepted the position of Congregational Services Director in the Central Midwest District. His tentative start date is July 1.

Ian is currently serving as Director of Research for the Alban Institute, and previously served as Academic Dean and Interim President of Meadville/Lombard Theological School in Chicago; Coordinator of Research for the Family, Culture, and Religion Project for the University of Chicago Divinity School; and Minister of the UU Church of Niagara Falls.

Please join us in welcoming Ian to our staff.

Rev. Harlan Limpert, Director for District Services

Rev. Emily Gage, President, Central Midwest District of the UUA

OTHER NEWS

INTERFAITH HOSPITALITY NETWORK BULLETIN FOR APRIL 2006

Did you know that IHN received an award for Best Practices in Case Management from United Way of Dane County? IHN was one of six local agencies selected to receive this award and to give a presentation at an April 6th conference on Case Management for homeless services providers. Our Case Managers gave a workshop on "Building relationships for successful case management" that focused on techniques for creating trusting and effective partnerships with the families we serve.

This kind of trusting relationship has made all the difference for "Maya" and her three children. Maya has had few good relationships in her life, and even fewer with service providers, but her relationship

with her IHN case manager is strong enough to endure challenges such as working on stabilizing Maya's mental health and improving her budgeting and parenting skills. This relationship has helped her to ensure good care and services for her children, and to develop a good relationship with her landlord.

MIDDLE EASTERN BENEFIT DINNER APRIL 30

A group of 12 UW students is holding a benefit dinner **April 30** at Luther Memorial Great Room in support of a service learning trip to Israel and Palestine, sponsored by The Crossing. The public is invited to attend.

The Middle Eastern Dinner will be a night of Middle Eastern food, guest speakers, entertainment, silent auction and more. Proceeds will support a trip in May sponsored by The Crossing.

The meal will be vegetarian and catered by the Caspian Cafe. It will include falafel, hummus, tahini, babaghanoush, baklava, and refreshments.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$10 for students. Doors open at 6 p.m. and dinner will be served from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.

Contact Laura Ley at [info \(at\) questip.org](mailto:info@questip.org) or 608-513-2935 for tickets.