



# Prairie Fire

**December 22, 2008**

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The full-featured **Prairie Fire** is published on the 21st of every month. The **Prairie Fire Bulletin** is a calendar-only newsletter that is published on the 6th of every month. Both are published by Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society. View past issues at [www.uuprairie.org](http://www.uuprairie.org)

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## Calendar

### Sunday, December 21, 2008

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "A Child's Christmas in Wales," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

### Wednesday, December 24, 2008

7:00 pm - Christmas Eve program, presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

### Sunday, December 28, 2008

No morning service, no choir rehearsal.

6:00 pm - service - "Looking Forward," presented by Religious Education.

### Tuesday, December 30, 2008

2:00 pm - Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood.

### Thursday, January 1, 2009

Prairie Fire Bulletin deadline today (calendar and program items only.)

### Sunday, January 4, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "Journey to Selma," presented by Rev. Darrel Richey.

12:00 noon - Humanist Union meets.

### Friday, January 9, 2009

9:00 am - WOW meets at the home of Kathy Converse.

### Sunday, January 11, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "First Amendment: Right or Slogan," presented by Andy Somers.

11:45 am - Prairie Board meeting. Potluck at 11:45, meeting begins at noon.

### Thursday, January 15, 2009

Prairie Fire article deadline today (calendar, program items, and articles.)

### Sunday, January 18, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "Coincidence and Ambiguity," presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

11:45 am - Book Club meets to discuss [Blink: The Power of Thinking Without Thinking](#).

**\*Details about many of these items follow inside\***

# Upcoming Programs

**Sunday, December 21 "A Child's Christmas in Wales"** - presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski. This service will feature a reading of "A Child's Christmas in Wales" by Dylan Thomas. Readers, back by popular demand, will be Andy Somers, Al Nettleton, Warren Hagstrom, and Rev. Ralph. Choral performances will also be part of the service. Through the lyrical language of Dylan Thomas and beautiful Welsh and English carols, the readers and singers will paint a warm, wry, and sympathetic picture of the human spirit and the wintry observance of Christmastide.

**Wednesday, December 24 "Christmas Eve, Carols, and Candlelighting,"** presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski. We celebrate with readings, singing of carols, and candlelighting the story of the birth of Jesus of Nazareth. This, an intergenerational service, draws from Christian teachings which call us to respond to God's love by seeking peace and good will for humankind. No childcare will be available.

## Prairie Web Sites:

Society Home Page  
[www.uuprairie.org](http://www.uuprairie.org)

News Group  
[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie\\_news/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie_news/)

Views  
[http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie\\_views/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie_views/)

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

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

**Sunday, December 28 at 6:00 pm "Moving Forward,"** presented by Religious Education. There will be no morning program. Service will begin at 6 p.m. Just like our state motto, we will be looking "forward" to the coming year which is sure to bring about a lot of change. Join us for a time of sharing memories, hopes for the future and a skit performed by our RE students. Bring a snack to share after the program and plan to stay for dancing!

**Sunday, January 4, 2009 "Journey to Selma"** presented by Rev. Darrel Richey of James Reeb Unitarian Universalist Congregation. Rev. Richey will share his understanding of the work of Social Justice in our UU congregations, shaped, in part, by the transformational journey that he took to Selma, Alabama, the site where on March 9, 1965, UU minister, James Reeb, was brutally beaten by a mob of white men. James Reeb died two days later, March 11, 1965.

Rev. Richey explains: "A lot of what I call Social Action, is actions, that though well intended, are done in ways that allow the "doer" to remain in their comfort zone, and avoid personal transformation, while "reaching out," at a good arms reach, to help some "other." What are the sacrifices and opportunities for personal transformation that result when we engage ourselves in authentic Social Justice actions?"

**Sunday, January 11, 2009 "First Amendment: Right or Slogan,"** presented by Andy Somers. There will be a short review of the amendment and what it purports to protect in dangerous times, such as war, and what it doesn't (to our peril.) We will be concentrating on the "free speech" portion of the amendment. We will review some of the "tough" decisions of the US courts and check their consistency. Do we understand the protections, or do we see through a glass darkly

**Sunday, January 18, 2009 "Coincidence and Ambiguity,"** presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski. On this day we observe the birthday of Martin Luther King, Jr., (born Jan. 15, 1929) and in anticipation, the Inauguration of Barack Obama as President. I will be exploring some coincidences and ambiguities that their lives shared and suggest. Both men received their graduate education in Boston. Both men walked the streets of Chicago and experienced first hand the insults of racist temperments. Both men share a comfort level with a discourse that finds deep meaning in religious terms like Hope, Faith, and Sacrifice.

# Religious Education



It may be cold outside but Prairie is full of warmth this holiday season. Weather you're celebrating Eid, Winter Solstice, Hanukkah or Christmas all is merry at Prairie!

Last week was our annual Nifty Gifty event. Over 20 RE students showed up to make 10 different homemade gifts to give to family and friends. I would like to thank all who helped out that day: Judy Wacker, Metje Butler, Robyn Perrin, Susan Herr-Hoyman, Patty Stockdale, Kris Long, Randy Converse, Jill Cornejo, and Ann Pryor for helping the children make gifts. Carl Wacker for taking pictures, and Jori Conca and Lynn Pawelski for not only helping their children but other children when help was needed. Also, Orange Schroeder and Heidi Hughes brought a delicious fruit tray and banana bread.

This event would not have been possible without all the "crafty" ideas from Kathy Converse. Kathy has been doing Nifty Gifty for many years and her dedication to our children is greatly appreciated. Randy and Kathy along with Karen Deaton helped me set up the tables for the event the day before--thank you!!!

Our annual Symbol Tree service was beautiful as always. Thank you Erin Bosch for organizing and leading the service and reading a story to our children. It was so heartwarming seeing our students walk into the service that morning with candles in their hands and smiles on their faces. Thank you Paula Pachciarz, Jori Conca and Robin Proud for organizing all the students in their procession. Over 20 young people with candles can be a bit nerve wracking but thanks to you three all was safe!

I would like to give a special thank you to Katherine Liu. She was our Santa Lucia and did a wonderful job leading everyone to the front of the church and giving us holiday treats. Katherine looked just beautiful in her white gown and looked very brave walking with a real candle crown! Thank you Katherine!

Coming up on Sunday evening, December 28th, our RE students will be leading our New Year's Evening service at 6:00 pm. Madeline Arnold will preside over the service and the readings and RE skit will be almost entirely done by RE students. Afterwards there will be food and dancing. What a wonderful way to bring in the New Year!

Classes resume January 4th. All students planning on returning for the spring semester will need to fill out a registration form. Forms will be made available online and in hardcopy. Look for them soon.

I hope the rest of the year is safe and full of much holiday love for all of you and your families.

*Rebecca Malke (YREC)*  
[youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org](mailto:youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org)

## Our Society

### **Please Help Make Prairie More Accessible**

Prairie does not have parking spots designated for those less able, but we do have members and friends who have difficulty walking. We request that if you drive to church and are comfortably mobile that you reserve the two parking spaces in front of Prairie's main entrance for those less mobile. This would be in the area just past the bus stop. Thank you for your consideration.

### **Prairie Book Club Selections**

Prairie Book Club meets once a month after service to discuss a chosen book. Here is the list of selections and the dates they will be discussed for the next couple of months:

[Blink, the Power of Thinking Without Thinking](#), by Malcolm Gladwell, Sunday, January 18th.

Interpreter of Maladies, by Jhumpa Lahiri, Sunday, February 15th.

Devil in the White City: Murder, Magic, & Madness at the Fair that Changed America, by Erik Larson, Sunday, March 15th.

Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan, Sunday, April 19th.  
Happy reading!

### **Invitation to the Prairie Dance**

Prairie UU is a lay-led congregation. That means we are all invited to participate fully in the dance to create a vibrant community. The Program committee invites you to consider joining us as we re-structure our committee to three parts: The Program Committee, Program Coordinators, and Sunday Program Assistants. Check out the areas below and bring your gifts and talents large and small to share with us. You can even choose more than one role. If you are tired of being a wallflower, come join us as we step to the beat of moving Prairie forward to new life. Let Susan Herr-Hoyman (250-0559; herrsm@gmail.com) or Christina Klock (273-9397; cak190@hotmail.com) know of your interest.

Brief descriptions:

Program Committee: (Time commitment: 4hrs/mo) These folks will oversee the whole structure. They will decide on speakers and schedule them. They will ensure a variety of programs and set the tone and goals for programming. They will meet once a month.

Program Coordinators: (Time commitment: 3hrs/service) These folks will take the info on speakers, contact them and create the order of service for the programs. They will also contact the Sunday Program Assistants to make sure set-up is in place.

Sunday Program Assistants: (Sunday morning approx time commitment: 2 hrs) The responsibilities would include set-up and clean up on Sundays and assisting with passing the mic and offering.

*Susan Herr-Hoyman, Program Committee Chair*

### **Movie Group Meets Thursday, January 22, 2009**

The Movie Group will view "Ride the High Country," a noted 1962 western directed by Sam Peckinpah. This film was selected by the Library of Congress in 1992 for preservation in the National Film Registry. It stars Joel McCrea, Randolph Scott, Marinerre Hartley, Ron Star and Edgar Buchanan. The film has a mix of the conventional and the revisionist in its treatment of the Western and won the the Belgium Film Festival and winning the Paris film critics award for best film. Bring snacks to share, the movie starts at 7:00 pm.

### **Mark your calendars - the place & date for next year's retreat have been set!**

Where? Pine Lake Camp, a United Methodist Camp near Westfield on I-39, just over an hour north of Madison

Website? <http://www.wisconsinumc.org/PineLake/>

Date? Friday, October 23 - Sunday October 25, 2009

Kate Liu was last year's program coordinator for the retreat and is actively seeking volunteers for next year's program. It was suggested that for next year, there be two coordinators: one for kid's activities and one for adult's activities. If you are interested in either of those volunteer jobs, please let Kate know.

Hope you can make it!

*Rachel Long, President, Prairie UU Society*

### **Green Committee News**

If you have not already done so, we need all adults and high school age students at PUU to fill out a Personal Assessment of your environmental lifestyle. Each adult in a household can participate.

Go to the Prairie website ([www.uuprairie.org](http://www.uuprairie.org)) and click on the church with the green steeple.



This link takes you to our Green Page. The link (your ecological footprint) to the assessment is at the top of the page.

We want to apply for the Green Sanctuary program in January 2009. The personal assessments are one of the requirements for our application. Your assessment will also be used to help the Green Committee develop the Action Plan for our Green Sanctuary Certification.

An additional note: The personal assessment survey is maintained on the computer by Survey Monkey for a monthly service charge of \$20 until the survey is completed. We would like to end the service as soon as possible.

The Green Committee thanks you in advance for attending to this task. If there are any problems or questions contact Randy Converse.

### **Prairie WOW News**

Prairie WOW is the women's group at Prairie. We meet once a month for a breakfast potluck and conversation, sometimes at a member's home and sometimes at Prairie. Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday, January 9th, 2009, at the home of Kathy Converse at 9:00 am.

### **Hospitality and Membership Notes**

--On Sunday, January 25, 2009, there will be an all-society potluck after the service. Bring a dish to pass and enjoy some good food and conversation with your Prairie friends and family.

--Please note an address and phone number change for Phoenix Wardell. There will be a sheet on the greeting table with this information as well as contact information for new members.

--Where's the Magazine Exchange?

The Magazine Exchange is temporarily suspended while we work out a way to best use the space in the foyer.

*Paula Pachciarz, Membership and Hospitality Chair*

### **Prairie Elders Meeting**

Prairie Elders meets Tuesday, December 30, 2:00-4:00 pm. Informal conversation 1:30-2:00 pm. *This is a time change and a temporary departure from our usual 4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday.* We meet in the Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks building, Oakwood Village West. Newcomers are welcome. Call contacts below for directions or a ride.

TOPIC: First focus of the new U.S. administration. What do you think it should be? Why?

DISCUSSION FORMAT: Our "round robin" format gives all an opportunity to speak and to hear. Topics alternate between general issues and personal stories. November's "food stories" produced a WWII tale of bargaining ration stamps for an oversized ham that was hung out a Washington DC apartment window to keep cold. December's "first focus" issues might include, for example, the plight of 30 million people now dependent on another form of U.S. food stamps six decades after WWII.

SNACKS: If convenient, please bring a few 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. Current participants range from age 65 to 90-something. We welcome other UUs who live in the facility where we meet.

CONTACTS: Donna Murdoch 238-3802, Gordon Cunningham 230-3367, Rosemary Dorney 238-4382 or Rose Smith 233-3363.

## New Members

This summer and fall, we have welcomed seven new members to Prairie. (And we're expecting three more on December 21!) If you haven't done so already, please welcome the following individuals. Our admin will make available a sheet with directory information for these new members and put it on the greeting table. Bios and photos of some of our newer members are also on the greeting table.

Madeline Arnold (She is already in the directory)

Jennifer Bunner  
[oniongirl\(at\)iname.com](mailto:oniongirl@iname.com)

Jill Cornejo  
Emily  
[jillctcornejo\(at\)hotmail.com](mailto:jillctcornejo@hotmail.com)

Brian Simmert, Kate Franzmann  
Luna, Greine, Zeme, and Ruah  
[earthcritters5\(at\)mhtc.net](mailto:earthcritters5@mhtc.net)

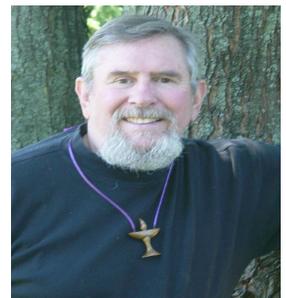
Elizabeth Macasaet  
[macasaet\(at\)msn.com](mailto:macasaet@msn.com)

Robyn Perrin  
Ellie  
[robyn\(at\)perrinhome.com](mailto:robyn@perrinhome.com)

## Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

In the more rural parts of Dane County, the farmers and others who no longer farm but live in the country decorate their houses, garages, barns, and out buildings with lights at Christmastime. As I often drive along a dark, two lane road at this time of year I will often observe a brightly lighted homestead filling the darkness, every light reflected off the snow, welcoming the traveler, redeeming the dark time of the year. It's a very welcome sight.

Light is a central symbol of this season of the year. The lights of Hanukkah, of Christmas, of the Solstice and the rebirthing of the Sun's light, all make this a time special and inviting of reflection and pondering of meanings to be explored. What is required of us is that we accept the symbol into our lives, find meaning for it, and respond with light of our own. We can frame this as "getting into the spirit of the season."



Nowadays, "getting into the spirit of the season" takes on massive efforts to insulate



one's self from the marketing excesses of bad taste and consumptionism that we see so early and so blatantly in the stores. I will readily admit that for most of us to "get into the spirit of the season" requires more than lights. I trace back to memories of Christmas' past, stories, readings and music, sacred and secular, classical and popular. From my own past, I recall the Christmas when our family was a little low in cash flow and we held off buying a tree from one of the local vendors that were scattered on empty lots throughout our neighborhood in Chicago. But before a tree could be brought into the house my mother required a "thorough" house cleaning, scrubbing floors, washing windows, vacuuming, etc. Christmas Eve came and we still had no tree to decorate. Darkness set in, and Mom sent Bill and Terry, my two older brothers and I to go and buy a tree and haul it back home on our sleds. The first and second tree lots that were visited were closed. A third lot was found but it was also closed up and dark. Peering into shadows we saw three trees piled in the back of the lot. Upon closer inspection none appeared worthy of bringing home. Bill, the artist in the family, had us load them onto our sleds and haul them back to our house. He got a drill and bits from Dad's shop and we cut branches from two of the scraggly trees and drilled holes in the third to insert those branches into its trunk. Lo and behold, soon one very shapely tree was created and was carefully hauled into our living room. It was delicately decorated with lights and ornaments and became the most memorable tree in our family's holiday history.

Most of us from Christian backgrounds have our own memories and favorites to be visited - Scrooge and Tiny Tim, Yes Virginia, The Gift of the Magi, The Grinch who Stole Christmas, Befana the Christmas Witch, Christmas in the Trenches, and oh so many more. Each one holds a special memory. Each story can remind us that generosity, change of heart, and the love that transforms lives are still possible in our world. Each of those stories calls us to find the light in ourselves that will allow us, each and every one of us, to be a blessing unto the world, to add our light to those who may need its illumination. And just as we can be an individual beacon to others our congregation, Prairie Unitarian Universalist Society, can be a beacon to those in our community who are seeking a place where the spirit can be enlightened, refreshed and renewed. With luck and good fortune may our light shine forth throughout 2009.

Happy to be journeying with you,  
Ralph

## Denominational News

### **Cradle Club Deadline Extended**

The "Cradle Club" deadline has been extended until Sunday, January 4th. If you had planned to donate some baby items, but were unable to get around to doing so, there is still time. The committee is extremely grateful to Orange and Dean Schroeder, who so generously offered to donate the packing and shipping of our collected goods, and we felt that we did not want to burden them with this so close to Christmas when the store is so extremely busy.

### **UUA Draft Peacemaking Statement of Conscience Available**

Our congregation will have the opportunity to vote on the Unitarian Universalist Association's draft Statement of Conscience regarding Peacemaking. For a Draft Statement of Conscience (SOC) to appear on the 2009 General Assembly Final Agenda, our Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA) bylaws require a minimum of 25% of certified congregations to participate in the ballot vote on whether the Draft SOC should be placed on the Final Agenda. Please take a moment to read the draft, which is excerpted below. To read the entire article, follow the link at the bottom of the excerpt.

### [Peacemaking: A Draft Unitarian Universalist Statement of Conscience, November 2008](#)

War is abhorrent. Violence is reprehensible. Human history has been marked by both. Religion has been a catalyst for war and for peace, sanctioning behaviors individual and international. What is our religious response as Unitarian Universalists to the historic habits of war and the timeless challenges of peace?

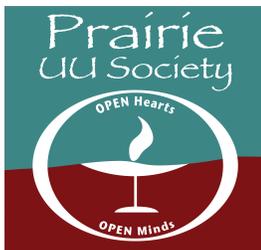
Should we reject the use of any and all kinds of violence and war and affirm a commitment to seek just peace through non-violent means? Should we continue with the more conventional practice of seeking peace through application of "just war" criteria? Are these our only options as we seek to promote "a world community of peace, liberty, and justice for all?" This Statement of Conscience results from widespread deliberation and presents an approach arising out of our history, theology, and understanding of human nature for building a peaceful, just, and sustainable global future.

To continue reading, follow this link:

<http://www.uua.org/socialjustice/issuesprocess/currentissues/peacemaking/121606.shtml>

## Input Deadlines:

Calendar items and program descriptions are due on the 1st and 15th of each month. Feature articles for the full *Prairie Fire* are due on the 15th of each month. Please send to Kate Liu at [admin@uuprairie.org](mailto:admin@uuprairie.org) or call 271-8218.



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