



# 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."

**October 12, 2007**



Prairie Fire is the semi-monthly newsletter of Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. View past issues at [www.uuprairie.org](http://www.uuprairie.org).

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## PRAIRIE CALENDAR

### Sunday, October 14

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

\*10:00 a.m. "Association Sunday: Growing Our Faith through Growing Our Numbers" presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski

\*12:00 p.m. Humanist Union program

### Wednesday, October 17

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

### Thursday, October 18

\*7:00 p.m. Movie Group views *Dersu Uzala*

### Sunday, October 21

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

\*10:00 a.m. "The United Nation's Role in Building a Peaceful World: Success or Failure" presented by Wendy Cooper

\*11:30 a.m. "Who Are UU" Q&A with Rev. Ralph

\*11:30 a.m. Book Club potluck and discussion

11:45 a.m. Prairie Board meeting

### Tuesday, October 23

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

### Wednesday, October 24

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

7:30 p.m. Finance Committee meets

### Sunday, October 28

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

\*10:00 a.m. "Day of the Dead" led by Dorothy Krause

### Wednesday, October 31

6:30 p.m. Midweek Meal @ Prairie

### Thursday, November 1

\*6:30 p.m. Spanish Speakers potluck and conversation at the home of Mary and Andy Somers, 4467 Crescent Rd., Fitchburg.

### Sunday, November 4

9:00 a.m. Choir rehearsal

10:00 a.m. "Keeping Religion and Government Separate" presented by Dan Barker

### Saturday and Sunday, November 10-11

Fall Frolic at Prairie

### Saturday, November 17

\*9:30am "Path To Membership", an orientation program to UUism sponsored by the Hospitality and Membership Committee

(\* = Details follow in this issue.)

**NEXT INPUT DEADLINE SUNDAY, OCTOBER 21**

## **DETAILS OF COMING PROGRAMS**

### **Sunday, October 14**

Rev. Ralph will be presiding at this service. We join with thousands of Unitarian Universalists across the nation celebrating our shared commitment on Association Sunday. In this service, we will strengthen the bonds of our common purpose and combine our resources to make Unitarian Universalism a stronger voice for liberal religious values in our country. We are better together. We increase our spirit and influence. We honor the "inherent worth and dignity of every person."

Our values are needed to help heal a wounded world. So, we will be taking a special collection for the growth and vitality of our congregations. Funds raised will be used for a national marketing campaign and for grants to congregations for growth outreach projects. We are hoping that each person will contribute \$50. If you can't attend, please send in a check; envelopes will be available. To donate online for Association Sunday, please visit <http://www.uua.org/giving>

### **Sunday, October 21**

Perhaps the most visible aspect of the UN is its Peacekeepers. But is that the role of the UN that is most important to the goal of peace in the world? In recognition of the current Unitarian Universalist Association focus on Peacemaking, we will consider how the contribution of the UN to peace.

Wendy Cooper, who leads the service, has served as Coordinator of Social Justice programs at First Unitarian Society of Madison since December of 2000. She holds a Bachelor's degree in Political Science from Beloit College and a Masters degree in Social Work from the UW Madison. She is serving her first term on the Board of the Unitarian Universalist United Nations Office located at the UN in New York City. Her previous work includes stints as a staff person in both Congress and the State Assembly, and many years in health care policy in Wisconsin.

### **Sunday, October 28**

Observance of the Day of the Dead/All Souls is a tradition at Prairie. Many cultures throughout history have celebrated the turning of the seasons and the circle of life. And in many cultures, the end of the harvest season has not only been the end of the growing season, but also symbolized the end of life. This is also a time of rest for the hearth, with the promise of renewal and regrowth as the wheel continues to turn.

At this time can reflect on and celebrate the cycle of life that surrounds us. Whatever anyone believes about the hereafter at the end of the cycle of life for a person, we can agree that they live on, in our memories and hearts as well as in the seed, roots, and branches of our families.

Join us as we celebrate the turning of the seasons and the interconnected web of life of which we all are a part. Bring memories and mementos of loved ones, including candles (in holders) and/or seasonal flowers to decorate an altar for people you would like to honor, regardless of when their cycle in this life ended.

## **OUR SOCIETY**

### **REPORT FROM THE PARISH MEETING**

On September 30, 2007, the parish met in a specially called session. Three issues were addressed. First, we unanimously elected the following:

- Mary Somers, Finance Chair
- Reuben Arnold, Youth Member of the Board
- Barbara Park, Committee on Committees, replacing Mary Somers

Second, Rachel Long, President, gave an information update on Prairie's current financial situation. She has been able to contact all the promissory note holders except one, and other than the repayment already requested they have agreed to either defer payment of their notes for at least 18 months or to forgive the debt completely. (Numbers below updated 10/3/07.)

Immediate debt due 11/1/07 including interest is \$53,080. Matching grant fund: combined with the

matching grant, we need to raise \$26,500 to cover our immediate need. Raised so far: \$19,475; left to go: \$7,025. Additional donations should be given to Kate Liu, Mary Somers, or Rachel Long.

Remaining Debt: To members, principle is \$132,000, plus interest to date total = \$140,131; mortgage on Whenona property is approximately \$85,000; total current Prairie debt is approximately \$225,000. Note that the Whenona property and the Fitchburg property are each worth about \$300,000.

Mortgage Option (to cover our outstanding debt to members with interest): sample mortgage for the Fitchburg Center property is 7% interest, \$1275 per month over 15 years. (We could probably negotiate better terms than this.) Note the interest on our debt to members is accruing interest at the rate of 5%.

Response from Fitchburg Center on our status: they continue to wait, hoping we'll build. They would buy rather than let us try to sell to third party.

Third, Patricia D'Auria, who is a consultant from the Central Midwest District of the UUA, led us in a discussion of a proposed Strategic Planning Process. She began by giving background about the process, including goals and possible issues that might be addressed. She emphasized that there are a variety of ways that this process may be implemented. She indicated that strategic planning is undertaken for the purpose of clarifying congregational vision and mission and developing a plan based on the congregation's mission that focuses on growth and activities to build toward the congregation's vision.

A number of topics were addressed in the discussion that followed. A number of members expressed the concern that Prairie has made major decisions by majority rule, without the time and process to develop better agreement among us. We discussed the need for processes of decision-making that seek broad general agreement, engage as many in our community as possible, honor disagreements and respect diversity of opinion, and move beyond a win-lose approach. There was discussion about whether we should be reaching for consensus, or just

getting as much agreement as possible when making major decisions.

Strategic planning was described as an activity that should be undertaken every 5-7 years, with regular revisiting of goals, and actions taken to stay on track with those goals. Prairie has gone through a number of planning processes in the past, and we are grateful for those members who have put forth this effort. Many actions have come out of these processes; most recently, the decision to hire a consulting minister and the decision to move from our current building, and to buy land in furtherance of that goal.

It was noted that unresolved differences over whether to build on the Fitchburg Center property and immediate financial concerns have dominated our attention for the last couple of years, rather than the discussion of our vision and mission that would be essential to strategic planning. Concerns were shared that some people may be weary of such processes, and may have doubts about whether they will lead to concrete actions. We agreed that we need to improve our consensus-building up front, which would facilitate follow through on our decisions once made. We noted the potential value of having outside assistance in moving through the process of clarifying our mission and vision, and will be working with a consultant.

Members were invited to serve on a strategic planning task force. The work of the task force will be to partner with the Board to guide and implement the strategic planning process, not to reach decisions for the congregation. Contact Rachel Long if interested.

Next Parish Meeting: **Sunday, December 2,**  
11:45 am.

### **CONGRATULATIONS TO KEN**

Please congratulate Ken Skog, who was associated with the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change!

## **WASHINGTON LOBBYIST FOR NON-THEISTS SPEAKS TO HUMANIST UNION**

We are very fortunate to have Lori Lipman Brown, Director of the Secular Coalition for America, address us this **Sunday, October 14**. (She will be joining us after giving a report to members of the Freedom From Religion Foundation at the Concourse Hotel that morning.) After a potluck lunch at noon, Lori's presentation on A Place at the Table: How the Nation's First Lobbyist for Non-theists is Enjoying the Feast will start about 12:30 pm. Please join us for this talk and the discussion which will follow it.

Lori Lipman Brown served as Nevada State Senator from 1992 to 1994, and was named Civil Libertarian of the Year by the Southern Nevada chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union and Legislator of the Year by the Nevada chapter of the National Association of Social Workers. She has been a frequent political commentator on television and radio. She has taught constitutional law, American history, and education law for the University of Phoenix, and women's studies for the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

Lori was hired by the Secular Coalition for America in September 2005. She directs the coalition's activities and lobbies members of Congress on issues arising out of the inappropriate incursion of religion into civil law. She also addresses the interests and concerns of America's atheists, humanists, freethinkers, and other nontheists through media appearances and speaking engagements such as the one at Prairie.

Member organizations in the Secular Coalition for America include the American Humanist Association, Atheist Alliance International, the Freedom From Religion Foundation, the Institute for Humanist Studies, the Military Association of Atheists and Freethinkers, the Secular Student Alliance, Secular Web / Internet Infidels, and the Society for Humanistic Judaism.

## **PRAIRIE ELDERS MEETING OCTOBER 23**

The next meeting of Prairie Elders is on **Tuesday, October 23**, 2:00-3:50 p.m. in the Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks Building, Oakwood Village West.

TOPIC: Personal reflections on becoming a Unitarian Universalist. How did each of us come to affiliate with a liberal organization that encourages a "free and responsible search for truth and meaning?" Some of us may be birthright Unitarians or Universalists but none of us are birthright U.U.'s. unless a young-un in disguise is sneaking by our bouncers. Unitarians and Universalists didn't merge until 1961. Most of us probably joined what is now a UUA organization for other reasons. Was it due to personal growth, a social issue, another person's influence, childhood religious education, a liberal spouse, desire for community, proximity to a meeting house? Be prepared for surprises. One never knows what fascinating stories will emerge and help us to know each other better.

Prairie Elders alternates a round-robin "show and tell" topic with discussion of a current issue. Participants at our September meeting shared and discussed useful information about presidential candidates. We plan to revisit that important topic.

Typically, we begin and end our gathering with casual conversation. The Nakoma Room is open at 1:30 for those who wish to come early to visit. Participants are welcome to come and go as necessary for appointments, rides, chair attendants, etc.

REFRESHMENTS: If convenient, please bring a small handful of snacks to pass and your own beverage cup.

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 contact Donna Murdoch 238-3802. Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363

## MOVIE GROUP MEETS OCTOBER 18

The Prairie Movie Group will meet at **Thursday, October 18**, 7:00 p.m. to view and discuss *Dersu Uzala*. This 1975 film by Akira Kurosawa tells the story of Dersu Uzala, a hunter hired by Russian soldiers as a guide through Siberia in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The film won the 1976 Best Foreign Film Oscar and numerous other awards. It is based on a 1923 memoir by Valdimar Arsenyev about his 1902-10 exploration in Siberia and his encounter with the real Dersu Uzala. Wilderness, human endurance and friendship join to tell this story.

The film starts at 7:00. Bring snacks to share and a hunger for a good film.

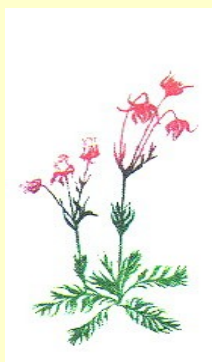
The schedule for future films is November 15 and December 13.

## SPANISH SPEAKERS MEET NOVEMBER 1

Spanish speakers will meet for potluck and conversation on **Thursday, November 1**, at 6:30 p.m., at the home of Mary and Andy Somers, 4467 Crescent Rd, Fitchburg. For directions or questions, call Mary at 276-8397 or Rosemary Dorney at 238-4382. Everyone is welcome.

## IN MEMORIAM

Prairie extends our condolences to our long-time member Larry Nahlik and his family for the recent death of his mother.



## REV. RALPH'S RUMINATIONS

The late Molly Ivins had a deep and respectful appreciation for the “messiness” and chaos



that often accompanies our democratic institutions, which, I believe, includes most of our Unitarian Universalist congregations. In her words:

“It's not the symphony of voices in sweet concert I enjoy, but the cacophony of democracy, the brouhahas and the donnybrooks, the full-throated roar of a free people busy using their right to freedom of speech. Democracy requires rather a large tolerance for confusion and a secret relish for dissent. This is not a good country for those who are fond of unanimity and uniformity.”

In describing what characterizes a mature and healthy congregation perpetual harmony and peaceful relations would not give a visitor from abroad a truthful and accurate picture of our lived situation. Our tenacious Unitarian Universalist commitment to the way of democracy begins and ends in our unyielding trust in the basic equality of human beings in our societal and political relationships.

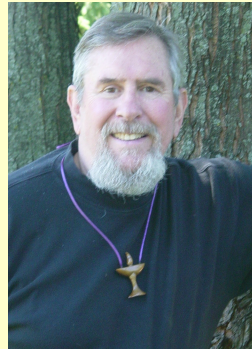
Democracy stands in deep alignment with our heritage and principles. Unitarian Universalist minister Alice Blair Wesley writes, “Show me the patterns of your church organization, and I'll show you what the people of the church find worthiest of their loyalty. Organization and theology are not two different things. Our organization is a function of our actual theology.”

The word democracy comes from demos (people) and cracy (rule) in our congregational life. Too few people ruling is one dilemma; everybody in charge is another. Democracy flourishes when that delicate balance of power sharing is achieved. A Unitarian prophet of the 19th Century, Theodore Parker—and wholeheartedly quoted by Abraham Lincoln—said, ours is a faith “of the people, by the people, for the people.”

How can real change take place in our Prairie community given the limitations and frustrations of living with democratic principles? What are the needed decisions that will shape change in a community like Prairie?. Most of us will agree that we want real and productive change. But the

normal tendency is to prefer making gradual shifts in our situation without having to change those things we are strongly attached to. Most of us want to stay “inside the box” of our comfort zone and yet still believe we must make changes in our situation.

I submit to you, from my perspective as your minister, that Prairie is entering a stage that brings both pain and possibility to our situation. By our fully acknowledging and embracing both pain and possibility will the opportunities for finding creative solutions to Prairie’s problems begin to find acceptance. . Please be willing to join our efforts in the coming weeks to find creative solutions for building a strong and healthy future for Prairie UU Society.



Glad to be journeying with you,  
*Ralph*

### BOOK CLUB CHANGES MEETING DATE

The Book Club has changed its next meeting date from October 14 to October 21.

#### Sunday, October 21

*Man Gone Down* by Michael Thomas, from \$5.95 at <http://www.amazon.com/Man-Gone-Down-Michael-Thomas/dp/0802170293>.

The narrator of this first novel is a man who was born poor, black, and brilliant in a Boston ghetto, married a white upperclass woman, became a father, and at 35 is struggling to reconcile his upbringing and his life as a black father. He has four days to come up with \$12,000 to rent an apartment, pay the tuition at his children’s private school, and rescue his family from New England where they’ve spent the summer with their Brahmin grandmother. Flashbacks to his 1970’s childhood as a “social experiment” and the son of an abusive mother and absent father blend into his more recent history. The *New York Times Book Review* notes that in his critique of American Society Thomas relies heavily on “Invisible Man” and also on T.S. Eliot. 432 pages (Suggested by Donna Murdoch)

All are welcome to the Book Club discussions. We meet at Prairie after Sunday services, except in September. Participants bring food to share. The meeting usually begins about 11:30 a.m. For more information or to be put on the e-mail list, contact Mary Mullen, mmullen (at) chorus.net, 608-298-0843.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

### IS THIS OCTOBER OR JULY?

I would like to say I'm enjoying the crisp Autumn air but as you know, we've all been enjoying warm, almost humid air. Frustrating for some, beneficial for our RE students.



Two weeks ago Carl Wacker took the preschool children outside. I had fun watching the children pretend to be different animals with everyone having to guess what they were. I don't think any of us ever did figure out what Hannah Lawrence was pretending to be!

Paula Pachciarz took the high school class outside to teach students about yoga. I had the chance beforehand to talk about the religious aspects of yoga and Paula was able to teach them partner yoga. I told students I expected them to come back fully enlightened. I'm not sure if Paula was able to do that in 45 minutes.

John Eligenti was a substitute teacher for Robin Proud's grades 1-3 class. John taught them about the Jewish holiday, Sukkot, and had the children make booths in honor of the harvest/booth holiday. While I was outside I noticed that children from Shaarei Shamayim made their own beautiful and quite large booth outside. Our RE children had the opportunity to place their own small booth under theirs.

We are still in need of a co-teacher for Robin Proud. If you would like to assist her from October to May 2008 please let me know. If you're concern is missing services upstairs don't worry. Throughout the year there will not be regular classes because of intergenerational services and

service Sundays so you will not be required to teach every Sunday.

October 21st is our first Service Sunday. Students will be raking leaves in the neighborhood. If you're interested in having your lawn raked please let us know.

Also coming up are our Parent/Teacher Coffee sessions. The schedule is below:

**October 14**—Preschool

**October 21**—Grades 1-3 and 7-12

**October 28**—Grades 4-6

Enjoy the warm air. I'm hoping for a drop in the temperatures so I can carve pumpkins outside and snuggle with my little baby, Indy, inside.

Rebecca Malke (YREC)

[youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org](mailto:youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org)

#### UPCOMING RELIGIOUS HOLIDAYS

13 October—Eid al Fitr (Ramadan ends, Islam)

18 October—St. Luke's Day (Christian)

20 October—Birth of the B'ab (Baha'i)

20 October—Installation of Scriptures as Guru Granth (Sikh)

21 October—Dasera (Hindu)

27 October—Reformation Day (Protestant)

## MEMBERSHIP

#### ORIENTATION TO UU-ISM OFFERED

Sundays, **October 21, November 18, December 16**, following the Service, Rev. Ralph will be leading a "Who Are UU" Q&A sessions for visitors new to UUism in the sofa room.

**Saturday, November 17**, 9:30 a.m., "Path To Membership", an orientation program to UUism, will be held at Prairie. Learn all there is to know about your membership in Prairie UU Society. Brunch will be served. Registration is necessary. Call Paula Pachciarz, 273-4806, to sign up.

## DIRECTORY

The new update for the Prairie Directory is finally coming out in the next week. Pick up your copy at Prairie.

## UNITARIAN UNIVERSALIST NEWS

### UU WOMEN'S CONNECTION FALL CONFERENCE

Shelly Jackson Denham will be the theme speaker and singer at the UU Women's Connection Fall Conference Feel The Rhythm **November 9-11**, 2007. Composer of five hymns in *Singing The Living Tradition*, she will help us reflect on "Who Am I?, What Is Sacred to Me?, and How Shall I Live My Life?"

The 25th Annual Fall Conference will be held at George Williams College Retreat Center at Williams Bay, Wisconsin. For a brochure and registration form go to [www.uuwomensconnection.org](http://www.uuwomensconnection.org) or call Sage Hagy 847-498-9333 or Emily Meter at 847-948-7147.

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### JOURNEY TOWARD WHOLENESS NEWS

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Buses of Unitarian Universalists and eight UU ministers—the Revs. Liz Brown, Steve Crump, Eliza Galaher, Forrest Gilmore, Fred Hammond, Lyn Oglesby, Meg Riley, and Jim VanderWeele—participated in the September 20 demonstrations in Jena, Louisiana, in support of six young African-American high school students known as the Jena Six.

Read the on-the-scene report from Rev. Meg Riley, Director of Advocacy & Witness Programs, and her daughter Jie on the UUA Web site; Rev. Lyn Oglesby, All Souls UU Church, Shreveport, La., reports on the interfaith service before the day of action; and Bill Sinkford's Letter to the Governor.

The Governor has intervened in the first defendant of the Jena 6's case, Mychal Bell, and asked the LaSalle Parish District Attorney Reed Walters not to appeal the ruling to throw out the

charges and send it to juvenile court. He is no longer seeking an adult trial for the 17 year old. Mychal Bell was finally released from custody having spent almost an entire year in prison.

See Free the Jena 6 Web site for more reports on the rallies and upsurge against institutional racism.

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A statement from the Rev. William Sinkford, president of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, in response to recent events in the country of Myanmar (formerly known as Burma):

The people of Burma/Myanmar are in our thoughts and prayers. The images we've seen and the stories we've heard of the brave and inspirational witness offered by Buddhist religious leaders and citizens have touched our hearts and souls. Their peaceful protest against a cruel and repressive government is a notable moment in the multi-generational struggle for peace, liberty and justice in our world. The arrests, the killings, and all the forms of violence which they have suffered in response from the government are entirely unjustified. We stand in spiritual solidarity with the people of Burma as they risk their safety even as further governmental reprisals occur. We pray for their well-being, their vision, and their commitment.

We call upon United States government and the United Nations to pressure the government of Myanmar to refrain from violent responses and to release political prisoners, including Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been under house arrest for nearly seventeen years. Unitarian Universalists are asked to engage in advocacy for the people of Burma with their elected representatives, and to hold the people of Burma in their thoughts and prayers during worship this weekend, and in the weeks to come.

Rev. William Sinkford

## PRAIRIE WEB SITES

Society Home Page: <http://uuprairie.org/>

News Group: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairienews/>

Views: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairieviews/>

Social Action: <http://socialaction.madisonwi.us>

Humanist Union: <http://humanist.madisonwi.us>

## OTHER NEWS

### PRAIRIE RESTORATION BENEFIT CONCERT

On Saturday, October 20, Benedictine Women of Madison and the Benedictine Life Foundation host "Prairie Rhapsody," an evening of food, conversation and music. The concert will feature The Festival Choir of Madison and will be held at Asbury United Methodist Church, 6101 University Avenue, Madison, WI 53705.

The evening begins with an hors d'oeuvres reception at 5:30 p.m., followed by the concert at 7:00 p.m.

Admission is \$35; \$20 is tax deductible. Proceeds support the sisters' environmental restoration. Call (608)836-1631, ext. 121, or visit [www.benedictinewomen.org](http://www.benedictinewomen.org) for tickets.

### HOMELESS SHELTER PICTURES

Paula Pachciarz and Steve Blank recently volunteered to serve breakfast at the Men's Homeless Shelter at Grace Episcopal Church. Prairie volunteers work once at month to support the homeless shelter program.

