



Prairie Fire

March 22, 2009

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The full-featured **Prairie Fire** is published on the 22nd 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

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Calendar

Sunday, March 22, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "From Principles and Purposes to Covenantal Relationships," part two of three, presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

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

11:45 am - Prairie Book Club meets.

Monday, March 23, 2009

6:30 pm - Spanish Speakers potluck at the home of Amy Schulz and Dave Welo.

Tuesday, March 24, 2009

2:00 pm - Prairie Elders meet at Oakwood.

Thursday, March 26, 2009

7:00 pm - Movie Group meets at Prairie to view "In Bruges."

Saturday, March 28, 2009

10:00 am - Software Seminar presented by Al Nettleton. (You can still get in on this auction item! Please contact Al Nettleton for details.)

Sunday, March 29, 2009

9:00 am - Choir rehearsal.

10:00 am - service - "From Principles and Purposes to Covenantal Relationships," part three of three, presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski.

11:45 am - Denominational Affairs Committee meets.

Wednesday, April 1, 2009

Prairie Fire Bulletin deadline - calendar and program items only.

Sunday, April 5, 2009

9:00 am - Choir Rehearsal

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

12:00 noon - Ethical Humanism study group meets.

Saturday, April 11, 2009

8 am to 8 pm - Art Institute trip.

9:00 am - Prairie WOW meets.

9:00 am to noon - Prairie Orientation.

12:30 pm - Memorial service for long time Prairie Member, Dick Bonser.

Save the Date!

April 24-26, 2009, Central Midwest District Assembly in Waukesha.

June 24-28, 2009 UUA General Assembly in Salt Lake City.

October 23-25, 2009 Prairie's Annual Family Retreat at Pine Lake Camp

Upcoming Sunday Programs

Sunday, March 15, 22, & 29, 2009 "From Principles and Purposes to Covenantal Relationships" - presented by Rev. Ralph Tyksinski, Consulting Minister. In a three part series, I will be exploring the meanings and current relevance of the [7 UUA] Principles as they bear on our core understandings of what "Unites" us as UU's and what are the beliefs that connect us with one another in a bond of abiding relationship. With all of our diversity of beliefs, perspectives, frames of meaning, what "bonds" us together as Unitarian Universalists?

Sunday, April 5, 2009 "First Amendment: Right or Slogan" - presented by Andy Somers. This 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 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? We will be concentrating on the "free speech" portion of the amendment.

Sunday, April 12, 2009 "Easter Customs and Traditions: Old and New" - presented by Selena Fox. How is Easter connected with the Spring Equinox? What are the origins of eggs, baskets, and rabbits as Easter symbols? Where does Easter get its name? Rev. Selena Fox describes some of the customs, symbols, and traditions associated with Easter across cultures and through time. She also shares ideas for creating personal, family, and community Easter celebrations. Rev. Selena Fox is Senior Minister of Circle Sanctuary, a Wiccan church serving Nature religion practitioners worldwide. Active in interfaith work, she is serving her fifth term as the president of of the Greater Madison Interreligious Association. Selena has an M.S. in counseling from the University of Wisconsin in Madison.

Sunday, April 19, 2009 "Earth Day" presented by Florence Chenoweth.

Sunday, April 26, 2009 "Ending Hunger in Our Lifetime" - presented by Bob Mohelnitzky. An estimated 40% of all food in the United States never makes it to our tables. The issue of domestic hunger is not one of lack of food resources but how surplus and unsaleable groceries are allocated. The mission of Second Harvest Foodbank of Southern Wisconsin is to end hunger in southwestern Wisconsin. Second Harvest centralizes the food acquisition and distribution process for more than 400 partner food pantries, shelters and meal sites that serve 16 southwestern Wisconsin counties. Bob Mohelnitzky has been President/CEO of Second Harvest Foodbank since 2001 prior to which he was executive director of the Dane County Mental Health Center for 22 years.

Prairie Web Sites:

Society Home Page
www.uuprairie.org

News Group
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie_news/

Views
http://groups.yahoo.com/group/prairie_views/

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

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

Religious Education News

Spring is officially here! The snow is finally gone and I'd like to brag for a moment and say that I actually have flowers in my garden! I can't stop thinking of all the things our RE students can do outside now that the weather is getting warmer. However, even with the harsh winter, nothing stops our RE students from having a good time at Prairie.

We all had a fun time bowling during our Wild Wintering weekend which was February 21-22nd. Despite the snow storm that morning we had a great turn-out. The age range of students was very diverse. Our youngest student bowlers were Indy Eliganti and Ellie Thayer (ages 1 ½ and 4) with our oldest being 18-year-old Reuben Arnold. It's always great to see our young people grow up together!



High school students Madeline and Reuben Arnold, Gavin McFarlane and a friend of Prairie's arrived early to

stock shelves at the Allied Partners Food Pantry. What would have taken two or more hours to do was done in just under an hour. Many thanks to our Prairie youth for taking the extra time to help out a neighborhood's good cause.

On March 1st our middle and high school students had speaker from the Gay Straight Alliance for Safe Schools (GSAFE) talk about the organization and education our youth on the necessity of it's work, bullying in schools and addressing high risk behavior amongst teens. The talk ended the series on gender identity and sexual orientation.

The rest of March will have our students learning about homelessness both locally and nationally with a collection drive for Porchlight Inc. ending this month. If you have items to donate please see me or RE Chair, Karen Deaton, to learn more on how you can help.

Hopefully April showers won't be too much for our youth next month. April is our month on learning more about how we can help the environment. Students will be working outside cleaning up the neighborhood and Prairie's yard and garden. The garden will be used this summer to grow vegetables and educate our young people on the importance of taking care of the Earth and growing their own food. If you would like to help students this summer in the garden please let me know. It's a fun way to work the soil and spend time with Prairie youth.

Rebecca Malke (YREC)
youthcoordinator@uuprairie.org

Our Society

Prairie Book Club Selections

Prairie Book Club meets once a month after service to discuss a chosen book. The next selection is Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals by Michael Pollan, which will be discussed Sunday, April 19th. This is a great book for those interested in the UUA's congregational study issue on Ethical Eating.

2009 Prairie Service Auction Results

The Prairie Service auction was a rousing success. Lots of fabulous soup was consumed and wonderful items were purchased. The final tally shows we raised \$5,746.00. Way to go!

Prairie Women's Group (WOW)

WOW will meet at 9:00 am on Saturday, April 11, 2009, for a breakfast potluck. Location to be announced.

Memorial Service for Richard (Dick) Bonser, Saturday, April 11, 2009

A memorial service will be held at Prairie for Richard (Dick) Bonser at 2:00 pm on Saturday, April 11, with his family. Dick was an active member of Prairie from 1975 to 1996, and was the editor of the Prairie Fire for 10 years. Al Nettleton will be officiating, with Mike Briggs providing music and Aileen Nettleton taking care of refreshments. His obituary is reproduced below.

Richard (Dick) Bonser died December 16, 2008 in Tucson, AZ. He was born August 14, 1938 in Dayton, OH, to William and Ella (Sims) Bonser. He spend his childhood in Madison, WI and Honolulu, HI. He attended Oregon State College where he met his wife Julia (Waite) Bonser. They were married December 28, 1960 in Longview, WA. He attended the University of British Columbia, Vancouver, BC, for his Masters in Regional Planning. Next he worked in Vancouver, Washington as a Regional Planner. He moved to Madison in 1970 where he worked for the State of Wisconsin from 1968 until his retirement in 1996. He and his wife then spent 11 years living and traveling in their motorhome. In 2007 they moved to Tucson, AZ. He is survived by his wife of 48 years Julia Bonser, two children Geoffrey (Michelle) Bonser and Joella (Karl) Berkner, grandchildren; Isidora Bonser, Calidora Bonser, Lucian Bonser, Kaspian Berkner, and several foster children. Donations may be made to the American Bladder Cancer Society, PO Box 263, Dalton, MA 01227-0263.



Movie Group Meets Thursday, March 26, 2009 at 7:00 pm

The Movie Group will view "In Bruges," the 2008 film written and directed by Martin McDonagh. Roger Ebert says this is "an endlessly surprising, very dark, human comedy, with a plot that cannot be foreseen but only relished. Every once in a while you find a film like this... Yes, it's a 'thriller,' but one where the ending seems determined by character and upbringing rather than plot requirements." Please bring snacks to share; the movie will begin at 7:00 pm.

Green Committee News

Our application for the green sanctuary was approved at the March 8, 2009 Special Parish Meeting. The Parish Meeting was called to order at 11:45 AM by Al Nettleton. Kathy Converse reviewed the progress of the Green Sanctuary application and made a motion to submit the application to the UUA. After a brief discussion, the vote was called and it was unanimous to submit the application. The meeting was immediately adjourned by Al Nettleton at 12:00 PM. The application was then submitted electronically during the following week. In a message back from the UUA Congregational Stewardship Services, we were informed that it is scheduled to be reviewed by one of the Green Sanctuary Review Teams on Wednesday, April 8th. After the review, we can expect a detailed letter that will let us know about the status of our application and provide feedback on our action plan. We can expect an update no later than Monday, April 20th.

Housing and Property News

Critter Control successfully removed 10 raccoons from the Prairie attic. We didn't quite break their record for most raccoons in a structure (13) but we came close! We did have enough, however, to warrant a "volume discount" for their removal. Critter Control will be back to make some improvements to our roof to prevent re-colonization.

Prairie has a computer monitor and a set of drawers (excellent for a basement or garage) that are both free to a good home. If they are not claimed shortly, they will be recycled.

A Note from your Administrator

The deadlines for items for the Prairie Fire are the same every month - the first of the month for calendar items and the 15th of the month for calendar items and articles. This will stay the same year round. We have now had the new format for the Prairie Fire (a short calendar-only version once a month and a full-featured version once a month) for almost six months. I would like your feedback about the new schedule and the new appearance. Look for a survey to come your way soon! Of course, your comments are welcome anytime, too.
Kate Liu, admin@uuprairie.org

Spanish Speakers to Meet

The Spanish Speakers will have their next potluck at the home of Amy Schulz and Dave Welo, 2304 S. Syene Road, on Monday, March 23, 2009, at 6:30 pm. For more information about the group, or to arrange for a ride, please contact Rosemary Dorney at 238-4352.

Prairie Elders Meeting

Prairie Elders meets Tuesday, March 24, from 2:00-4:00 pm in the Nakoma Room, Heritage Oaks building, Oakwood Village West. Newcomers are welcome. Call contacts below for directions or a ride.

TOPIC: An influential person in your life, other than relatives. People who influenced us in special ways may not always be the first to come to mind. Those we chose to talk about may have touched us only briefly but in a meaningful way. Interpret the topic as you wish. This can be a fascinating exercise in reviewing people in our past. DISCUSSION FORMAT: Our "round robin" format gives all an opportunity to speak and to hear. Topics alternate between general issues and personal interests.

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.

Annual Prairie Family Retreat, October 23-25, 2009

We know it's hard to think about next fall already, but we'd like to encourage you all to mark your calendars now for

the Annual Prairie Family Retreat, which will be held at Pine Lake United Methodist Camp outside of Westfield, Wisconsin, October 23-25, 2009. Bethel Horizons served us very well for many years but they were unable to offer us a good date next year due to the fact that their own use of the facility is growing, so we have selected a new site for the retreat. Pine Lake is a beautiful facility with lots of flexible space for all of the fun things we do at the retreat. You can visit their website at <http://www.wisconsinumc.org/PineLake/> to get a look at what they have to offer.

Pledge Time!

On 3/15 we had our big pledge luncheon, with great entertainment as well as information about our budget for 2009-10 and how you can support Prairie's plans for next year. We had a rapid-fire talent show reprise organized by Erin Bosch and presented by numerous Prairie members, past and present. If you missed the show, a DVD is available. Here are the highlights of the budget plans:

- Membership has risen 23% in the past year to 110
- We started a Capital Fund with \$44,000 this year
- We have additional money for a planned emergency fund
- Even though we are doing so well, we still need a balanced budget
- Proposed budget is \$115,000, an 11% increase from last year
- Staff hours and leadership training are increased to support our growth
- Given the economy, try to pledge more to help those who can't give as much

Please mail your pledge form to Barbara Park, Finance Chair, as soon as you can so we can finalize our budget. If you need new forms, please contact our administrator, Kate Liu (admin@uuprairie.org).

Thanks!

Rachel Long, Prairie Society President

Ethical Humanism Study Group

The 3rd meeting of the adult study group on "Ethical Humanism as a Religious Approach" will be at Prairie on Sunday, April 5. The group is led by Ron Solomon, who has over 40 years of experience in the Ethical Culture movement. An outline and handouts for the class are being posted online at

<http://humanist.madisonwi.us/Ethical/>. All those interested are welcome to join these informal discussions. On April 5 the study group discussion will start at 12:45 pm, and be preceded by an optional potluck at noon.

All-Society Potluck

Our next church potluck will be held after the service on April 26. Please bring a dish to share. The potlucks have been very popular with excellent turnout and we expect the same for this one. We will be making some calls to line up volunteers to clean up ahead of time, so don't be surprised if you hear from us!

Paula Pachciarz, Hospitality and Membership

Membership News

Please extend a warm welcome to Nick and Cara Abts, who recently signed the book at Prairie. Please add their contact information to your directories:

Nick & Cara Abts (and one on the way)

608.438.8583

5 Lynbrook Circle

Madison, WI 53719

[caralynnabts\(at\)gmail.com](mailto:caralynnabts(at)gmail.com)

New, 2009 Prairie directories are available, both in print and as a pdf. You can have your choice of a regular font or a large font, too. Contact Prairie's administrator, Kate Liu, at 271-8218 or admin@uuprairie.org if you would like one.

Orientation to Prairie Saturday, April 11, 2009

We are holding our spring orientation on Saturday, April 11, and we invite anyone who is interested in getting to know us better, or in becoming Members. The orientation begins at 9:00 am and will end at 12 noon. We provide a substantial brunch, and child care if needed.

The orientation includes several topics we think are key to getting to know who we are: social action projects that Prairie people put their energy into; a condensed history of Unitarian Universalism; what use donations and pledges

are put to; a tour of the building and grounds; Prairie's identity and vision. The heart of the orientation, however, is the time we set aside to share our personal journeys, where we are in our individual quests for a meaningful life or spiritual fulfillment.

Participation in the orientation does not mean that we expect you to join Prairie. We provide orientations two to three times a year to give people an opportunity to get to know us, and to answer any questions they may have. Some participants do go on to become Members; some stay Friends indefinitely, some decide that Prairie is not a good fit for them.

Please let me know if you are interested in attending, and if you would like child care. You are also welcome to bring other adult family members or friends.

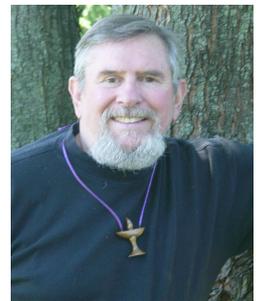
Thank you,
Paula Pachciarz
Chair, Hospitality and Membership
273-4806
pjpchz@gmail.com

Rev. Ralph's Ruminations

Those of us who were at the Pledge Sunday Luncheon (March 15) heard Rachel report that our membership numbers have increased by almost 20 per cent during the past year. This is a remarkable number and Prairie should be happy with this measure of growth. But here is the focus of my thoughts regarding "healthy" congregational growth.

* Are membership numbers a key measure of Prairie's health?

- Are the number of new children enrolled in our RE program also a sign of Prairie's health?
- Are the number of new family's with children also to be considered as a sign of Prairie's health?
- Are the numbers of members willing to accept roles and tasks of doing the many jobs of serving congregational needs increasing?
- Is there a greater sense of ownership by more members of Prairie's mission?
- Is there a positive attitude by Prairie members that growth is welcomed with enthusiastic embrace?
- Are Prairie members willing and ready to accept the challenges that come with growth (more staffing, space and meeting house needs, leadership training and role responsibilities, etc.)?



Growth is inevitable in healthy congregations. To be a healthy congregation is to develop responses that are sound and reasonable. To be healthy is to be vigorous, to have strength, and to use these qualities in taking action. When a congregation sees clearly its place and possibilities and understands its mission and purpose, it will make decisions that serve itself and its community well. Such a congregation will continue growing because of its health. As a congregation is Prairie ready to serve people who need our particular way of doing Unitarian Universalism?

As your minister, (albeit part-time and contractual or Consulting) I have a special interest in our congregation's health and well-being. Because health and growth are related, growth should be a topic of equal interest and study. The most basic and practical understanding a religious leader must have about growth is that it is a necessary condition for the continuation of any religious community. Not to grow leads to death. It is a simple and well documented fact that a congregation that is not growing in wisdom, strength, action, or numbers is a congregation that will not last in its present state.

That is NOT what is happening at Prairie— new shoots of growth are emerging and these sproutings of growth appear to me to be vigorous and healthy. The important question for Prairie to answer is, "How are we tending to these new sproutings of growth?"

As your minister may I suggest that your task as a member or friend (old or new) is to select those new “bursting forths” and find how they best match the mission of the congregation, and to begin in earnest to water and nurture their energy, perhaps even to prevent their being trampled, and to honor their new place in the life of the congregation.



What is this mission of the congregation? We're still in the process of finding the right words to express it but here is what it must hold up for all to embrace.

The job of everyone at Prairie, leaders—boards, minister, members, friends and staff—is not to “give us what we want.” For one thing, if the only mission is to the current population of the congregation, the congregation will likely soon die. Prairie’s mission must be not only to change the lives of all of us, but of others yet to join. A real problem with democracy in congregations is that future members do not vote. If they did, at every meeting they would make up a majority.

Another reason a congregation cannot simply “give the members what they want” is that part of our mission is to teach people to want things that they don’t want. Members of vital congregations testify to many ways the congregation has drawn them out of themselves into voluntary service, sacrificial changes of career, and hard work for social justice. Sometimes members of congregations are asked, “What would you have done if someone warned you how joining this congregation would transform your life?” Generally they admit, “I would have run the other way!” Pleasing people—members, future members, leaders, or anybody else—should not be our mission. Our mission should be to change lives.

As Prairie grows may we consider how we are changing lives and how are our lives can be changed by being part of Prairie and supporting it in the ways and in the measures that comes from this kind of mission and vision.

Glad to be journeying with you,
Ralph

Denominational Affairs

Journey Toward Wholeness

You are urged to read the new report issued by the Madison Urban League entitled “The State of Black Madison 2008.” It can be purchased for \$5.00 at the Urban League Office, 151 E. Gorham St, or you can download a free pdf copy at the website: www.ulgm.org

2009 General Assembly

The 2009 GA will take place in Salt Lake City on June 24-28. It is not too early to think about who our Prairie delegates will. If you are interested, please contact Pat at: pwatkins@wisc.edu or phone 233-5795. General Assembly (GA) is the annual meeting of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations, and attracts members from all over the globe, who join together for five days of music, celebration, spiritual practices, learning, worship, workshops, lectures, dancing singing and inspiration. And, this summer, we will be electing a new UUA President. There is something at GA for everyone, and if you have never been, you have no idea what you are missing. On line Hotel and Conference Registration is at www.uua.org. Scholarships and home hospitality can make GA affordable. We need Prairie delegates, so if you are interested, please talk to Pat and we'll help you to make it happen.

Central Midwest District Assembly, April 24-26, 2009

"DA" will meet in Waukesha at the Marriott Milwaukee West Hotel on April 24-26. Mark your calendars now and plan to attend if possible. Most of us cannot attend General Assembly, but this “mini” assembly provides a smaller but still delicious taste of the G.A. experience: social events, workshops, speakers, and an opportunity to meet people from the entire midwest district and learn what they are doing in the various congregations. The theme of this year's assembly is “Leadership in Times of Profound Change,” and the keynote speaker will be Sharon Daloz Parks, author of “Big Questions, Worthy Dreams: Mentoring Young Adults in Their Search for Meaning, Purpose and Faith,” and co-author of “Common Fire: Leading Lives of Commitment in a Complex

World.” At this year’s General Assembly, we will be voting for a new President of the UUA, and the CMwD Assembly will provide an opportunity to meet and hear the candidates, Dr. Laurel Hallman and Rev. Peter Morales, who are running for the office.

Registration for the District Assembly is \$ 155 (25% discount for a 2 hour volunteer stint), and \$45 for students and young adults. Three meals are included, and child care is available on Saturday. The brochure is available on www.cmd-uua.org and you can register for both conference and hotel at www.regonline.com/690962. If you call the hotel directly, give them the corporate code of CMMCMMA to get the \$79 room rate. Home Hospitality is also available. Let me know if you are interested in being a Prairie delegate.

Unfortunately, the charter bus for transportation to the Central Midwest District meeting has been canceled due to lack of interest. I apologize if this has caused inconvenience and disappointment to anyone.

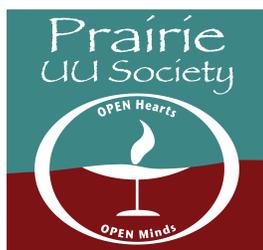
Interfaith Peace Fair, March 27-29, 2009

An interfaith peace fair will be held at the First Unitarian Society on March 27, 28, and 29, and will consist of many events and workshops, speakers and film. It will also include a children’s program on Saturday for ages 6-12. This program is free (except for the Saturday lunch) and open to the public. For additional details go to www.fusmadison.org/sj/peace_fair_brochure.pdf If you have questions, contact wendyc@fusmadison.org.

Pat Watkins, Denominational Affairs

Input Deadlines:

Calendar items and program descriptions are due on the **1st** and **15th** of every 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 or call 271-8218.



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